

Veterans Affairs Housing Effort Reaches Homeless in Mobile

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A housing-focused outreach by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to place homeless veterans in safe and stable living conditions across the country, with one recent initiative in Mobile, Alabama seeing tangible results. The local “housing surge” event aimed to connect veterans with housing, documentation, and support services needed to help them rebuild their lives.

Navy veteran Eric Robertson, who had spent over a year living in a tent in west Mobile due to financial hardship, was among the veterans seeking help. Robertson said he turned to the Waterfront Rescue Mission earlier this year after growing concerns for his safety. “To be honest with you, I was getting shot at,” he told FOX10 News. “And I was in an area where I was close to houses. And I guess they found out I was there.” His story is not unique, but it illustrates the challenges many former servicemen and women face when trying to re-enter civilian life without a support system.

The event in Mobile was part of the VA’s broader “Getting Veterans Off the Street” campaign, which is being implemented nationwide through September 30. The initiative, supported by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is a response to findings from HUD’s annual Point-in-Time Count, which estimated that 35,574 American veterans were without permanent shelter in the previous year.

At the Mobile event, 18 veterans received help in just one day. Four found housing immediately, while others were placed in transitional programs or referred to temporary housing like Vets Recovery. Eric Lindmark, regional director of development and public relations at Waterfront Rescue Mission, said they were surprised by the turnout. “We came in this morning thinking, ‘Well, we’re only gonna get a few,’ and we’ve already hit 13 veterans,” he shared during the event. That number had grown by the end of the day.

Lindmark noted that veterans make up roughly 25 to 28 percent of the Rescue Mission’s clientele, often coming in with little more than the clothes on their backs. Many require help securing identification documents such as military discharge papers, Social Security cards, and birth certificates. These are critical for applying to housing, benefits, or medical services, including surgery or treatment for injuries sustained during or after service. Robertson, for instance, is seeking permanent housing where he can recover from needed back and knee surgery.

Another veteran helped at the event, Ray Charles Garrett, had arrived in Mobile from New Orleans just 12 days earlier and was robbed on his first night. The Navy veteran, who has spent eight years living on the streets and hasn’t seen his family in over a decade, hopes the VA program will assist with both housing and treatment for his cocaine addiction.

The program’s approach goes beyond shelter, also offering counselling and mental health services, which Lindmark said are essential given the high rate of addiction and trauma

among homeless veterans. “It gives them the housing opportunities to get going and get moving,” he said. “It helps them get back on their feet. It gives them a purpose.”

While the federal government continues to expand its reach through the VA and HUD, it’s clear that on-the-ground partnerships with local missions and community programs are what make real results possible. Initiatives like these reflect a renewed emphasis on honouring commitments to veterans not just in words, but in meaningful, practical support.