



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Cortnie Parish, Co-Founder of VETLIFE to receive National Service Impact Award from Governor**

**Lansing, Michigan** – Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Community Service Commission announced the 2022 Governor's Service Awards and applauded their commitment to volunteerism, service or philanthropy. "Michigan succeeds because of Michiganders who go above and beyond to serve their communities and lift up others," said Governor Whitmer. "This year's winners get things done even when nobody's looking because they know that every contribution makes a huge impact. I am honored to present the Governor's Service Awards to this year's recipients and urge every Michigander to get involved in their community so we can move our state forward together."

Cortnie Parish of Howell is one of three individuals receiving the National Service Impact Award from the Governor. The 2022 National Service Impact Award is being awarded to Cortnie Parish (Howell), Thomas Steele (Swartz Creek), June Swift (Grand Rapids), YouthWork AmeriCorps– Child and Family Services of NW MI (Traverse City), Economic Opportunity Coaching Corps AmeriCorps – Peckham, Inc. (Lansing).



Cortnie Parish is the spouse of an Iraq War veteran and she saw first-hand the impact on veterans and their families when they return home from combat service. As a result, she co-founded VETLIFE with her husband. VETLIFE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting veterans to benefits. Michigan is home to over 600,000 veterans, but in 2019 less than 18% of that population were connected to a federal benefit earned through their military service. To address this challenge, she chose to launch a large free event for veterans and their families called Vet Fest. Since 2018 it has connected tens of thousands of veterans to benefits and helped veterans and their families through difficult times. A person who attended Vet Fest reported "I think you

saved my husband's life - he is an Army veteran and today is the first time he's left the house in six months." Cortnie inspires others through her service. She works with community resource providers to help educate them on what benefits veterans are entitled to. She has created several other events that help food insecure veterans, homeless veterans and veterans struggling with mental health concerns. Without her selfless service more veterans would fall through the cracks.

To recognize those who go above and beyond, the Governor's Service Awards have been presented since 1994. The Michigan Community Service Commission supports Michigan volunteers, organizations and businesses that are committed to service and play a critical role in improving the lives of our people and communities.

"We are proud to recognize this remarkable group of Michiganders who are an inspiration when it comes to helping others," said Michigan Community Service Commission Executive Director Ginna Holmes. "Their service has strengthened communities and made our state more resilient."

The Michigan Community Service Commission will host the 2022 Governor's Service Awards on November 17th, 7 PM at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Admission to the event is free, but registration is required. To register, visit <https://2022governorserviceawards.eventbrite.com>.

To learn more about VETLIFE visit [www.vetlifetoday.org](http://www.vetlifetoday.org) or follow on social media @vetlifetoday.