



# Biennial Report 2011-2013

**Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs**

**John A. Scocos**  
*Secretary of the  
Wisconsin Department of  
Veterans Affairs*



October 15, 2013

Scott Walker, Governor  
State of Wisconsin  
115 E State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Governor Walker:

I am pleased to report to you the many accomplishments of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs over the 2011-2013 biennium. The WDVA has many accomplishments for which to be proud that truly make a difference in the lives of veterans.

The WDVA is proud of improvements made at the three veterans homes we operate, serving nearly 1,000 veterans and their spouses. In addition to our homes at King and Union Grove, earlier this year we opened a new home at Chippewa Falls to serve families up north. Our veterans homes are consistently occupied near capacity and all of our facilities have been rated at four stars (on a five star scale) with two even attaining a five star rating in terms of overall quality.

Over the biennium, we have increased our outreach efforts. We successfully launched the Veterans Benefits and Resource Center, making sure every veteran who needs information about their benefits, our services or our programs, has someone who they can speak with directly. The outreach team has organized dozens of career and benefit fairs, as well as symposiums for employers to learn the benefits of hiring veterans.

Our claims office and others continue to make sure veterans have access to critical benefits and services. Our cemeteries continue to provide a great service for veterans and their families. We operate the fifth busiest cemetery in the country and are proud to provide military funeral honors for our nation's heroes. The attendance at our Wisconsin Veterans Museum has grown and plans for expansion are moving forward.

As we look forward to the new biennium, we are planning to further improve upon the programs, benefits and services we provide to Wisconsin veterans. Wisconsin has a long, proud history of serving those who have sacrificed and served our country. I am proud to serve the many military veterans who have served us all, and I look forward to continuing the Wisconsin standard of being the best state in the nation for veterans.

Thank you,  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Scocos". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

JOHN A. SCOCOS  
Secretary

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*Honoring*  
**All Who Served**

# OVERVIEW



Wisconsin has earned a distinguished reputation nationally for instituting programs and services that meet the needs of its residents who served in the U.S. armed forces and their families. The state's proud tradition of providing began soon after the Civil War to alleviate the suffering of destitute veterans and their families.

In 1887, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a prominent organization representing Civil War veterans, founded the Grand Army Home at King. This facility near Waupaca was eventually turned over to the State of Wisconsin and became the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. In August 2001, the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove opened and in June 2011, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs broke ground for a new Veterans Home in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Each of the veterans homes offers high quality skilled nursing care and retirement options for veterans and their spouses.

In 1901, the state honored Civil War veterans by establishing a GAR headquarters and museum in the State Capitol. In 1989, the Legislature authorized the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs to build a new museum, honoring veterans from all wars, across the street from the Capitol. The award-winning Wisconsin Veterans Museum opened in 1993.

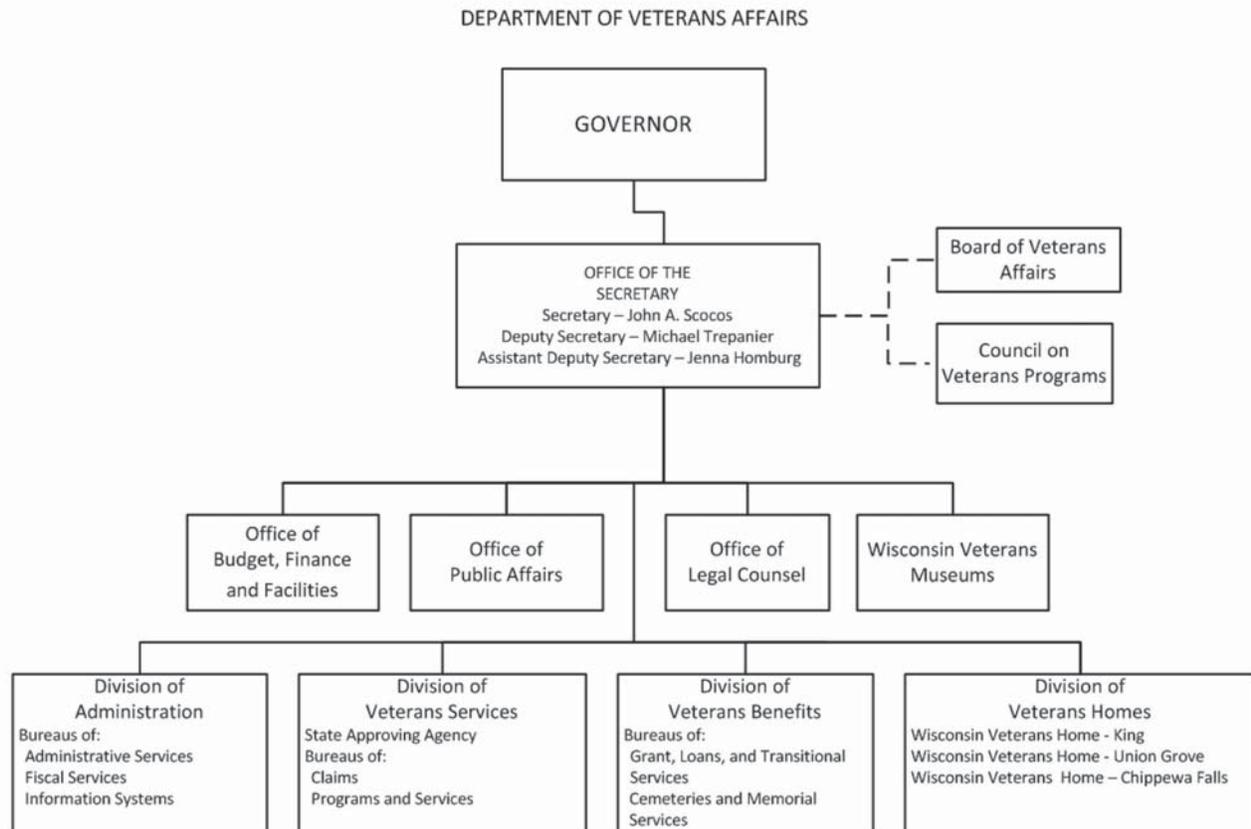
In 1919, the state issued its only wartime bonus to Wisconsin veterans of World War I. In 1945, rather than issue a wartime bonus with little lasting value, the Legislature created programs that offered long-term benefits for state veterans and their families.

