



## Snapshot

Cleveland Regional Office Staff Working to Sack Homelessness



The City of Cleveland's first Veterans Stand Down provided homeless veterans a day of safety and security, along with food, haircuts, and blankets. VA representatives provided benefits counseling and distributed almost 200 donated backpacks filled with socks, clothing, food, bus passes, and personal hygiene items. The backpack drive, known as "Pack a Sack," was the first organized effort of the Cleveland VA Regional Office's new Outreach Committee. Comprised of Cleveland Veterans Service Center employees, the group aims to meet the needs of local veterans. "Two vans were so filled with these backpacks that when opened, they literally began falling out," said regional office Public Contact Coach Todd Weber. "Representatives of other agencies came up to compliment our efforts. And the veterans carried our backpacks with a sense of deep appreciation and even joy."

A wide variety of services and assistance from many veterans' advocacy groups was also available. Over 400 homeless veterans attended the event.



## Snapshot

Joanne Compagna:  
Going Above and Beyond the Call of Duty



Joanne Compagna, vocational rehabilitation specialist in Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program at the Bedford, Massachusetts, VA Medical Center, was worried about her trip home from work during an intense New England snow storm when other priorities intervened. As she was ready to leave for the day, she heard that the center's CWT van driver was stuck in nearby Wakefield and unable to pick up four veterans working in Waltham. She immediately took a VA minivan to retrieve them. It took her more than an hour to get out of Bedford, and then she faced gridlock on the highway to her destination. Knowing the veterans at the worksite would be distressed, she persuaded a state snow plow to escort her on the shoulder lane past the accident holding up traffic. When she reached Waltham, she found herself stuck behind abandoned vehicles. She parked the van and walked a quarter mile to where the veterans were waiting in a half-foot of snow. She escorted them back to the van and made the return trip. Her work day did not end until well after 8 p.m., and she did not leave the hospital grounds until she was sure the veterans had beds for the night.