

2023 Impact Report & 2024 Goals



Dear MVJ Members,

As we reflect on another dynamic and impactful year at Veterans in Journalism, I'm filled with pride for the strides we've made together as a community.

In 2023, our fellowship and internship programs reached greater heights as new partners joined prior partners to provide even more opportunities for our members nationwide. The success of these programs reinforces MVJ as a catalyst for impactful journalism careers for veterans and military spouses. At the same time, our flourishing mentorship program is fostering relationships that help new and long-time journalists alike navigate the complexities of the media landscape.

Our commitment to countering disinformation and improving media literacy in the military community remains unwavering. Throughout 2023, we equipped our counter-disinformation team with tools to combat propaganda effectively. From immersive in-person training sessions at the Poynter Institute and Medill's Washington, D.C. campus to online sessions with a variety of training partners, program reporters and other MVJ members engaged in collaborative learning that strengthened their skills and will make a positive impact on the industry.

This year, our disability journalism program awarded \$3,700 in journalism grants to amplify impactful reporting on disability and disabled veterans issues. Our new entrepreneurial journalism program created opportunities for MVJ members to start their own sustainable ventures and cover the topics most important to them. These two programs have supported impactful reporting this year and set our members up for a wealth of opportunities and continued growth.

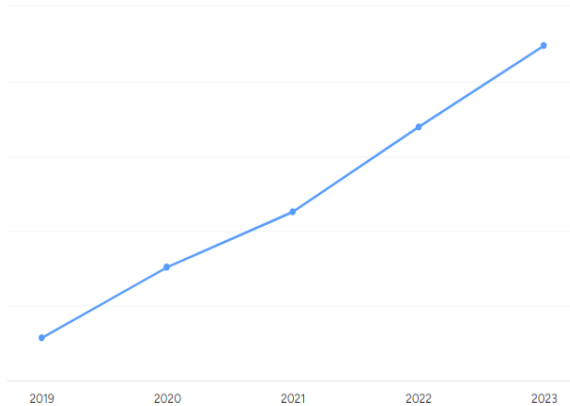
At the end of the year, MVJ2023 in New York City brought together MVJ community members and supporters from newsrooms across the country. Supported by sponsors including CNN, Spectrum, DAV, and many others, this year's convention featured workshops and panels on a variety of topics, among other networking opportunities. This year's event provided a platform for veterans and military spouses in journalism to connect with each other, learn from other talented journalists in America's biggest news organizations, and shape the future of media with their ideas. In the coming year, we hope to build on what this year's convention started, creating an even greater opportunity for our community and supporters to join together.

This report encapsulates the essence of MVJ's impact in 2023 and highlights our vibrant, supportive community. My heartfelt thanks to our members, sponsors and partners for making this year's journey possible. Together, we will continue to provide opportunities for veterans to thrive in and meaningfully contribute to the media industry in 2024.

With gratitude,

Zack Baddorf
Executive Director
Military Veterans in Journalism

Military Veterans in Journalism In Numbers

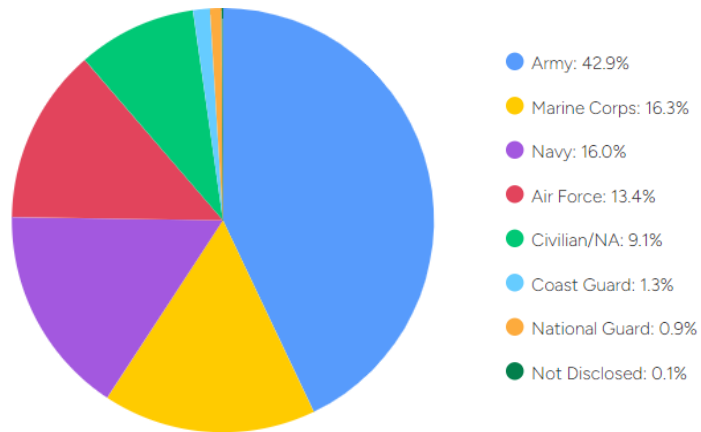


MVJ's total number of members as of year-end is **905**, a growth of **213 (30.7%)** new members this year. That's 13 more members than our 2023 goal.

We expect to see another 22% of membership growth in 2024 - or 200 new members within the calendar year.

A breakdown of MVJ members by military branch:

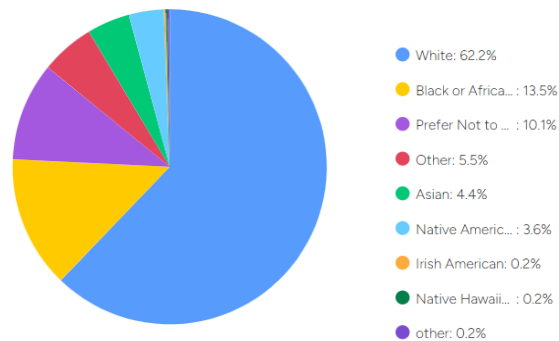
- Army: **42.9%**
- Marine Corps: **16.3%**
- Navy: **16.0%**
- Air Force: **13.4%**
- Coast Guard **1.3%**
- National Guard: **0.9%**



MVJ members average **10.5** years of service. **87.8%** of our members have served and **13.3 %** have served in multiple armed forces. Of the remainder, **1.3%** are military spouses and **7.8%** civilian journalists who support veterans in journalism.