To administer state veterans programs, the Legislature created the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) in 1945. The department was given the administrative responsibility for the Grand Army Home at King, the GAR Memorial Hall in the Capitol, the state's economic and education assistance benefits for veterans, and other programs. It also assumed responsibility for segregated funds for veterans that were combined in 1961 to form the Veterans Trust Fund.

Today, WDVA provides an array of benefits and services to eligible state veterans and in some instances, veterans' family members. To deliver these benefits and services, WDVA works closely with county veterans service officers (CVSOs), Tribal veterans service officers (TVSOs), state veterans service organizations (VSOs), the University of Wisconsin System, Wisconsin Technical College System, Office of the State Public Defender (OPD), Wisconsin Department of Revenue, and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

# WDVA ORGANIZATION

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The department was created by Chapter 580, Laws of 1945, to ensure that the state's veterans receive the state benefits to which they are entitled and to assist them in securing their federal veterans benefits. The department is headed by a Secretary appointed by the Governor.

Programs included in the department's mission are the: Wisconsin Veterans Homes, Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries, Veterans Administration Regional Claims Office, Military Funeral Honors Program, Veterans Assistance Program and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. For the most part, these programs are designed to provide health, educational assistance, economic assistance and other services to specified veterans of the armed forces of the United States.

## MISSION

The mission of the department is to work on behalf of Wisconsin's veterans community—veterans, their families and their survivors—in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation.

# OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The Office of the Secretary drives the department's overall strategy and long-range planning initiatives and oversees the operations of the WDVA.

The Office of the Secretary includes:

### **Secretary**

The Secretary works closely with the Governor's office, other heads of Wisconsin State agencies, the regional directors of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and state and federal legislators to ensure the department's overall mission and goals provide value to the veterans living in the State of Wisconsin. The Secretary oversees the operation of three veterans homes that provide long term care, three veterans cemeteries, a claims assistance center, and many other programs and services for our state's veterans.

### **Deputy Secretary**

The Deputy Secretary serves as a surrogate for the Secretary and is responsible for the day-to-day internal operations of the department, including the department's budget, resolution of all critical issues and oversight of major contracts.

### **Assistant Deputy Secretary**

The Assistant Deputy Secretary serves the Secretary and is the primary contact for inter-governmental agency functions. The Assistant Deputy Secretary also serves as the agency legislative liaison.

### **Office of Budget, Finance and Facilities**

The Office of Budget, Finance and Facilities (OBFF) consists of two Bureaus; the Bureau of Policy, Planning and Budget (BPPB) and the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS). BPPB develops, monitors and manages the department's annual and biennial capital budgets; provides policy and statistical analysis of department programs; coordinates risk assessment, internal control development and internal audit services; and maintains effective working relationships with the State Budget Office, Legislative Fiscal Bureau and United States Department of Veterans Affairs officials. OPPB also coordinates collection and analysis of

demographic data concerning Wisconsin veterans; department-wide planning and development of internal policies, administrative procedures and business improvement projects; and implementation of strategic planning. BFS is responsible for all financial operations in the department. BFS manages the accounts receivable and payable functions; maintains all contracts, purchase orders and purchase cards; administers loan accounting and servicing; and oversees strict adherence to internal controls.

### **Office of Legal Counsel**

The Office of Legal Counsel provides legal advice to the department's program managers and staff; supervises internal litigation matters (program/service denial appeals); supervises external litigation matters on behalf of the agency (bankruptcy filings, personnel appeals, and others); and coordinates external litigation handled on behalf of WDVA by the Department of Justice. The office also coordinates WDVA's rulemaking activities.

### **Office of Public Affairs**

The office of Public Affairs is responsible for overseeing and managing the WDVA public information activities and media relations. It is responsible for developing and implementing communications and public relations strategies with regard to priorities of the agency.

The Office is also responsible for planning statewide public events such as press conferences, listening sessions, town hall meetings and special ceremonies for veterans holidays such as Veterans Day, Memorial Day and many others.

### **Wisconsin Veterans Museum**

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum (WVM) employs exhibits, displays and presentations to tell the stories of men and women from Wisconsin who served in America's conflicts from the Civil War to today's Global War on Terrorism. The WVM, accredited by the American Association of Museums, contains 10,000 square feet of displays at the Capitol Square location and has a permanent exhibit located in the Marden Center at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.

