Dear Friends,

2015 was huge, IAVA’s best year ever. Thanks to the support of you, our dedicated staff and devoted members and supporters nationwide, we turned a corner across all lines of business in 2015 and solidified our position as the premiere thought and impact leader for post-9/11 veterans in America. Our results expand tremendously every year and since our founding we’ve now served more than 1.27 million veterans and their families.

You help make our success possible. In this report, we want to give you a special, in-depth look at our work over the last year: our successes and challenges, what trends we’re seeing and what we’re learning. We’ll also share a behind-the-scenes look at our operations, people and fundraising efforts to give you a fuller picture of what your dollars are helping to build and the impact they are having—and will continue to have for years to come.

In 2015, the team and I are proud to report that we served more of our community than ever before—reaching a record 439,269 veterans nationwide. (Watch a quick video on how we made such an impact here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TILY9DoAao&feature=youtu.be.) And we did it by actually spending less than we did in 2014.

It was not a year without continued growth pains—most notably in our work to develop predictable, sufficient and diverse revenue streams—but we persevered. We supported more vets than any other organization in the nation, grew the Board dramatically, drove nationally recognized technology innovation, and achieved our revenue goal—raising over $8 million. We exceeded our programmatic goals too, for example, serving the 5,000th client through our Rapid Response Referral Program (RRRP) and growing our membership by nearly 20%.

We invested in technology, tripling our digital output and pioneering groundbreaking innovations that advance our goals and serve as a model for what right looks in veteran services in the 21st Century. We scored historic advocacy successes on Capitol Hill and in local markets, including the passage of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act in February, creating the New York City Department of Veterans Services in November and passing the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act in December.

We keep pushing forward and proving that we are the Veterans Empowerment Organization of the 21st Century. Our members are the future of America. We are #VetsRising.

Thank you for your continued support of IAVA and those who served. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

Paul Rieckhoff
Founder and CEO
Table of Contents

The Premiere Veterans Empowerment Organization: IAVA’s Program Impact in 2015 ........ 4
  Member Services: Rapid Response Referral Program........................................... 5
  Member Services: Education Programs............................................................... 5
  Member Services: Employment Programs.......................................................... 6
  Member Engagement: Field Programs................................................................. 6
  Member Engagement: Digital Programs............................................................. 7
  Public Awareness Program...................................................................................... 8
  Advocacy Program................................................................................................. 9
  Research Program.................................................................................................. 10

Our People and Operations ..................................................................................... 11

Revenue .................................................................................................................. 11

Financial Stewardship ............................................................................................ 12

Looking Ahead to 2016 ........................................................................................... 13

Voices of IAVA Members....................................................................................... 14
Introduction: A 21st Century Veterans Empowerment Organization

At IAVA, we believe that veterans aren’t a charity: they’re an investment. So IAVA isn’t a typical Veterans Service Organization. We see ourselves as a Veterans Empowerment Organization: connecting, uniting and empowering the newest generation. Our member services and engagement opportunities are structured to help veterans succeed and lead in the civilian world, as they did in the military. We advocate for political accountability and for policies that are reflective of veterans’ talent and potential, and responsive to the courage and sacrifice that the country asks of the 1% who serve. We raise awareness about veterans' issues, and challenge harmful stereotypes, sharing stories of veterans to form a new narrative, one of #VetsRising.

Our work is organized into three major program areas. Membership Engagement and Services: led by our Programs, Field and Digital Products teams, these in-person and online programs offer community building, transition assistance and leadership development for new veterans and their families. Our Public Awareness program, spearheaded by our Communications team, ensures veterans’ stories are told and that veteran issues and veteran contributions are part of the national conversation. Lastly, our Advocacy and Research programs, which advocate for veterans on Capitol Hill, fight for accountability of the VA and others, and inform through original research. All programs are supported by the work of our People, Operations and Finance, and Resources teams, and by the Executive Office.

The sections that follow highlight successes, challenges and trends by program, as well as within our fundraising and operations divisions, and outline our path forward for 2016.

Members Services: Rapid Response Referral Program (RRRP)

The Rapid Response Referral Program (RRRP) is IAVA’s signature case management and referral services program. RRRP helps veterans and family members access resources and navigate transition issues related to financial need, legal aid, housing and homelessness, education, employment, mental health, disability claims and more. 2015 was a milestone year for the new program: we served our 5000th client; welcomed impressive new team members; and sharpened a number of our internal processes, enabling us to more efficiently and more thoroughly serve a client base whose needs are becoming increasingly complex.

