“Libraries [are] safe places where people care and want to help, and where core professional values of respect and confidentiality are upheld,” said former U.S. Army combat medic Jason Deitch. As service members become Veterans, they and their families have many needs, and America’s libraries—120,000 strong—are well-positioned to address them.

With only one U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in the state, helping veterans within their local New Hampshire (NH) community is paramount. Public libraries in all 13 cities and 221 towns in NH serve veterans with access to print and online services and resources, helping them to learn new skills for job searching and small business creation, and connecting them to other local veterans for support and friendship through shared experience.

**Delivering relevant resources and services**

One of the most significant library services is helping Veterans navigate information about the benefits they are eligible to receive and partnering with organizations that can help Veterans access them.

The NH State Library is working toward a collaboration with the VA Medical Centers in New England to pilot

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**Takeaways for presidential candidates, local and national public officials, and the media:**

- From the job search to obtaining benefits, libraries in NH and across the nation provide direct services to Veterans and their families. Libraries offer a trusted space for re-entering community life and making vital connections.
- Libraries are successful collaborators with the VA and other public and private organizations that support Veterans and their families.
- Libraries represent a proactive, cost-effective solution for extending outreach and services to Veterans. Policy makers should incorporate libraries into their plans to improve services to Veterans.
a new Veterans Health Administration National Desktop Library online portal specifically designed for use at public libraries. With only one VA medical center in the state, having the ability to provide resources and services to veterans in their communities through one site, without conducting many online searches for forms and information, will have a huge impact on accessibility and efficiency. Building on this pilot, the plan is to take it nationwide over the next few years.

Services related to employment also are widespread. A 2014 RAND report ("Why is Veteran Unemployment So High?") recommends that, "policymakers who wish to address veteran unemployment should focus attention on policies and programs that facilitate more efficient job search." Many libraries provide targeted resources such as resume and interviewing workshops, resources for starting a small business, and advice and programming on improving job skills.

Libraries across NH work one-on-one with Veterans to help them access necessary state or federal documents and forms. At the Concord Public Library, a librarian helped a veteran use the public Internet computers to access benefit forms he needed to complete through the VA. The librarian then helped him scan the completed documents and save them to a flash drive. Before leaving, he raised one hand above his head and told the librarian, "My stress level was way up here. Now I can exhale. Thank you so much for the help."

Collaborating with veterans service organizations

Libraries are often a first point of contact for Veterans who may be unaware of the VA benefits they are eligible to receive. In addition, libraries often serve as conduit to connect Veterans with non-profit organizations that provide additional valuable services.

As part of 2016 Community Stories: Soldiers Home & Away in southeast NH, the non-profit Operation Delta Dog came to the Kelley Library (Salem, N.H.) to present information and resources about their mission of training rescue dogs to become service dogs for veterans. During that same Community Stories nine-week project, the Hampstead Public Library hosted members of Rolling Thunder, who brought their motorcycles to the library and talked about their organization and services they provide to veterans across NH.

Connecting communities and honoring service

Libraries enable Veterans and others to engage with their communities, share their military experiences, and be recognized for their service. Veterans can meet each other and host exhibits and book talks on military themes at libraries.

Smyth Public Library (Candia, NH) hosted three different presentations by WWII POW Gerry Smith, who shared his story about being shot down over Italy and held prisoner for 15 months. His presentations drew capacity crowds of veterans from all over the state. In addition, the library hosts their local American Legion meetings once a month to provide a safe and free place for veterans to meet and share their experiences.

Finally, libraries honor our service members prior to their transition to civilian life by reinforcing family and community connections.

During a recent large deployment for NH, the Goffstown Public Library organized the Goffstown Area Deployed Family Support. This group of organizations in the area hosted monthly meals at churches for families to get together and support each other, linked local volunteers to military families to provide free yard work and repair services, and connected veterans with children of deployed parents for additional adult support during the school year.