# WDVA ORGANIZATION

## STAKEHOLDERS

### ***BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS***

Per 2011 Wisconsin Act 36, the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs is a nine-member, part-time, citizen board that provides advice to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

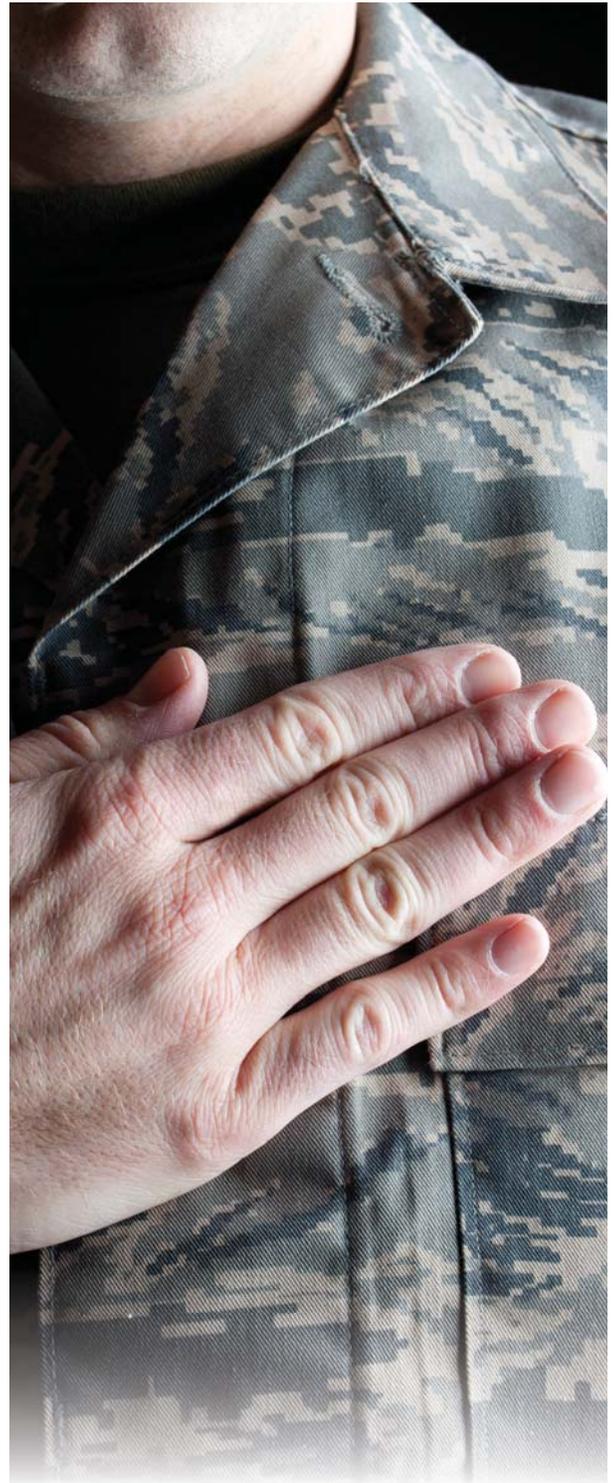
Board members are required to be veterans who meet the requirements of §45.01 (12), Wis. Stats., and for each of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts, there must be at least one member of the Board who is a resident of that district. Board members are appointed by the Governor for four-year terms with the advice and consent of the Wisconsin State Senate. Board members' four-year terms are staggered, helping to ensure continuity, and expire on May 1st in odd-numbered years. Each Board member is required by law to take and file an official oath prior to assuming office.

Current members of the Board include:

- Larry Kutschma of Lake Geneva, 1st District
- John M. Gaedke of Merrimac, 2nd District
- Daniel Bohlin of Stitzer, 3rd District
- Carl Krueger of Cudahy, 4th District
- Kevin Nicholson of Wauwatosa, 5th District
- John Townsend of Fond du Lac, 6th District
- Cathy Gorst of Marshfield, 7th District
- Vacant, 8th District
- Alan Richards of Grafton, At-large

### ***COUNCIL ON VETERANS PROGRAMS***

The Council on Veterans Programs is composed of representatives from twenty-six groups that affiliate with veterans' issues. It was created under § 15.497(2), Wis. Stats. § 45.03(3), Wis. Stats. specifies that the Council on Veterans Programs shall advise the Board of Veterans Affairs and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs on solutions and policy alternatives relating to the problems of veterans.



# RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS

## Year of the Veteran



Governor Scott Walker proclaimed 2012 the Year of the Veteran and launched an initiative to honor the deeds of Wisconsin's veterans and provide them with the tools they need to reintegrate into civilian society such as education, health care and employment assistance. The Office of Public Affairs was responsible for the initiative's development and implementation.

The Year of the Veteran consisted of: an employment initiative, special ceremonies to honor and educate the men and women and their families who put service before self, a series of listening sessions on reintegration and other issues for veterans, and a targeted legislative agenda to assist veterans and their families.

## Successful Biennial Budget

Among many other successes, the 2011-13 budget provided \$5 million general fund tax dollars to the Veterans Trust Fund. This is the largest injection of general fund dollars to the fund since 1972. The Wisconsin GI Bill, a landmark piece of legislation for veterans, was effectively eliminated in the prior biennium. In this biennium, the Wisconsin GI Bill was fully restored, expanded and clarified to include distance learning and online courses.



