

2017 Annual Report

Winnebago County Veterans Service Office

“Connecting Veterans With Their Benefits”



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Veterans Service Director:

Joseph G. Aulik- Accredited with National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion (AL), Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (WDVA), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

Veterans Deputy Director:

Judy A. Steckbauer- Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, WDVA, MOPH and DAV.

Veterans Benefit Specialist(s):

Jeffery R. Bucholtz-Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, WDVA and DAV.

Karen A. Winkel-Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, WDVA, DAV and TREA.

Lydia M. Wilz-Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, WDVA, MOPH and DAV.

Gregory T. Brittnacher-Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, MOPH and WDVA.

Veterans Service Administrative Assistant:

Susan Giese – Accredited with NACVSO, WDVA, AL, and VFW.

Accreditations:

The Veteran Administration (VA) accreditation is for the sole purpose of providing representation services to claimants. Yearly education requirements are required by our staff in order to maintain accreditation. The accreditation also allow our staff with full access to federal databases and files to further assist our veterans, dependents, and widows.

- Formal Studies prove veterans receive 50% more benefits and larger awards by using professional veterans service representation (i.e., Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services) than if he or she file individually or with a non-professional.



Winnebago County Veteran Service Office Mission Statement:

“We believe in strengthening the lives of our veterans and their families by connecting them with their earned benefits.”

Our Vision:

“Improving the quality of life for Winnebago County Veterans and their dependents through assessing all available benefits that were earned by the sacrifice and service to their country.”

County Veterans Service Office History

The first County Veterans Service Offices were self-appointed concerned veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) who took it upon themselves to aid and assist the veterans, dependents and survivors of their counties.

- The first CVSO, Leo Promen, was appointed in Fond du Lac County in 1932.
- The WI CVSO Association was established in 1935.
- Legislation was passed in 1946 requiring each county to have a CVSO and required each CVSO to have served in a branch of the Armed Forces (State Statute 45.80).
- Legislation was passed in 1973 authorizing a state grant for the CVSO office.



2017 Goals

Goal I: Provide excellent veterans customer service and assistance to maximize Veterans benefits.

The office continues to strive at providing good customer service and flexible meeting schedules to accomplish meeting our veteran's needs. We continue to increase our community visibility and involvement to reach all veterans and dependents using local partnerships, community event attendance, Facebook and monthly newsletter emails. We continue to be a 1-stop shop for veterans' issues and collaborate with other veterans programs such as the Green Bay Vet Center, Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP), Center for Veterans Issues (CVI), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), and the Winnebago County District Attorney's Diversion Program.

Goal II: Provide outreach to veterans and dependents through public meetings, special events and home visits to increase benefit utilization.

The office held a booth at the Winnebago County Fair in partnership with local Veteran Service Organizations. The office participated in many different events this year to include Valley VNA Outreach Event, American Legion State Conference, Mental Health Summit, Housing Coalition, and Community of Hope. The office directed monthly Winnebago County Council of Commanders meetings. The monthly meeting receives positive feedback and attendance. A monthly newsletter was published providing veterans with benefit updates as well as instituting a monthly radio program on WOSH. The office continues to submit Veteran related events and information to the Winnebago County Veteran Service Office website and Facebook page.

Goal III: Continue veterans transportation assistance to Veteran Affairs Medical Facilities

The office in collaboration with local Salvation Army have assisted in providing 5,880 miles including 140 rides for veterans to receive Health Care at the Appleton VA Clinic during this reporting period. The office also recruited fellow veterans to be volunteer drivers to meet the unique needs of transporting Veterans to Health Care appointments at the Green Bay and Milwaukee VA Hospitals respectively.

Goal IV: Develop veteran benefit and outreach services to Veterans in the Winnebago County Corrections System.

The office receives email update every Monday morning from Winnebago County Corrections Staff on new self-identified Veteran admissions. Each veteran is sent a personalized letter from the CVSO exploring benefits. The CVSO attended corrections outreach events to further educate veterans of their potential benefits.

Why we do what we do: Pure numbers cannot quantify the value of what Winnebago County Veterans Service Office does, although we do bring a great deal of additional federal funding to the county every year. There is a real, human value to the service we provide, which is seen and felt by the Winnebago County veterans and families we help. Following are some of their stories.

Reaching out to our Veterans

Reviewing a veteran's claims file, it appeared veteran was denied service-connection for lymphocytic Leukemia which is an Agent Orange Presumptive condition. Our office reached out the veteran to discuss the VA's decision letter, but more importantly encourage the veteran to re-open the claim. The veteran was hesitant to re-open the claim due to the way he was treated at the previous Compensation & Pension (C&P) exam. Our office reassured the veteran that the VA was primarily looking for a missing treatment record that showed the diagnosis of Lymphocytic Leukemia. The veteran agreed to come in to submit necessary private treatment records. The VA's decision was later overturned and the veteran was retroactively awarded 37,245.00. The veteran now receives 3,139.00 a month with other ancillary benefits for himself and his spouse.

Disabled Veterans Free State Park Pass

Veteran and spouse came into office to check eligibility for the State Parks Pass. As this was his first time in the office, he had never pursued any service connected disabilities or was aware what other VA/WDVA benefits might be available. Therefore he did not have the required 70% service connected disability rating which is required for the pass. The only other criteria for eligibility is being a POW during a war period or while serving in a crisis zone. We discovered at this point that he had been a POW during WWII and therefore was eligible for the pass. We started the discussion regarding any physical or mental health issues that he had from service. We discovered that he had several disabilities associated with being a POW and we applied for service connected disability. He was adjudicated 100% service connected disabled. That rating brings many ancillary benefits such as Property Tax Credit, ChampVA for spouse, dental, etc., as well as the monthly compensation of over \$3,000 per month. If this veteran had not come into the office to check his eligibility for the parks pass, none of this would have happened.