In 2015 RRRP’s team of Veteran Transition Managers (VTMs), all masters-level social workers and mental health professionals, served 2,634 clients (+23.4% from 2014) through 2,286 referrals (down 8.3%, in part thanks to new program efficiencies). Client outreach has been up so significantly this year, in fact, that at various times we have had to restrict entry points (e.g., temporarily removing the web case appointment form) to slow intake and ensure we are able to maintain our high standard of care. The high level of cases was steady throughout the year, with
a slight uptick in June and July and a corresponding uptick in those months for housing and financial assistance—a likely result of GI Bill benefits stopping.

As with the previous year, financial assistance is the number one need that prompts veterans and their families to reach out. This is often tied to other issues—such as employment, mental health and homelessness—which RRRP staff are able to address through our comprehensive case management. Other areas of need that we saw with greater frequency this year included legal assistance, suicide and mental health, and support on disability claims.

As a result of the passage of the Clay Hunt SAV Act, VTM’s now more heavily screen for and assess suicide and mental health needs. As a result, we made 73 warm transfers to the Veterans Crisis Line for suicidal ideation (up 278% from 2014).

RRRP has served clients from all 50 states and globally, with most clients in New York (17.8%), California (17.1%), Texas (5.6%), Florida (3.7%) and Virginia (2.7%). The typical client is a white, male Army veteran, but IAVA has served veterans from all branches and to date, 48% of our clients have been from minority communities and 19% have been female. In client engagements, VTM’s receive high marks for their customer service; 4.5 of 5 stars, on average.

**Member Services: Education Programs**

On September 16, six years after we launched the first comprehensive veterans education benefits calculator on the web, IAVA unveiled the redesigned NewGIBill.org and an upgraded New GI Bill Calculator, through a pro bono agreement with College Factual, a nonprofit dedicated to veterans education. The design got an upgrade and the Calculator is now more accurate and comprehensive thanks to new data on school costs and College Factual’s comparison tool.

Between the new site’s launch and the year’s end, NewGIBill.org received 100,483 unique page views and the Calculator received 60,435 unique visits, with a notable average time of 2:03 on site. Of those, 1,850 members requested and received their calculator results by email—77% of which have never used their education benefits.

In addition to providing the most comprehensive, freely available veterans education benefits tool on the web, IAVA continues to provide one-on-one benefits counseling to veterans in school or thinking about going back to school. In 2015, 409 veterans received this personalized support through RRRP or our Education Benefits Counselor.

![Referrals by Type](chart.png)
Member Services: Employment Programs

IAVA’s newest programmatic offering is RISE Veteran Careers. RISE is a holistic and customizable employment program that provides veterans a personalized pathway to finding—and succeeding in—civilian jobs.

Every veteran who enrolls in the program will be provided with a tailored pathway of resources, tools and program activities that are specific to their goals and where they are in their employment transition. The program is designed to be high-tech and high-touch, with online programming and digital automation that will enable IAVA to provide the program at scale.

In May 2015, IAVA hosted our first RISE Veteran Careers Bootcamp at Civic Hall in New York City. Nearly 60 veterans applied, and 28 participated in the intensive, daylong program. Each participant had a tailored experience, benefiting from 5 hours of small group workshops, one-on-one networking, and support from approximately 30 peer mentors and representatives from top companies (e.g., Salesforce, Landor, AMEX, LinkedIn, CAA), public and nonprofit agencies (e.g., the NYC Office of the Attorney General, Idealist) and other veteran careers programs (e.g., HirePurpose, Vets in Tech). Participants each walked away with a cohort for advice and support, an individualized career plan, and were provided the opportunity to connect with a peer mentor. (A recap video is available on our YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8UBSTDNcEs.)

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: 100% of survey respondents reported making useful new professional connections; 100% felt the Bootcamp was tailored to their interests; 100% felt more confident in their job prospects by the end of the day; and 88% thought the Bootcamp was better than any other veteran-focused jobs event they’ve attended.

Member Engagement: Field Organizing and Leadership Development

In 2015, membership grew by 69,245 members (18.1%). While not quite the growth we saw in 2014 and less than our goal of 28%, this is still a sizable increase, ranking as the third largest year-over-year membership growth in IAVA’s history. The typical IAVA veteran member is male (82%), white (71%), married (65%) and between the ages of 31-35 (24%).