## Breaking Down Barriers for Veterans Seeking Employment

One way to assist veterans obtain jobs immediately after transitioning from active duty is to waive fees they have to pay upfront to apply for certain professional licenses. 2011 Wisconsin Act 209, signed into law on April 4, 2012 and effective July 1, 2012, created a program which requires the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to establish and maintain a program under which 13 State Agencies grant fee waivers to qualified veterans when issuing initial licenses. Veterans often have a difficult time converting their military training and experience into civilian training and jobs. As a result, they often can't find jobs for which they are qualified, and when they pursue educational opportunities, they have to repeat training that is equivalent to their military training. 2011 Wisconsin Act 120 addressed this by applying a service member's military training toward satisfying the training requirements for various professional or occupational licenses.



## Operation: Greatest Generation

In May 2012, the WDVA hosted Operation Greatest Generation, a historic, largest of its kind event in Wisconsin, bringing together about 1,200 veterans, including 350 World War II veterans, as well as their families and friends. Operation Greatest Generation was a daylong celebration held in Green Bay that included a recognition ceremony as well as World War

# RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS

It themed programs and events such as a performance by the 132nd Army Band from Madison, living history demonstrations, World War II re-enactors, train rides and guided tours provided by the National Railroad Museum, a display of World War II vehicles and other World War II-themed programming. There are about 30,000 World War II veterans living in Wisconsin.



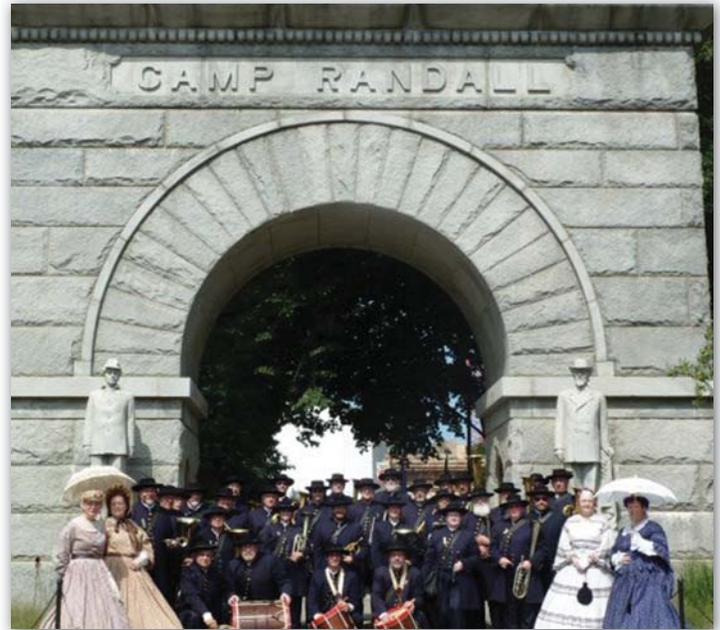
Secretary Scocos is joined by Hugh Ambrose, author of "The Pacific," Lieutenant Colonel James Megellas, the most-decorated officer in the history of the 82nd Airborne Division, and World War II veterans from around Wisconsin at Operation Greatest Generation.

## Camp Randall Arch Rededication

To celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the dedication of the Camp Randall Arch and Memorial Park, the WDVA hosted an Arch Rededication event in June 2012. Members of the Grand Army of the Republic Post 8, a recreated G.A.R. post, attended the event and members of the 1st Brigade Band performed at the ceremony.

Camp Randall was the initial training site for over 70,000 Wisconsin troops during the Civil War and also served as the stockade and hospital for 1,400 Confederate soldiers. It is a visible reminder of the sacrifices of 91,000 Wisconsin soldiers who served

during the Civil War. Over 12,000 Wisconsin soldiers gave their lives in the defense of the nation.



Camp Randall Arch rededication.

## Medal of Honor Monument Unveiling



Medal of Honor monument unveiled.

The WDVA unveiled a new monument dedicated to Wisconsin's Medal of Honor recipients at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King in November 2012.

# RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS

The monument was constructed in recognition of the sixty-two Wisconsin servicemen who went above and beyond the call of duty and have received the Medal of Honor.

Medal of Honor recipient Gary G. Wetzel served as keynote speaker. In addition, Packers alumni Bill Ferrario, Johnnie Gray and Bill Schroeder presented the department with a big donation to help pay for the monument.

In 1861, Congress established the Medal of Honor as the highest military award for bravery and supreme valor that may be conferred upon a member of the Armed Forces of the United States.

## Dedication of Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls

The WDVA was pleased to open its third veterans home in the state, the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls, which joins the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King and at Union Grove in providing care to Wisconsin's veterans and their families.

A dedication ceremony at the home in January 2013 included special guests Governor Scott Walker and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs John Garcia. Also during the ceremony, the main building at the home was dedicated the David A. Zien Hall. Former State Senator Dave Zien, a decorated Vietnam veteran, was an especially important advocate for the creation of a veterans home at Chippewa Falls, proposing and pushing through the legislation that paved the way for the facility.

## 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War

In March 2013, WDVA Secretary John Scocos, along with Governor Scott Walker, kicked off the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War at a ceremony with Vietnam veterans at the Capitol.

