

## 2023 El Paso County Veteran of the Year



Donna Juarez was born in Houston, Texas. She joined the Army in 1985 as an Administrative Personnel Records Specialist. In 1989 Donna transitioned from Active Duty Army to the reserves until 1993 receiving an Honorable Discharge. Donna came to El Paso when her family was assigned station at Fort Bliss, and in 1998 she made El Paso her permanent home.

Donna is currently the Director of Military Veteran Affairs for the STAR Military Veteran Treatment Program at Rio Vista Behavioral Health. She has spent the past 15 years specializing in PTSD, MST, and substance abuse treatment for military service members, veterans, National Guard reserves and their families.

Aside from her work, Donna volunteers her time with 346<sup>th</sup> Veterans Treatment Court, as a mentor coordinator. Her patriotism, love for her country and desire to honor our heroes lead her to volunteer at Old Glory Memorial at Flags Across America where she serves on the board. As a member of the Elks Lodge she serves Veterans by coordinating the veteran life skills and social engagement gatherings. For the last 12 years she has been a vital contributor to Woman's Veterans Days and other military veteran ceremonial events. Donna Spearheaded the 2023 "We Care Project" bringing 25 veteran service organizations and community partners together to provide meals for Independence Day to the National Guard soldiers guarding our Texas border. She was a key participant in the El Paso Veteran, Military Furniture distribution center for veterans going from homelessness to housed and anyone in crisis for no cost. Donna sits on the City's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee and was elected Mental Health Chair.

Of all her accomplishments, she is most proud of raising four healthy, productive children who are all now college graduates. They all carry her legacy contributing to society in inspiring ways. She is grateful to her number one helper in life her husband James Sample. She has seven grandchildren (and one on the way) who are the apple of her eye. Donna has a long history of involvement with the Military and Veteran community. Donna's is proud of her spiritually strong father who served on the USS Lexington, Vietnam Veteran, Donald Sanderson.

