TOUR DE VALOR: 200+ MILE BICYCLE JOURNEY ANNOUNCES CONFRIMED ROUTE STOPS & COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

Statewide Awareness Initiative Will Highlight Peer Support, Connection, Holistic Wellness and the Importance of Caring for Ourselves and One Another



NYSDVS Logo Image

ALBANY, NY, NY, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- ALBANY, N.Y. – On October 23-24, 2026, the Dwyer Coalition for Military Veterans & Families will launch the inaugural "Tour de Valor: One Million Voices," a statewide awareness initiative connecting communities across New York through a 200+ mile bicycle journey from Albany County to Suffolk County.

The Tour de Valor will travel from the Albany County Veterans Service Bureau to the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Memorial in Rocky Point, Long Island, bringing communities together along the way while raising awareness about peer support, connection, holistic wellness, and hope for Veterans, Service Members, Military Families, and caregivers.

The New York State Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) is supporting the inaugural Tour de Valor and helping amplify its message that caring for our physical, mental, and emotional well-being is essential, that asking for and accepting support is a sign of strength, and that no one should have to navigate life's challenges alone.

Guided by the theme "One Million Voices," the Tour de Valor represents the many different experiences and journeys within New York's military-connected community. Stops with local fire departments and community partners will highlight the network of people and organizations

available to provide support. Law enforcement escorts will represent those who help guide and protect our communities. Throughout the entire journey, two Veterans will travel behind the riders in a support trail vehicle, while two Veterans riding together will symbolize camaraderie, connection, and the power of peer support.

Tour de Valor would not be possible without the organizations and community partners supporting the journey. We thank the Adaptive Sports Foundation for providing a recumbent bicycle for the ride, as well as the fire departments and first responders opening their doors to support the riders along the route:



Tour de Valor Flyer

At each location, we invite you to write the name of a family member, friend, or someone important to you on our Tour de Valor banners. We would be honored to carry their name with us throughout the 200+ mile journey because every name represents a story, and every story becomes part of One Million Voices.

Official route and estimated times of stops: https://www.alltrails.com/explore/custom-routes/2026-tour-de-valor-f1a41da?u=i&sh=h1wpti

> We proudly stand with the Dwyer Coalition in promoting connection, peer support, hope and holistic wellness while reminding our military-connected community they never have to travel their path alone."
> *DVS Commissioner Dr. Viviana M. DeCohen*

At its heart, Tour de Valor is about helping erase the stigma surrounding mental health and encouraging people to reach out when they need support. It is about creating a community where someone who is struggling does not have to be afraid to say, "I need support, and I cannot do this alone." The journey symbolizes hope and the strength that can be found through community, connection, and camaraderie.

Tour de Valor also seeks to raise awareness of those whose service and experiences may sometimes be overlooked. National Guard members, Reservists, Military Families, caregivers, and others within the military-connected community are not always reflected in statistics commonly used to describe the Veteran population. Tour de Valor encourages conversations that recognize the entire military-connected community and the importance of ensuring every voice is heard.

The inaugural ride will be completed by two Veterans. Gavin T. Walters Sr., MSW, a disabled United States Air Force Veteran and Executive Director of the Dwyer Coalition for Military Veterans & Families, will ride alongside Todd Dorris, a Navy and Army Veteran and Program Manager of the Putnam County Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Project. Their journey together reflects the camaraderie, trust, and peer support at the heart of Tour de Valor.

Gavin T. Walters Sr., MSW, U.S. Air Force Veteran and Executive Director of the Dwyer Coalition for Military Veterans & Families, Inc., said, "Tour de Valor is about more than the miles we will travel. It is about the journey so many Veterans, Service Members, Military Families and caregivers experience, and the reminder that none of us has to make that journey alone. As Veterans, we understand the power of having someone beside you who has walked a similar path. That is what peer support is all about. We are honored to carry that message from Albany to the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Memorial and to recognize the communities, first responders and supporters who stand with our military-connected families every day."

New York State Department of Veterans' Services Commissioner Dr. Viviana M. DeCohen, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran, said, "At DVS, we have made this a Year of Wellness for All Who Served because wellness must extend to everyone we serve and everyone who serves alongside us: our Veterans, Service Members, Military Families, our DVS team members, our partners and our communities. Wellness is not a destination, and it does not look the same for every person. It is about caring for the whole person – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually – and knowing that reaching out and accepting support can be an important part of that journey. Tour de Valor gives us another opportunity to carry that message across New York. We are proud to stand with the Dwyer Coalition and our partners in promoting connection, peer support, hope and holistic wellness while reminding every member of our military-connected community that they never have to travel their path alone."

Under Governor Kathy Hochul's leadership, the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program was successfully expanded statewide, increasing access to confidential, non-clinical peer support for Veterans throughout New York. The program connects Veterans with fellow Veterans who can offer understanding, connection and support informed by shared experiences.

Private First Class Joseph P. Dwyer was a U.S. Army combat medic from Long Island who served in Iraq and became widely known after being photographed carrying an injured Iraqi child to safety in 2003. After returning home, PFC Dwyer experienced post-traumatic stress and a traumatic brain injury and passed away in 2008. The PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Program was created in his memory to connect Veterans with fellow Veterans through confidential, non-clinical peer support.

For more information visit: www.josephpdwyerpeerproject.org/2026-tour-de-valor.

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