A primary focus of IAVA in 2015 has been on deepening member engagement opportunities and impact, primarily through VetTogethers. VetTogethers are member-led community events that build camaraderie—the loss of which new veterans often tell us is the single most difficult part of their service. VetTogethers are one of the most effective ways for IAVA to build an
engaged national membership efficiently. In 2015, 236 IAVA leaders hosted 670 VetTogethers engaging more than 11,000 members. Forty-nine of those were hosted across 40 cities in a single day in June, when, through a partnership with Warner Brothers, IAVA supported our members to host family-friendly VetTogethers at screenings of Max, a film about a military service dog. It was the single largest member activation in IAVA history and our first opportunity to recruit and assess new potential leaders on a large scale.

In August, IAVA hosted two concurrent Regional Leadership Meetings in Baltimore and Minneapolis, attended by 36 members representing 26 states. The meetings provided our most promising and engaged leaders extensive training on organizing and outreach, community building, network mapping and other leadership principles, as well as on IAVA’s priorities. All leaders left with their own plans for growing and engaging their communities. From the end of August through December, they hosted 90 VetTogethers, one-third of all VetTogethers hosted during that time period. Of attendees, 22 (61%) continue to be highly engaged with IAVA, including building local teams.

**Member Engagement: Digital Products**

IAVA has proudly built a reputation as a thought-leader in the digital space. This was our first year with a dedicated Digital Products Division, and we nearly tripled our tech innovation outputs, while keeping development costs near 2013 levels.

On IAVA.org, which was redesigned in late 2014, we made 125 site iterations, improving pages, user experience and functionality. We also optimized our website experience for mobile devise, increasing mobile impressions by 30%. The site received 441,958 unique visits overall, and our campaign content did especially well. Visitors spent an average of 4:41 minutes on site; more than twice the industry average. Our Memorial Day #GoSilent campaign was the most successful in IAVA’s history, with over 9,000 individuals opting into mobile messaging—double our previous high. The campaign garnered more than 8.7 million social media impressions.

In large part due to the success of the first version of *The Wait We Carry*, IAVA received funding from the Knight Foundation to launch a second tool to highlight the human cost of the wait to receive VA healthcare, showing that some veterans wait more than 300 days for primary care appointments. The site helped return the focus to a complex bureaucratic issue and pressured those in D.C. to act. VA Sec. Bob McDonald issued a response on the VA’s website and called IAVA personally to discuss our findings. As a result, VA reform continues to be prioritized by both Sec. McDonald and Congress.

IAVA’s online social and resource platform for veterans, myIAVA, remains in active beta. The site added over 2,000 new users in 2015, bringing the total to more than 4,400. Throughout the year IAVA improved the user experience and added features to create a true online community and to integrate core program offerings, like RRRP and the New GI Bill Calculator. One hundred veterans connected with RRRP services through myIAVA.
Also in 2015, we built a custom event tool that enables us to showcase events to the correct geographic audience and collect data to track individual members’ engagement over time. Using the tool, we published more than 640 events and checked in 2,935 members, of which 25% were repeat attendees, and thus prime targets for leadership development.

Public Awareness

In 2015, IAVA was again the dominant voice for veterans in American media. Whether it was on the topic of veteran suicide, PTSD or local issues like the fight for a permanent department of veterans services in New York City, IAVA advocates and experts were called upon by members of the media to provide perspective on behalf of the community.

IAVA staff and members were mentioned in 3,407 original television and print articles in 2015, more than triple (337%) the previous year, reaching an audience of 435,129,131 and worth $1,206,478 in ad value. IAVA was aggressive in promoting our policy priority, veteran suicide prevention, contributing to a 76% increase in articles on the subject over a two-year period. IAVA also sought to drive the media conversation through targeted op-eds, placing 13 in 2015, of which national media picked up five. These pieces shined a spotlight on often misunderstood, complex and underrepresented issues, such as blended retirement and PTSD.

In April, IAVA launched the public awareness campaign, “Sometimes Even Heroes Need Help,” in Rockefeller Plaza. The one-month window display, donated by EHE International, showed that though veterans are heroic, they still need help from family and friends to deal with issues like PTSD. It reached approximately 250,000 people per day.