More than 165,000 Wisconsinites served in Vietnam, with 1,239 paying the ultimate sacrifice. With about 135,000, Vietnam veterans are the largest group of living veterans in Wisconsin.

President Barack Obama has proclaimed May 28, 2012 through November 11, 2025 as the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. The President is calling all to honor Vietnam veterans, the fallen, the wounded, those unaccounted for, former prisoners of war, their families and all who served.

The WDVA has joined the Vietnam War Commemoration as a commemorative chair. The Commemorative Partner Program is designed for federal, state, and local communities, as well as veterans' organizations and nongovernmental organizations to assist in thanking and honoring our nation's Vietnam veterans with dignified, memorable events to pay tribute to all veterans.



Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans with the 50th Anniversary Commemoration flag in the Governor's conference room at the State Capitol.

# RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WISCONSIN VETERANS

## Gates Hall Rededication

Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and WDVA Secretary John Scocos hosted a ceremony rededicating Gates Hall as a new skilled nursing home for veterans and their spouses at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove in June 2013.

In 2004, Gates Hall opened as a 42-bed Residential Care Apartment Complex for elderly veterans and their spouses. In 2012, Gates Hall was closed and remodeled as a 38-bed skilled nursing facility to meet the changing needs of Wisconsin's aging veterans demographic. Today, the facility operates at full capacity.



Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch and Secretary John Scocos join former WDVA Board Chairman Walter Stenovich (center) as he cuts the ribbon at the rededication of Gates Hall.

## Establishment of WDVA Employee Creed

On May 30, 2013, the WDVA Employee Creed was introduced to all employees in order to have a daily visual reminder to staff of what is expected of them when they work for America's heroes and their families.

### Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Creed

I am a professional and my mission is to work on behalf of Wisconsin's veterans community – veterans, their families and their survivors – in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation.

In accomplishing my mission efficiently and effectively, I always place the veteran first. In doing so, I recognize I hold my position as a public trust and exercise the high moral and ethical standards that are essential to the conduct of free government. This requires I adhere to the standards of my profession, follow the rules of my workplace, and maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect between supervisors, peers and subordinates.

In teaming up with my co-workers and stakeholders, I strive to provide the nation's best solutions to serving those who have served and sacrificed with excellent benefits, programs and services. I do all of this with compassionate and competent care in order to form a more perfect government, insure domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare.



## Reorganization and Creation of Office of Budget, Finance and Facilities

On February 25, 2013 the Office of Program, Policy and Budget was changed to a Bureau and combined with the Bureau of Fiscal Services (formerly part of the Division of Administration) to create the Office of Budget, Finance and Facilities. This administrative change makes sure all decisions having a budget or fiscal impact are managed in a uniform matter.

# MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2013-2015

- Find more ways to keep the department solvent, including infusions into the Veterans Trust Fund.
- Provide new ways to continue to make it easier for transitioning veterans to achieve employment immediately after discharging from service.
- Continue to produce programs, benefits and services that will assist veterans in achieving employment – especially disabled and female veterans.
- Explore more ways to increase outreach.
- Pave the way toward building a new state-of-the-art 200 bed skilled nursing facility at the Veterans Home at King.
- Establish long-term plan for the future of veterans homes throughout the state.
- Expand the Wisconsin GI Bill to include veterans that are eligible if they resided in the state of Wisconsin five consecutive years immediately preceding the date of application.
- Commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Korea War Armistice through an event called Korea Remembered: 1950-53, Celebration of Wisconsin's Korean War Veterans.
- Continue to host events that commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.
- Provide additional staffing for the Wisconsin Veterans Homes to adjust to the changing demographics which include higher ages with needs for more medical attention.
- Increase the financial position of the Wisconsin Veterans Homes.
- Decrease overall overtime and agency staffing levels at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes.
- Reorganize future of Veterans Assistance Program to better position the agency to assist homeless veterans.
- Ensure the Joint Preservation Storage Facility (joint project with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Wisconsin State Historical Society and the Department of Administration), which was initially approved in the capital budget via 2005 Wisconsin Act 25, opens as planned in mid- to late 2015.
- Continue to provide support necessary to facilitate the successful opening of the Joint Wisconsin History Museum (joint project with Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Wisconsin State Historical Society and the Department of Administration).
- Initiate six sigma lean government initiatives throughout the department.



# DIVISION SUMMARIES

## **Division of Administration**

The Division of Administration provides management and program support to the entire Department's operating units. Division services include human resources, risk management, payroll and benefits, employment relations, records management, open records administration, Central Office facilities management, building and safety, fleet management, Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) and information technology.

## **Division of Veterans Benefits**

The Division of Veterans Benefits administers an array of grants, benefits, programs, and services to all eligible state veterans, their families, and to many organizations that serve veterans. These benefits, programs, and services assist Wisconsin veterans by providing education assistance to expand employment opportunities, transportation to federal USDVA medical appointments, access to health care services not provided by the USDVA, tools for overcoming homelessness, and subsistence assistance in emergency situations. The division also maintains responsibility for two of the agency's cemeteries, located at Spooner and Union Grove, as well as the Military Funeral Honors Program.

