



THANK YOU! Because of your support, the holidays were brighter for thousands in need.



Thanks to your generosity, **1,200** children who live in our family and domestic violence shelters received toys this holiday season. We were also able to provide gifts to over **1,000** older adults in our care, 400 more than last year, through **Burt & Barbara's Gifts of the Heart**.

In total, 60+ partners supported our holiday drives by donating gifts and answering more than **700** "Dear Santa" letters. We are especially grateful to:

- Marubeni, for matching its employees contributions to support the gift drive.
- Cornerstone Research, for raising funds to help one of our family shelters in the Bronx purchase snacks, decorations, and a tree for their "Winter Wonderland" visit with Santa.
- A team of New York Life employees who filled stockings with candy and toys for all of the children at our family homeless and domestic violence shelters.

With your support these individuals and families were able to have a **MUCH** happier holiday season.

For nearly two decades an anonymous donor has given \$20,000 to our **Hope & Hearth Holiday Food Vouchers Program**. This year, thanks to their continued support, we were able to provide **700+** individuals and families from our programs with food vouchers in December. These vouchers act as cash at local supermarkets and allow the recipients to shop for and prepare a holiday meal that is special to them rather than having to rely on a food pantry or soup kitchen.

The video link below features our Holiday Gift Drive "Sort Week" during which volunteers sorted and prepped gifts for delivery to the children and older adults in our care.

WATCH VIDEO

Valentines for Veterans



This Valentine's Day, show the veterans in our care your gratitude by making or purchasing Valentine cards, candy, and small gifts like new socks or other warm winter clothing. You can also host a luncheon to honor those who served our country. Make February 14 special by letting our service men and women know that you appreciate them!

Volunteers of America-Greater New York helps more than 1,300 veterans and their families each year. We are the largest provider of supportive housing for veterans in New York City. In addition to addressing their housing needs, we provide a full range of services including counseling, employment assistance, and recreational

opportunities, among others.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Celebrate February

February is a busy month! You can help those in our care be part of a special celebration by hosting an event at one of our programs. Some suggestions include:

- In the spirit of the 2018 Winter Olympics, hold a game day at one of our family shelters with activities like ring toss and relay races.
- "Tailgate" for the Super Bowl with a pregame luncheon at a veterans' residence.
- Commemorate African American History Month at a family program complete with trivia, prizes, and a story time for the young children.

[Get More Details](#)



Fundraising for Operation Backpack[®] 2018 Has Begun!

Operation Backpack[®] (OBP) is Volunteers of America's signature community service campaign that distributes new backpacks full of school supplies to all children living in NYC's shelters in time for the first day of school. We are already planning for OBP 2018, and it's never too early for you to start planning as well!

Using our fundraising platform [CrowdRise](#), you can set up your own team to help us purchase the supplies which are not donated. Anyone interested in becoming a sponsor or making a substantial contribution can [contact us here](#).

With the support of partners like you, we hope to meet our goal of filling **18,000 backpacks** again this year!

[Donate Here](#)

Partner Spotlight: The Weeks Lerman Group

A longtime sponsor of Operation Backpack[®], The Weeks Lerman Group's culture of philanthropy extends to a variety of our programs. Their

support this holiday season was incredible.

At Thanksgiving, they provided turkeys and hams for residents, and in December, catered a full meal at one of our veterans' residences. Weeks Lerman volunteers served food at the event and distributed gift bags full of snacks and gift cards to each veteran. It made the holidays special for our vets! Employees also answered "Dear Santa" letters from children at our domestic violence shelter in Queens and supplied a full meal for their holiday party.



Weeks Lerman VP & C.O.O. Cindy Ciaccio and Strategic Account Specialist Lou Montella pose with a veteran at their December dinner.

Thank you, Weeks Lerman!

A New York Winter's Eve Gala

Volunteers of America-Greater New York held its annual Gala, *A New York Winter's Eve*, at The Plaza on December 5. More than 300 guests gathered to honor community partners and help raise critical funds that support our 90+ social service programs.



We were pleased to honor our friends at Deloitte with the 2017 *Spirit of the Founders* award for the consistent, generous, and inspiring impact they have in our community. Deloitte's top-down philosophy of corporate citizenship and their steadfast support of our programs for more than a decade have been essential to the success of the organization. **Take a look at their partnership with us in this video feature.**

We also recognized three individuals- Aileen Busick of Duane Reade/Walgreens, Mitch Grant of RXR Realty, and 12-year-old Elektra Pritchard and her family- as champions of Volunteers of America and specifically Operation Backpack[®]. **Watch a video recognizing their exceptional efforts here.**

If you feel inspired after watching, please share these videos with anyone who may be interested in the work we do!

Learn More About Our Work: What is Moral Injury and How VOA Helps

You've likely heard stories in the media of veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of their combat experiences. But you may not be as familiar with the concept of **moral injury**. Unlike PTSD, moral injury is not a fear-based disorder. Moral injury is the damage to one's conscience or moral compass when a person perpetrates, witnesses, or fails to prevent acts that transgress their own moral and ethical values. It can occur after losing beloved comrades, handling human remains, or failing to prevent harm to others. Combined with PTSD or other debilitating conditions, moral injury can accelerate a downward spiral to hopelessness.



So what are we doing to help? Currently, VOA is the lead organization on a research project funded by Bristol Meyers Squibb to develop an Evidenced-Based Model for treating moral injury. Over the next two years, VOA-GNY will work with 60 veterans on this project, which will

be known as Spiritual Resiliency Training (SRT). Our approach is a peer leadership system, a military squad model of trust and bonding, and complimentary alternative therapy strategies such as mindfulness and the arts. The SRT strategies focus on confronting moral suffering, exploring forgiveness and gratitude, restoring meaning or faith and purpose to life, increasing self-acceptance and awareness of each person's core humanity, and civic engagement through public service.

In our **continuum of care for veterans**, this will become an innovative instrument in our "toolbox" to help those in need.

We appreciate your support in 2017 and look forward to an even greater New Year!



To learn more, contact:

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