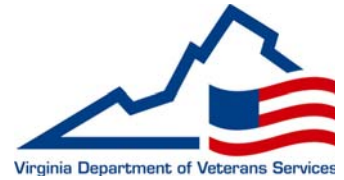


# The Virginia Department of Veterans Services



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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Contact: Anne Atkins  
(804) 371-0441

### *Despite tight economy, spare change adds up to a significant contribution for wounded warriors*

Using yellow “Soldier at Your Table” bags, students at Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Virginia collected nearly \$1,200 in spare change for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. The students, members of Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), wanted a high profile project that would affect a lot of people. As a result, they decided to help military service personnel returning home from deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan.

“For our project, we surveyed about 220 students and 74 percent of them had a close relative overseas,” said Lauren Goetzinger, a sophomore at Robinson and one of the project directors. Goetzinger’s aunt and uncle both served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The experiences of U.S. troops overseas and the possible mental health consequences were the first ideas that came to mind according to Goetzinger. “We chose specifically PTSD because of the dramatic increase in soldiers returning home with this injury,” she explained. “What also seemed to motivate the students was the fact that these men and women are doing so much overseas to protect our freedom and safety that we should turn the tables and help serve them,” Goetzinger said.

The “Soldier at Your Table” bags were the students’ largest source of income. The yellow bags were distributed to the 435 members of the Robinson DECA Chapter. Students were asked to place the bag on their dinner table and have family members donate spare change. “The name reflects a soldier always being present at the table, so the family would never forget that soldiers are serving us,” said Goetzinger.

*Serving those who served.*

DECA students at Robinson learned about the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program through Goetzinger's grandfather. After doing some research, they realized the program's mission was a perfect fit with the goals of their project.

Virginia's Wounded Warrior Program coordinates support services for veterans with stress related and traumatic brain injuries resulting from service in a combat area. The executive director and three regional directors ensure that these veterans and their families receive timely assessment, treatment, and support. The program supports Virginia veterans and members of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia residents of the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service. The program also supports the family members of these veterans, Guard and Reserve members. Later this month, the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program will announce grant awards to community-based programs that will provide behavioral health, brain injury and other services to wounded warriors and their family members.

DECA is an international association of high school and college students studying marketing, management and entrepreneurship in business, finance, hospitality and marketing sales and service.

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