IAVA also achieved social media growth in 2015, increasing the number of followers and impressions significantly. Total social media followers across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram increased by 3.5% to 564,920 and total post impressions increased 64.9% to 71,518,220. Our signature #VetsRising hashtag campaign alone reached 15.4 million impressions during Vets Week, up 285% from 2014. We also used the IAVA blog to communicate with members and supporters, with 218 posts featuring IAVA programs, research, member stories and more.

2015 was a watershed year for IAVA in solidifying a successful system for executing press conferences and building capacity to do so through strategic partnerships and carefully selected opportunities. We held 14 press conferences in D.C., New York, Las Vegas and Boulder, primarily to bring attention to legislative priorities, including the SAV Act and the Zadroga Act.

We increased our pool of trained spokespeople by 56%, training 60 new veterans and expanded media partnerships to grow IAVA’s brand online and offline. These included Defense One—our first revenue generative media partnership—Warner Bros. Pictures and MGM, and presidential debate commentators (on ABC News and CNN).
Lastly, IAVA deployed a new online advocacy tool on November 11 to drive grassroots messages to Congress—via email and Twitter—to support our advocacy efforts to pass the Zadroga 9/11 first responder health care extension. In just over six weeks, IAVA members and supporters delivered Members of Congress 4,121 messages urging their support of the vital legislation.

**Policy Advocacy**

2015 was bookended by advocacy victories for IAVA. The year began with the historic passage and subsequent signing of the Clay Hunt SAV Act and ended with the inclusion of a permanent extension of the James Zadroga Health Act into the Omnibus Appropriation Bill signed by the president. Demonstrated in both bills is IAVA’s ability to cut through partisanship and accomplish meaningful results for our nation’s veterans.

The Clay Hunt Act was signed into law in February, the culmination of an 18-month fight by IAVA. IAVA has since secured a commitment by House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL) to conduct an oversight hearing in early 2016 on the implementation of the new law. As of September, 667 veterans had enrolled under the Act. In December, the Zadroga Act was signed into law, effectively creating a permanent, 75-year extension of the health program for 72,297 first responders and their families. This was a $6 billion increase over the 5-year temporary act that expired in October of 2015.

Also in December, IAVA celebrated a huge victory for New York’s 230,000 veterans with the establishment of a city Department of Veteran Services, which we pushed for alongside Council Member Eric Ulrich, Chair of the Veterans’ Committee, and Public Advocate Letitia James. Other legislative victories in the year included strengthening benefits for veterans in the National Defense Authorization Act, defending the GI Bill and supporting VA Accountability legislation.

IAVA’s staff and members delivered 20 testimonies (up 43%) on issues including women veterans’ health care, mental health and suicide, education, homelessness and VA accountability. We reviewed and supported 68 bills at the request of Congressional sponsors (34 Republican and 34 Democrat). We attended four House and Senate Leadership briefings and conducted 72 Congressional meetings within the last four months of 2015 alone.

IAVA expanded its unprecedented access to the VA, DoD and White House. We facilitated more than 50 member veterans visiting the White House, and attended over 20 meetings at the Department of Defense, including three with the Defense Secretary. We attended more than 50
meetings at the VA in support of IAVA policy priorities and programs. For the first time in a generation, IAVA was able to secure a seat at the meetings held between the VA Secretary and established Veteran Service Organizations. In another first, IAVA was instrumental in the formation of the Post-9/11 Veterans Caucus in both the House and the Senate. The goal of the groups is to build on the bipartisan nature of the Clay Hunt Act and work together to advocate and pass legislation that is beneficial to veterans.

Research

IAVA launched our Annual Member Survey in Spring 2015. This is among the largest non-governmental surveys of post-9/11 veterans and the most comprehensive. The member survey helps IAVA to champion a data-driven approach to our initiatives, using this data in combination with literature reviews to form positions on legislation and drive our advocacy campaigns and policy agenda. The data has been analyzed and the report will be released in 2016.

Also in 2015, we launched our first women veterans survey, with the intent of better understanding the challenges and successes of women veterans—the fastest growing population both within the military and veteran community. In total, 1,500 women veterans participated in the survey, an unprecedented number that has allowed IAVA to conduct a higher level of rigorous analysis. Complementary to the survey, we hosted focus groups in eight cities, talking to approximately 60 women veterans about their experiences both in their communities and in accessing VA benefits.

