

# THE VETERANS VOICE

MAY 2026 ★ MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

### HAPPY MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH.

On behalf of the Board and staff at Liberation Veteran Services, I extend our deepest gratitude to the Veterans we are honored to serve and to all service members in our community. Their sacrifice and dedication have shaped the freedoms we enjoy each day—and it is our privilege to stand beside them when they need support most.

At LVS, this month is not only a time to reflect, but a renewed call to action. Every day, we work to ensure that Veterans facing hardship have access to safe housing, essential resources, and a path forward. Behind every service we provide is a simple commitment: to honor their service with action, compassion, and unwavering respect.

While “thank you” will never feel like enough, we remain dedicated to showing our gratitude through the work we do—today and every day.

With gratitude,

**Jay Patrick**  
President & CEO  
Liberation Veteran Services



## A LEGACY OF GIVING BACK



Left: Bob Conrad on the family bench; Right: Conrad family in 2007- granddaughter Katie, daughter Virginia, son Bob and his wife Leslie, and Jane Conrad

### THE CONRAD FAMILY

For Jane and Charlie Conrad, giving back was a way of life. After relocating to Richmond in 1993, they became deeply involved through Southminster Presbyterian Church, where their volunteer efforts supporting the unhoused quickly grew into a lasting commitment rooted in dignity and respect.

Their work expanded through Freedom House and the Conrad Center, where they devoted countless hours to serving meals and supporting those in need. Named in their honor in 2007, the Conrad Center recognized not a single gift, but a lifetime of service. As their son Bob shared, “They

gave their time and talent—they just put their whole heart into it.”

After Charlie’s passing, Jane continued her service—mentoring youth, coordinating meals, and supporting programs that would later connect to Liberation Veteran Services. Today, the Conrad family’s legacy lives on through Bob and Leslie’s continued support and a dedicated bench, in honor of the Conrad Family, at Veterans Village—a lasting tribute to compassion in action.



**At Liberation Veteran Services we offer homeless Veterans the care, resources, and stability needed to rebuild their lives.**



Just about every morning, the unmistakable aroma of bacon drifts through Veterans Village. Step into the Dining Hall and you will find a welcoming buffet—eggs, toast, bacon, and other comforting favorites—carefully arranged with plates and napkins, ready to be shared.

Take a step behind the scenes in our kitchen and you'll find the heart of it all: Mr. Jay Womack. Cooking. Serving. Cleaning. And always—smiling.

Mr. Womack is an Air Force Veteran who served from 1988 to 1990 in the Intelligence Division. Originally from the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina, he built a successful career in the restaurant industry after his service, working his way up to become a corporate trainer from 2005 to 2019. Along the way, he discovered a true passion for cooking and graduated from the Chef's Academy in 2013 with a 3.81 GPA. His training deepened his expertise in everything from menu development to emerging culinary trends.

In 2019, he was promoted into upper management and relocated to Richmond, where he worked until 2024. After a series of life transitions,

Mr. Womack joined LVS in January of this year.

Through it all, he has leaned on the strength and depth of his faith: *"God will provide."* That faith is evident in his calm presence and generous spirit.

*When asked how his now-beloved breakfast service began, Mr. Womack thoughtfully smiled. One morning at the Hull Street location, he made a little extra breakfast and offered it to some fellow Veterans. A few gathered. A meal was shared. Something meaningful began.*



Then, during the ice storm, when a partner church was unable to deliver dinner, Mr. Womack stepped in. For 30 men, he prepared a full meal—spaghetti, meatballs, green beans, and garlic toast. From that moment on, his role in the kitchen became something much more than cooking.

These days, you'll find him in our kitchen almost daily, quietly creating meals that nourish both body and spirit. Recently, he prepared a chicken and egg noodle casserole for lunch, followed by a pineapple-vanilla dessert topped with a generous layer of whipped cream. When I jokingly suggested I should be first in line to taste it, he simply smiled—and served me the prized corner piece!

Mr. Womack often contributes his own SNAP benefits to help supply ingredients. Others join in as well. "One guy will say, 'I have a dozen eggs,' someone else will say, 'I have a loaf of bread,'" he shared. "And then it all just comes together—kind of like the loaves and fishes."

At LVS, we often speak about Veterans serving Veterans, and the power of camaraderie and community. Mr. Womack brings those words to life each and every day.

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## VET SERVING VET CONTINUED

When asked why he does it, he didn't hesitate. With a quiet smile, he said, "Giving back. I've always been a giver."

And we are all better for it.

Mr. Womack continues to work diligently with his case manager on his steps to success for permanent housing. We are cheering him on and hope he will one day join our LVS Alumni Association.

Thank you, Mr. Womack—for your service, your generosity, and your gentle caring heart.

*Lynne Berkness*

**Lynne Berkness**  
Chief Advancement Officer

## COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### RVA Bluegrass Jam



This year marked the 15th year for The Richmond Bluegrass Jam, an event created to raise funds for military Veterans and their families, and LVS is proud to be designated a beneficiary for the 4th year.

*This all-day family-friendly event on May 2 showcased 20 of the area's best bluegrass bands on multiple stages overlooking the beautiful James River, all at the American Legion Post 354 in Midlothian, VA.*

LVS is grateful to RVA Bluegrass Jam, Inc. for its long-standing support of our program, as well as the performers who gave their time and talent to make this event possible.



## LYNNE'S LENS

Greetings from Liberation Veteran Services!



Memorial Day invites us to pause and remember the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country. It is a time for reflection, for gratitude, and for honoring the sacrifices that make our freedoms possible. At Liberation Veteran Services, this day holds special meaning as we are reminded that the cost of service does not end when the uniform comes off.

*Every day, we have the privilege of walking alongside Veterans who are working to rebuild their lives with dignity and purpose. Their resilience is powerful—and it is made possible through the compassion and commitment of supporters like you. Because of you, a Veteran finds a safe place to sleep, a warm meal, and a renewed sense of hope.*

This Memorial Day, we invite you to honor those we have lost by supporting those who are still finding their way home. Your generosity ensures that no Veteran is left behind. Thank you for standing with us—and with them.

*Lynne Berkness*

**Lynne Berkness**  
Chief Advancement Officer

**YOU CAN MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE**  
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Lynne Berkness

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