

Safe & Healthy County

September 2024



Veterans Services

The Mendocino County Veterans Service office recently participated in the annual Mendocino/Lake County Veteran Stand Down event at the American Legion Post Konocti in Clearlake, CA, on September 18, 2024. The event aimed to support at-risk veterans by offering a variety of services and resources. In the military, "Stand Down" historically referred to a time when battle-weary soldiers could rest and renew themselves, but today the term applies to community-based programs designed to help veterans improve their well-being.

At this event, over 20 agencies and organizations participated, offering services such as legal assistance, education benefits, substance abuse counseling, employment help, and veterans' benefits. Additionally, attendees received food and supplies, emphasizing the community's commitment to supporting veterans in achieving a healthier lifestyle.

Veterans Day, observed on November 11, 2024, provides an annual opportunity to honor and express gratitude for the sacrifices made by veterans and their families in service to our nation. Over the past century, tens of millions of Americans have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, with hundreds of thousands giving their lives in that service.

The Mendocino County Veterans Services Office is proud to support the approximately 4,200 veterans residing in the county. The office offers respectful advocacy and assistance to veterans and their dependents in securing benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. These benefits include VA Health Care, Compensation and Pension claims, Education benefits, VA life insurance, and other essential services.

In recognition of Veterans Day, the Adult and Aging Services Division of the Department of Social Services will present a proclamation for approval by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors at a regularly scheduled meeting in November to honor both Veterans Day and the local veteran community.

Mendocino County Department of Social Services New Monthly Data Dashboard

MCDSS is thrilled to announce that our new Monthly Data Dashboard is posted on our website. With this new tool, we are reporting on multiple data points for Family & Children's Services, Adult & Aging Services, and Employment and Family Assistance Services.

You will find this report at

<https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/social-services>



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November is Adoption Awareness Month

November is Adoption Awareness Month, a time to celebrate families created through adoption and highlight the urgent need for loving homes for children in foster care. Families like the Manriquez's exemplify the joy and fulfillment that adoption brings to both parents and children.

Alex and Claudia Manriquez longed for a child, and with the unwavering support of their family, they pursued adoption through foster care. Recognizing the various options available for families wishing to adopt, they found that fostering to adopt was the best fit for their needs.

In 2020, Alex and Claudia began their journey with a local agency, starting with resource family approval, which is the initial step in foster care. Understanding the financial burdens associated with private adoption, they felt that adopting from foster care was the most suitable choice for their family. Fast forward four years, and the Manriquez family—now including their son Josiah and their new puppy, Lady—are thriving together.

Claudia, a certified nursing assistant at Adventist Health Ukiah Valley, recalls a pivotal moment that changed their lives. While on shift, she spotted a tiny face peeking out from a bassinet being wheeled down the hall. "I saw that baby and thought to myself, maybe that could be my baby," she recalls. That night, she shared her encounter with Alex, feeling an instant connection to the little one.

The very next day, the Manriquez family received a call about a baby boy in need of placement.

Claudia responded to the hospital and spent the night with the one-day-old infant she had seen. "I saw him and just knew he was meant to be with us," she remembers.

Though the process involved extensive paperwork and legal proceedings, their dedication paid off. Just weeks after Josiah's third birthday, the family celebrated the finalization of his adoption.

"Everybody in the family and close friends moved things to be there. Now, every year on February 21st, we celebrate Josiah's 'gotcha day!'" Claudia beams.

The Manriquez family is open about their adoption journey and plans to discuss it with Josiah as he grows older. "If he wants to find family members, we will support him in that process," Claudia shares, emphasizing the importance of understanding and connection.

The Manriquez family continues to foster and eagerly looks forward to adopting a sibling for Josiah. Their journey exemplifies the love, commitment, and resilience found within families formed through adoption.



For information on becoming a foster or adoptive parent or to apply, please contact the Resource Family Approval Unit at (707) 467-5893.