We engaged our members through seven polls on social media, which in turn informed IAVA actions on the Post-9/11 GI Bill, VA Health Care Utilization, VA’s Choice Program, VA’s plan to Consolidate Care in the Community, and the opening of combat military occupation specialties to women. We also engaged with the media and the general public in a number of ways, for example, authoring 62 blog posts on our research and responding to 68 media inquiries for more than a dozen print media publications and three public radio programs.

We also participated in two Twitter Town Hall events on mental health and suicide, one with Congressman Rangel and the other with Pivot TV. Lastly, we participated in six thought leadership events, including symposiums and roundtables.
Our People and Operations

In 2015, the People Division launched a new, vibrant focus on staff retention, employee morale and professional development. At the end of 2015, our team had grown to 50 full and part-time employees in seven locations across the country: in our New York City HQ and Washington, DC office, and remotely in Atlanta, Buffalo, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego.

Our staff is 40% veterans and 60% civilians, including many veteran spouses and family members. In 2015, we made some key new veteran hires in 2015, including two senior-level fellows and a new veteran case manager, as well as promoted some long-time veteran staff members to more senior level positions, including two to Chief. We value our staff’s professional development and engagement, and in 2015 we held all-staff trainings and learning lunches on everything from stress management, to using Salesforce and Google Apps, to management, to understanding the VA System. We also supported staff to attend professional conferences and events, from Dreamforce to SXSW.

We also made strides to be more high-tech and data-driven in 2015, building a custom hiring system on Salesforce. This system has greatly improved our ability to monitor and analyze our hiring trends, create a pipeline of talented candidates and report effectively.

On the operations side, we have focused on creating greater efficiency in financial and operational systems, transforming the financial data capture and reporting processes, and creating the backbone that will allow IAVA to scale into a truly national organization. In September, we relocated our New York City headquarters to a new building near Bryant Park. Generously supported through a sublease by Navigant Consulting Inc, the new building owned by The Blackstone Group waived the six-figure security deposit for IAVA and extended a reduced monthly rate more than 50% under market value through 2018.

Although end of year financials show a positive net and expenses were held down, cash flow continues to be a challenge. Our CEO, Board and senior management are working diligently toward solutions, including more sustainable revenue streams, in 2016.

Revenue

2015 was a record-breaking year for IAVA revenue. We raised more than $8,056,920–111% of the previous year’s total, and the third consecutive year in which gross revenue has increased by more than $1 million.

Notable successes include a rejuvenated gala with excellent potential for 2016. The 2015 Heroes Gala brought in 79 new donors and grossed $1,025,355, more than 67% growth over the previous year.
A strong foundations performance with historic wins exceeded our goal by $400,000. We raised just under $3.3 million in foundation gifts (up 49% from 2015), through new gifts and by improving grants renewal performance to 66% from 51%. We received support from 44 foundations, with the majority of income coming from approximately 10 new six-figure gifts, and payouts on the previous year’s pledges.

The Strategic Partner program recovered from a rocky 2014, raising just over $1.7 million (28% growth over 2014) through renewal of relationships with key partners and the cultivation of new strategic relationships. The groundwork was also laid for future success—especially given the significant and largely successful effort put into retooling the sponsorship and cause marketing management process.

Individual Giving remains perhaps IAVA’s single greatest revenue opportunity, and the revenue stream in which the most work remains to be done. We raised just over $1.36 million from individuals in 2015, up only 6% from the previous year. Notable in this category is that Board giving increased 3.6 times the previous year, up to more than $687,000. We also formally launched a direct mail program in May 2015, which generated at least $400,000 in total revenue. Online giving brought in roughly $330,000, and presents an opportunity to further prospect and cultivate donors, especially through recurring gifts.

Looking forward, IAVA has recently created a Philanthropy Division, which will focus on major gifts, and the planning, launch, and oversight of a $50 million endowment campaign. We’ll also be launching a leadership giving circle, the Circle of Valor, to steward donors in the $1,000-$50,000 range. Across all revenue streams, we are making moves toward becoming more proactive and strategic in our prospect identification and cultivation.

**Financial Stewardship**

IAVA is committed to financial transparency, and to efficient and sound financial management. We work hard to ensure that our programs make the largest impact for as many veterans as possible—at the lowest costs.