True Customer Service

Our office had been working off and on for the last several years with a female Iraq War veteran. We had established a good rapport and she felt comfortable enough coming into see us when her world seems to be spiraling out of control. She had lost her job due to her physical problems. With the loss of income, she had fallen behind multiple payments on her car and it was in danger of being repossessed. She was also behind on utilities and her power was about to be shut off. There were numerous other problems and concerns that had completely overwhelmed her and I truly believed she was going to take her own life. She had become so depressed, she was unable to function. With intensive case management and the help of numerous agencies, we were able to completely eliminate her financial concerns. He got her service connected disability at the 100% rate. We were able to get her the help she needed for her physical ailments and most importantly, get her mental health concerns addressed. Her life has completely changed for the better in the last 6 months and her outlook on life has drastically improved. I truly believe that our office prevented another veteran from becoming a suicide statistic.

Our Impact:

Winnebago County veterans and their dependents have received a total disbursement of combined Federal VA benefits of \$64.8 million for 2017, this is an increase of \$2.2 million from 2016. Compensation and Pension was increased over \$775 thousand from 2016 to 2017 for a total over \$34.4 million.

Furthermore, our office tracked over \$2.5 million in retroactive non-taxable cash payouts to veterans and their dependents with \$20 million dollars’ of projected monetary monthly benefits. Veterans and their dependents use these non-taxable payouts to pay taxes and purchase goods and services within Winnebago County.

CVSO Measure of Efficiency in Delivering Federal DVA Benefits		
Winnebago County Total CVSO Budget Investment	Total VA Expenditures in County	Return on Investment
\$513,708 (.3% of Total County Expenditures)	\$64,859,000	12,525%

Note: The CVSO office budget investment consists of .3 percent of the total Winnebago County expenditures for 2017.



STATE BENEFITS WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The office assists veterans and dependents in applying for Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs provides benefits. Application for various benefits are received, adjudicated and awarded or denied based on eligibility requirements.

<u>Type of Benefit</u>	<u>Applied</u>	<u>Amount</u>
▪ Aid to Needy Veterans Grant	16	\$26,423.00
▪ WI Property Tax Credit	297	<u>\$904,025.00</u>
Total		\$930,448.00

In 2017 our office received a \$13,000 CVS0 Grant from the WDVA. This money was used to enhance services to our veterans.

In 2017 the office received donations of \$4,531.34 from Organizations and individuals to assist with the needs of our office and Winnebago County veteran's.

FEDERAL BENEFITS US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

<u>Type of Benefit</u>	<u>Amount</u>
▪ Compensation & Pension	\$33,463,000
▪ Readjustment & Vocational Rehabilitation	\$3,893,000
▪ Insurance & Indemnities	\$752,000
▪ Grave Markers & Flags	\$50,000
▪ VA Health Care	\$25,751,000
▪ Federal VA Home Loans	<u>\$48,818,447</u>
Total	\$112,727,447



The University of Wisconsin-Madison office performed an analysis of the economic impact Veterans Administration expenditures had on the economy of Winnebago County for 2017. UW-Madison used the following economic metrics (e.g., jobs, labor income, etc.) and nature of the multipliers (direct, indirect, induced and total) to determine totals. The impacts are summarized as follows:

Winnebago County VA 2017 Impact

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Total Income	Industry Sales
Direct Effect	165	\$18,318,800	\$18,428,400	\$26,521,900
Indirect Effect	36	\$1,874,700	\$3,251,900	\$5,454,600
Induced Effect	<u>300</u>	<u>\$11,131,900</u>	<u>\$21,021,200</u>	<u>\$36,255,500</u>
Total Effect	501	\$31,325,500	\$42,701,500	\$68,232,000

State & Local Government Revenues: \$3,396,800

- Employment: Jobs, *not* full-time equivalent
- Labor Income: Wages, salaries, proprietor income
- Total Income: Labor income plus all other sources of income (e.g., social security, pensions, etc)
- Industry Sales: Industry revenues
- Direct effect: VA spending
- Indirect effect: Multiplier effect from business to business expenditures
- Induced effect: People (labor) spending income.
- Total effect: Direct plus Indirect plus Induced

Feedback from those we have Served

“This is a long overdue thank you for taking care of Jim’s gravestone. The replacement was put in just before Memorial Day, which was great! Thank you for caring and going that extra mile. I am so grateful” -Tina

“I would like to thank you again for your help and kindness that you have given me. I am so very glad that there are people like yourself that help veterans receive the help they need.”

“I wish to thank you for all of your help through the years. Your experience and dedication shows through your work every day & we appreciate your kindness.” -Steve & Renee

“Those who give of their time are truly generous. Just saying “thank you” doesn’t seem enough. I hope you know how appreciated you really are.” -Patrick

“Just a note to say thank you for all the kindness you have shown Dave and me in this application process. The Veterans Office is very fortunate to have you on their team. You obviously enjoy helping others and we appreciate your help very much” -Lisa

“Your dedication to help our “finest” men and women with guidance and “going the distance” provides us with deep appreciation and honor aimed at you. We will be forever grateful to you, your boss, the encouragement and support thru this journey.” -Jim & Kathy