## **Division of Veterans Homes**

The Division of Veterans Homes provides long-term care services to veterans and their eligible spouses and dependents at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes located in King and Union Grove, and Chippewa Falls (opened in February 2013), Wisconsin. The Veterans Home at King provides skilled nursing services for up to 721 veterans and maintains responsibility for one of the agency's cemeteries. The Veterans Home at Union Grove provides skilled nursing services for up to 158 veterans and is licensed to serve up to 40 veterans at the assisted living level of care. The Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls provides skilled nursing services for up to 72 veterans. The Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls is unique from the other homes in that the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs has contracted out the operations of the facility to a private healthcare provider.

## **Division of Veterans Services**

The Division of Veterans Services provides programs and services, as well as benefit and employment information to Wisconsin veterans and their families. These programs and services assist Wisconsin veterans by enhancing their education, training, and employment opportunities. In addition, the division provides increased access to other state benefits and federal programs such as VA compensation, pension, medical care and death benefits and also certifies veteran status for other state agencies that provides benefits for veterans.

# DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

## Division Description

The Division of Administration is a service division consisting of 35 staff whose responsibility is to provide a wide variety of customer-focused, central support services to the Office of the Secretary, DVA programs, staff and partner agencies. The Division is organized into the Bureaus of Administrative Services and Information Services.

### Services provided by the division include:

- Human resource management
- Payroll and benefits management
- Health, safety and risk management services
- Records management
- Open records administration
- Mail, fleet and asset management
- Facilities management for Central Office
- Information technology, imaging and telecommunication services
- Central coordination of the department's administrative process and policies
- Continuity of operations planning

## Bureau of Administrative Services

The mission of the Bureau of Administrative Services is to ensure the recruitment and retention of the best possible staff to provide benefits and services to Wisconsin veterans. The bureau ensures that the department establishes and administers human resources and payroll policies in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations to maintain a productive workforce.

### Accomplishments 2011-2013

- Created an Automated Performance Review System for employees and managers.
- Provided guidance and implemented PTA web for the recording of work hours for all staff other than those on a 24/7 basis.
- Provided guidance and insured compliance directing all employees to receive their pay check by Direct Deposit.
- Implemented new agency guidance for the monitoring of FMLA, Fitness for Duty and Leave Without Pay (LWOP) of employees.
- Streamlined the recruiting and hiring processes at Central Office and the Veteran Homes.
- Provided guidance and instituted recruiting plans to fill employee vacancies at the Veterans Homes at Union Grove and King.
- Created various communication tools for employees; catch a coworker doing something right, suggestion boxes at the Veterans Homes, and an employee question mailbox to facilitate timely HR responses to employee questions.
- Provided justification and forwarded a request which resulted in Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) approval for pay increases for the Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and cemetery care workers.
- Conducted a reorganization of the HR and payroll staff at the Veterans Homes resulting in centralized management structure.

# DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

- Assisted with all personnel, logistics and IT actions in regard to the move of the Central Office to a new location and building.
- Developed a 5-year vehicle replacement program for Central Office and the Veterans Homes.
- Instituted a program at Central Office to centrally manage all office supplies, copy and printing items.
- Revised the "Employee Achievement Awards" to include creating the "Years of Service Awards" at Central Office.
- Updated and improved management of the department's open records request program.
- Reviewed and changed the mail program at Central Office.
- Revised and published updated/new policies within the agency; such as vacation, attendance, scheduling, conceal carry, communications, and non-competitive appointment process for disabled veterans and many more.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Develop and implement a yearly "supervisor training program" within the agency.
- Complete the Lean Government Project regarding the "Employee Orientation Programs" at Central Office and the Veteran Homes.
- Reorganize duties and responsibilities for HR and payroll staff at Central Office and both Veterans Homes.
- Initiate new Lean Government Projects for the forms and policies that currently exist in the agency.
- Provide increased training, guidance and assistance to the HR and payroll staff located at Central Office and the Veterans Homes.
- Increase efficiencies within Central Office HR; organize offices, train and mentor staff, timely completion of grievances and other HR actions.
- Develop an effective risk management/safety program within the agency in order to help reduce injuries and future worker compensation claims.
- Provide appropriate training, guidance and assistance pertaining to record management and records retention for supervisors and employees within the agency.
- Coordinate actions with OSER to authorize this agency to conduct its own HR staffing processes.
- Review department employee classifications and duties in order to provide justification for future actions relating to reclassifications and justifications for salary increases.
- Develop and implement a HR centralized electronic system in order to maintain and manage all department position descriptions.
- Coordinate and assist with construction of new offices and conference rooms, to include security upgrades on WDVA floors within the building.

## **Bureau of Information Systems**

The mission of the Bureau of Information Systems (BOIS) is to provide information technology resources in support of the department's strategic and operational strategies. This IT support includes customer support (Help Desk, web page administration of the internet and intranet, IT training, computer operations and design and maintenance), technical support (network and desktop) and application development support. BOIS provides IT support for network hardware and software, desktop/laptop hardware and software, security, telecommunication equipment and software support. BOIS creates and maintains automated systems or processes the agency uses to support its business programs and to provide service to its customers which, in addition to department staff, includes veterans and their families, County Veteran and Tribal Veteran Service Offices and Veteran Service Organizations.

# DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

## *Accomplishments 2011-2013*

- Automated Military Funeral Honors Scheduling Program.
- Developed cemetery plot mapping, tracking and scheduling of interments for Northern Veterans Cemetery.
- Assisted with PTA web migration for central office staff, Home staff with data exchange and integration.
- Analyzed costs and determined it was not cost effective to move to DOA Server.
- Conducted and executed IT planning, movement of servers, implementation to new building and location for Central office.
- Implemented IT infrastructure at new Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls; fiber optic network backbone, category 6 cabling for data and phones, wireless access points, and two servers.
- Established individual email accounts for all agency employees.
- Implemented public wireless internet access for members at King Veterans Home.
- Purchased and installed disclaimer software for all outgoing emails by employees
- Enhanced access to Veterans Benefits and Application Tracking System (VBATS) for the County Veteran Service Offices and veterans.
- Implemented as part of the Veterans Benefit Resource Center (VBRC) services via phone, chat (WDVA's website) and email communications.
- Assisted with the IT connectivity for the program upgrade to the Veterans and Surviving Spouse Property Tax Credit.
- Assisted with the connectivity and created a streamline process for veterans to be verified by the DNR in order to receive free recreational licenses.
- Created access for all verifying officials to access WDVA system to verify eligibility for the WI G.I. Bill.
- Reviewed and made changes to the usage of cell phones and land line usage within the agency.
- Developed and implemented an IT replacement schedule for equipment replacement within the agency.
- Implemented changes and updates to the agency web page and intranet systems.
- Implemented a system to allow completion of on-line performance reviews.
- Implemented changes to convert on-line Wisconsin Accounting and Reporting System (WARS) system to the Management Financial Information Tool (MFIT).
- Implemented imaging capabilities for the Milwaukee Claims Office and Veterans Homes Finance and Admissions; Veterans Information Management System (VIMS).

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Creation of an electronic eligibility policy for record keeping.
- Creation of an on-line training application.
- Creation of an on-line system for managers to obtain supplies/equipment before purchasing outside the agency (Pre-swap).
- Creation of various labor distribution reports for the Human Resource and Payroll staff.
- Implementation of SharePoint for the agency.
- Computer upgrades at Central Office to reach 5-year equipment replacement goal.
- Implementation of a 3-year computer upgrade program for the agency.
- Implementation of Microsoft 2010 at Central Office.
- Creating document management programs for the Admissions area at the Veterans Homes.
- Updating and maintenance of programs on the W drive at Central Office.

# DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION

- Installation of Booster at the King Veterans Home.
- Working with other agencies to implement new scheduling soft system at the Veterans Homes for 24/7 staff; replace agency scheduling.
- Update IT policies within the agency.
- Conversion from Content Manager to Smart Search.
- Implementation of Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) via Defense Personnel Records Information System (DPRIS) with federal agencies.
- Reduction of base files in support of records retention.
- Implementation of an on-line fax program for the Veterans Homes
- Implementation of a system working with the payroll section for an automatic identification and pay of night differentials for nursing staff.
- Implementation of the department's internet and intranet redesign.
- Implementation of the cemetery on-line interment scheduling board at the Southern Veterans Cemetery.
- Implementation of the veterans driver license project with DOT.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

## Division Description

The Division of Veterans Benefits administers an array of grants, benefits, programs, and services to all eligible state veterans, their families, and to many organizations serving veterans.

## Division Mission

Provide timely health, education, and economic assistance to eligible Wisconsin veterans and their families; provide top quality interments and military funeral honors for deceased veterans and their families.

### *Programs and Services*

- Grants for education and job training
- Grants for health care and basic subsistence
- Grants to County and Tribal Veterans Service Offices
- Grants to veterans service organizations who provide claims assistance and transportation services
- Interments for veterans and eligible family members at state veterans cemeteries, together with Military Funeral Honors
- Transitional housing assistance, job training, and counseling for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Continued administration and support of existing home mortgage loans, home improvement loans, and personal loans



# DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

The Division is divided into two bureaus: the Bureau of Grants, Loans, and Transitional Services and the Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services. Both bureaus work closely with County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs), Tribal Veterans Service Offices (TVSOs), and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs).

## **Bureau of Grants, Loans, and Transitional Services**

The Bureau of Grants, Loans, and Transitional Services offers an array of benefits to qualified Wisconsin veterans statewide. The bureau consists of the Property Management and Loans Section, the Grants Section, and the Veterans Assistance Program. The Property Management and Loans Section administers Primary Mortgage Loans, the Personal Loan Program, and Home Improvement Loans and their associated property management and collection functions. The Grants Section administers Veterans Retraining Grants, Veterans Education Reimbursement Grants, Assistance to Needy Veterans Grants (consisting primarily of Health Care and Subsistence Aid components), County and Tribal Veterans' Service Office grants, and veterans service organization grants.

**Veterans Retraining Grant** – Provides up to \$3,000 to recently unemployed or underemployed veterans who demonstrate financial need while enrolled in a training program expected to lead to employment.

**Veterans Education Reimbursement Grants (VetEd)** – Provides tuition and fee reimbursement to eligible veterans enrolled at most Wisconsin academic institutions. The VetEd grant provides up to eight semesters or 120 credits towards a bachelor's degree, depending on length of active service.

**Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant (ANVG)** – Provides assistance for veterans who need vision, dental, or hearing care, three areas not normally covered by the federal VA. This program also provides temporary emergency financial aid to veterans and their dependents in the event of an illness, disability or death. Grant awards for health care and subsistence aid combined cannot exceed a \$7,500 lifetime limit.