In 2014 (our most recent audited accounts), 80.3% of spending went directly to veteran programs, and our members pay no dues to receive access to IAVA benefits and services.

Importantly, we believe that “overhead” is not waste. It is an investment necessary to do our work at a very high level. It goes to expenses like technology hardware for our social workers, development and maintenance to online programs like www.NewGIBill.org, and to pay our phone bills so more than 6,000 veterans could call IAVA when they were in crisis. At various times, IAVA has and will continue to make conscious, strategic decisions to increase spending on things necessary to catapult us to the next level of growth and impact.

IAVA has received top ratings from Charity Watch and GuideStar, two leading nonprofit reporting agencies. Our EIN is 20-1664531. More
Looking Ahead

Our first decade was about laying the foundations: learning what our members need and want; building robust, dynamic programs that support and empower; fighting on Capitol Hill to ensure that returning veterans get the care and benefits they were promised; and establishing IAVA’s national reputation as a thought leader and the trusted voice for new veterans. The next decade is about scale and depth: growing our national membership, deepening member engagement and leadership development, and reaching more veterans through our holistic transition assistance programs.

To that end, in 2016, IAVA has set three ambitious goals with specific, achievable objectives:

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<th>Goal:</th>
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| 1. Drive the nation to support and empower veterans | a) Pass numerous priorities in our annual Policy Agenda,  
b) Put women veteran issues on the map  
c) Protect the Post-9/11 GI Bill  
d) Train veterans as advocates  
e) Inject veterans’ issues into the presidential election  
e) Educate the voting public about IAVA issues |
| 2. Build the most powerful network of veterans on earth | a) Grow our membership by 40%  
b) Train and empower 200 veteran members as leaders  
c) Host a national convention to engage and develop our top members from across the country  
d) Reach 500,000 veterans through IAVA programs and tools |
| 3. Serve as the backstop for veterans in crisis | a) Connect more than 3,000 veterans with RRRP  
b) Enable 300,000 veterans to maximize New GI Bill benefits  
c) Empower 200 veterans through holistic career support |

This is just the beginning. Thank you for your generous support and we hope you will continue to stand with us—and with our more than 185,000 veteran members—in 2016 and beyond.
Voices of #VetsRising: What Are Members Are Saying About IAVA

“About once a week I receive a phone call from my friend Josh out in Washington. These have become my favorite calls of the week. Josh is an Army veteran who served in Iraq, and now he’s a fellow IAVA team leader. We both attended an IAVA regional leaders summit back in August and left feeling hyped up and enthusiastic about creating a sense of community among veterans in our area. He calls to share his success stories, to tell me about the veterans he meets and how happy they are to have found others who served. He does all of this in addition to his responsibilities as a father and full-time employee working with the homeless… In my opinion, this is the essence of #VetsRising.” – Andy, IAVA Veteran Leader

“We were sharing our stories with each other and finding a common bond. We defied the stereotypes and unpopular portrayals of broken, immobilized veterans. We defied even Newton’s Third Law and created Veteran’s Law of Action: For every veteran action, there is an equal and greater forward reaction.” – Vaniesha, IAVA Veteran Leader

“Thank you IAVA for helping me and making it clear that I am not alone in what I am going through. I’ve spent most of the past two and a half years since I’ve been back believing I was alone. But I’m not alone. THANK YOU.” – RRRP client

“My VTM has always gotten back to me the same day and often calls to check in with me to see how things have been going for me. She has proven to me that she really cares. She…is playing a significant part in me regaining some degree of normalcy to my life after multiple Iraq deployments and being injured in combat in 2005.” – RRRP client

“IAVA helped me identify the next step forward in achieving my life vision. The information I received about the Post-9/11 GI Bill was vital in making my decision.” – Max Pennington, IAVA Veteran Member

“The Rapid Response Referral Program provided me with prompt professional support, and walked me through the difficult process of requesting essential service related documents. My transition manager was informed and answered all my questions, she also followed up to ensure my issue was resolved. I would recommend RRRP to any veteran or family member that is seeking veteran-specific resources.” – Benjamin Robles, RRRP Client

“This experience gave me a renewed confidence in being able to successfully find a career for me.” – RISE Bootcamp participant
“IAVA was a light in my life when things seemed really dim. They gave me hope and help.”

–IAVA Veteran

To learn more and sign-up to receive the latest news and information, visit www.IAVA.org.