MVJ members identify as follows:

- White **62.2 %**
- Black or African American **13.5%**
- Asian: **4.4%**
- Native American **3.6%**
- Irish American **0.2%**
- Native Hawaiian **0.2%**
- Other: **5.7%**
- Prefer not answer **10.1%**



In addition, **24.1%** of our membership identifies as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin.

Our Team

We could not be successful without the dedication of our team – who are predominantly military veterans, military spouses, and military family members.

MVJ has **ten** Core Team members (listed alphabetically):

- Casandra Burr, Community Engagement Manager
- Clyde Gunter, Team Member / Navy Veteran
- Devon Lancia, Partnerships Director
- Drew F. Lawrence, Sword & Pen Co-Host / Army Veteran
- Lori King, Sword & Pen Co-Host / Army, National Guard & Air National Guard Veteran
- Marcela Loor, Memberships Coordinator
- Noelle Wiehe, Mentorship Manager / Army Veteran
- Rich Dolan, Programs Manager / Army Veteran
- Russell Midori, President / Marine Corps Veteran
- Sara Feges, Operations Manager
- Zack Baddorf, Executive Director / Navy Veteran

MVJ has **five** Board of Directors members, **three** of whom are female and **three** of whom are people of color (listed alphabetically):

- Jen Paquette, Board Member / Military Spouse
- Kyra Davenport, Membership Voice Board Member / Army Veteran
- Priya Sridhar, Board Member / Navy Reservist
- Russell Midori, President / Marine Corps Veteran
- Zack Baddorf, Executive Director / Navy Veteran

Impact

Thanks to generous support from our funders and partners, MVJ offered seven fellowship and internship opportunities in newsrooms across the nation this year, two of which are currently in the selection phase. Participants were selected by an independent committee made up of journalists across the media spectrum. Please see below for an alphabetical-order listing of this year's MVJ fellows and interns.

- Allen Frazier, the Sun Herald
- Caron LeNoir-Kelly, NBC10 & Telemundo62
- Eve Sampson, the Washington Post
- Joshua Carter, the Belleville News-Democrat
- Sonia Clark, the Island Packet & Beaufort Gazette

MVJ has placed an additional veteran into a nine-month long fellowship through our CUNY Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism and INN collaborative program. Upon graduation in December 2023, Navy veteran Chris Janaro will begin his fellowship with New York nonprofit newsroom City Limits.

We have also secured another internship spot for a veteran at the Washington Post for Summer 2024 and teamed up with Gannett to offer two six-month fellowships in early 2024.

In March of this year, we launched a new initiative to counter propaganda and other narratives spread within the military and veteran communities by bad actors. The MVJ Counter-Disinformation Program, supported by the Knight Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and Craig Newmark Philanthropies, is conducted in collaboration with a variety of partners in the disinformation and journalism spaces. We worked with Military Times to create a reporting team on a brand-new extremism and disinformation beat, with accomplished military and veterans reporters Nikki Wentling and Allison Erickson hired to the program. We also built an Advisory Board of 17 experts in this space and created a program marketing team to work alongside our reporters and engage the military and veteran communities online.

As part of the effort, we facilitated a variety of in-person and virtual training sessions on investigative best practices, solutions-based journalism and methods to engage communities away from extremist propaganda. While Nikki and Allison attended all sessions, a total of 34 other members of the MVJ community also participated. Below is a list of our training partners for the Counter-Disinformation Program. We thank each for working with us to provide these valuable learning opportunities.

- PolitiFact
- The Poynter Institute
- Task Force Butler Institute, a counter-extremism nonprofit organization

- Solutions Journalism Network
- Project Over Zero

In May, MVJ partnered with NBCUniversal and the NBC News Group to host an in-person networking event in New York City. This event, hosted in the NBC News Group's headquarters at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, brought together 40 military veterans who are members of MVJ with members of the NBCUniversal team. During the event, attendees had a premiere opportunity to connect with top journalists in the NBC network, hear from newsroom and company leadership, and engage with hiring managers.

This year, we hosted **27** career-enhancing events in collaboration with our partners.

- Webinars:
 - Podcast 101 with PRX
 - Longform Journalism with Ben Kesling
 - Maynard 200 Journalism Fellowship
 - Disability Reporting with Scott Bourque and Shruti Rajkumar
 - Bridging the Military-Civilian Divide in Reporting
 - Telling Stories with Your Photography and Writing
 - Seeking Legal Support as a Journalist
 - Introduction to Allbritton Journalism Institute
 - Learn How to Leverage MVJ Careers in Your Job Search
 - Veterans and Journalism at American University
 - Charting Your Journalism Career with McClatchy
 - Discover CityView Media
 - Connecting with & Reporting on the Next Generation of Service Members
- Workshops:
 - Broadcast Journalism with Carey Harrison
 - Founders Fellowship Workshop
- Talent Scout Sessions:
 - American University
 - Newmark J-School at CUNY
 - Report for America
 - Military.com
 - Sinclair Broadcast Group
 - POLITICO
 - Washington Post
 - Spectrum News
- In-Person Events:
 - From Frontlines to Headlines with NBCUniversal
 - Bloomberg Newsroom Tour
 - Gannett Newsroom Tour

- NBC News Group Newsroom Tour

We continued our Press Pass program all year and issued over 60 new passes. The MVJ Press Passes program is our commitment to recognizing our members as working journalists and facilitating their access to sources in their journalistic endeavors.

We also continued our Ford Disability Inclusion Program. Under the program's journalism grants initiative, we awarded \$3,700 in funding to members of our community to facilitate impactful reporting on disability issues. Below are some samples of the reporting that was produced:

- Jennifer Barnhill, [The Military Is Missing Recruitment Goals. Are Thousands Being Unnecessarily Disqualified?](#)
- Doug Atkins, [Virtual Reality Showing Promise as Medical Treatment for PTSD](#)
- Crystal Kupper, [Is there a link between TBI and veteran suicide?](#)

In 2021, MVJ received a generous five-year grant from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for improvements to our mentorship program. This year, our team has continued to make improvements to the processes we use to pair military veterans with seasoned journalists who will serve as their mentors. We have welcomed a Mentorship Manager to the MVJ team who is responsible for managing our mentorship program in Mentornity, ensuring a positive experience for mentors and mentees, and taking care of participant requests and concerns. At the end of 2023, we have 120 mentors and 180 mentees in the program and 147 active mentorship pairings.

In late 2022, MVJ received a grant from News Corp Giving to support a new initiative: the MVJ Entrepreneurial Journalism Program. We have sent three MVJ members, Siobhan Cunningham, Ethan Rocke and Donna Cole, to the CUNY Newmark J-School's 100-Day Entrepreneurial Journalism Creators Program, where they learned business, market analysis and engagement skills needed to make their news initiatives thrive early on. We have also held five webinars on news entrepreneurship and sustainability, attended by around 30 MVJ members each and taught by Jeremy Caplan, Paul Szoldra, and the aforementioned CUNY students. The final leg of this program, our Entrepreneurial Grants initiative, is ongoing.

In the heart of New York City from October 5 to October 7, the Military Veterans in Journalism 2023 Convention gathered around 150 attendees for a three-day exploration of the future of media. With support from more than 15 sponsors, including major contributors CNN, Spectrum, DAV, and others, the event featured 12 diverse workshops and panels, from API training on mental health in journalism to discussions on disability, documentary and entrepreneurial journalism. A two-day career fair, combining in-person and virtual interactions, provided veterans with valuable opportunities to connect with potential employers. As MVJ reflects on these dynamic days, we remain committed to shaping a media industry where veterans not only find their place but thrive in shaping its narrative.

2024 Goals

MVJ's strategic vision for 2024 encompasses four key pillars: general sustainability, the expansion of our convention and sponsorships, the growth of our counter-disinformation program, and overall organizational development.

General Sustainability. In 2024, MVJ is committed to enhancing general sustainability through:

- Developing and implementing programs and projects that reduce dependency on one revenue channel and diversify our nonprofit revenue streams.
- Strategizing and executing an in-depth public fundraising plan.
- Strengthening MVJ's position as a thought leader on military, veteran, and disabled veteran reporting.

Growing Annual Convention and Sponsorships. In 2024, MVJ aims to elevate our annual convention and increase sponsorships through:

- Attracting a higher number of participants to MVJ2024.
- Expanding the network of sponsors and partners for the convention, perhaps involving some local partners outside of journalism itself.
- Facilitating enhanced networking and learning opportunities during the convention.
- Implementing other strategies to make the convention a significant source of revenue for MVJ.

Growing the MVJ Counter-Disinformation Program. Building on the current successes of the counter-disinformation program, we will expand the program in the coming year by:

- Extending the program's impact to local communities of military families and veterans.
- Collaborating with a broader range of partners to amplify the program's influence.
- Actively contributing to efforts combating disinformation and improving media literacy skills in partnership with other organizations, such as We the Veterans and Military Families.
- Continuously measuring and assessing the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

General Organizational Growth. MVJ's commitment to organizational growth in 2024 includes:

- Refining and expanding existing programs to better serve members.
- Expanding the number of internships and fellowships, aiming to place 4 vets in national newsrooms and 7 in local newsrooms.
- Hosting a minimum of 15 online events throughout the year in collaboration with partners.
- Introducing innovative initiatives to provide members with even more opportunities.
- Fostering a dynamic environment that nurtures the professional development of MVJ members.
- Actively monitoring and assessing the impact of programs on member growth and satisfaction.

- Exploring and implementing strategies to broaden the scope and reach of existing initiatives.