**County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) Grants** – Supplements the operations of county veterans services offices. The grants for counties with a full-time CVSO are based on total county population:

- \$8,500 for counties with a population of less than 20,000
- \$10,000 for counties with a population of 20,000 to 45,499
- \$11,500 for counties with a population of 45,500 to 74,999
- \$13,000 for counties with a population of 75,000 or greater
- \$500 may be granted for counties with a part-time CVSO

**Tribal Veterans Service Office (TVSO) Grants** – Supplements the operations of Tribal Veterans Service Offices. The department made annual grants of up to \$8,500 to eligible, federally-recognized American Indian tribes and bands. 2013 Wisconsin Act 20 expanded the annual grant up to \$15,000.

**Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Grants** – Provided financial assistance to veterans service organizations of up to \$30,000 for each organization assisting veterans with claims for benefits from the USDVA. 2013 Wisconsin Act 20 expanded the amount of the grant to a maximum of \$70,000.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

**Transportation Grants** – Provides grants to the Wisconsin Department of Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and to counties with veterans not served by the DAV to provide transportation services to veterans traveling to USDVA-approved medical appointments.

**Veterans Assistance Program (VAP)** – Assists veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with necessary services to obtain steady employment and affordable housing. The program is located at Union Grove, Chippewa Falls, and King.

**Primary Mortgage Home Loan Program (PML)** – Provides 30-year, fixed-rate mortgages for the purchase or construction of a veteran’s principal residence. WDVA pays the origination fee for veterans who have a combined service-connected disability rating of 30% or higher from the federal VA.

**Personal Loan Program (PLP)<sup>2</sup>** – Offers mortgage-secured, low-interest home equity loans of up to \$25,000, and co-signed loans up to \$5,000 that can be used for any purpose.

**Home Improvement Loan Program (HILP)<sup>2</sup>** – Provides mortgage-secured, low-interest rate loans for repairs, alterations, construction, and renovation of a veteran’s principal residence.

## Accomplishments 2011-2013

- Developed online applications for nearly all grant programs.
- Graduated 54 veterans to self-sufficiency from the Veterans Assistance Program.
- Established a new contract for services for operation of the Veterans Assistance Program at King, Union Grove, and Chippewa Falls.
- Managed \$96,412,372 in outstanding loans to include properties due to foreclosure.

## Total Veterans Trust Fund Benefits and Services Disbursed July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013

Program	Number	Amount
Personal Loan Program <sup>3</sup>	95	\$920,875.00
Veterans Retraining Grants <sup>4</sup>	47	\$128,338.22
Aid to Needy Veterans Grants	1,495	\$740,461.89
Veterans Education Reimbursement Grants <sup>4</sup>	841	\$1,741,978.61
County Veterans Service Office Grants	140	\$1,483,000.00
Tribal Veterans Service Office Grants	18	\$113,694.93
Transportation Grants	74	\$400,000.00
Veterans Service Organization Grants	8	\$206,268.64
Military Funeral Honors <sup>5</sup>	10,596	\$516,925.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10,836</b>	<b>\$6,251,542.29</b>

Data Source: VBATS

<sup>1</sup> The VAP site operating at Fort McCoy was closed in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> WDVA is currently not issuing new loans due to economic factors. No new primary mortgage loans have been issued since November 2, 2009; no new personal loans or home improvement loans have been issued since December 1, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> PLP and HILP moratoriums began on December 1, 2011. Projected end date for PLP is June, 2022. Numbers and amounts reflect the period of July 1, 2011 through November 30, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> There has been a significant decrease in education grant disbursements due to the availability of other forms of financial aid.

<sup>5</sup> Military Funeral Honors Stipends are funded by General Purpose Revenue.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Develop an online application for the veterans retraining grants.
- Cross-train personnel in all programs offered in the bureau to eliminate single points of failure.
- Change the rules for the assistance to needy veterans grant program to expand eligibility for low-income veterans.
- Explore changes to health care aid grant that will result in more effective treatment of the dental needs of veterans.
- Relocate the King veterans assistance program due to a campus construction project.

## **Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services**

The Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services manages two of the three state veterans cemeteries: Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spooner and Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Union Grove, the fifth busiest state veterans cemetery in the nation. The Bureau also administers the Military Funeral Honors Program. The Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at King is maintained and operated by the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.

Interments are available to eligible veterans, spouses, and dependents at all three locations. 2013 Wisconsin Act 20 authorized the burial of any member of our three state Veterans Homes in our Veterans Cemeteries.



**Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP)** – Coordinates and provides military funeral honors for the interment of eligible Wisconsin veterans. A stipend of up to \$50 is paid to eligible veterans service organizations that perform military funeral honors.

## *Accomplishments 2011-2013*

- Interred 2,642 veterans, spouses, and dependents over the biennium, of which 1,983 were interred at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery.
- Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP) coordinated honors for 6,917 military funerals in 2012, including 1,014 conducted by the MFHP honors team, a 6.8% increase of services over 2011. A total of \$309,600 for military funeral honors stipends were disbursed to veterans service organizations for these services.
- MFHP trained 27 new veterans organizations, now certified to perform services and receive the grant stipend.
- Completed a Master Plan for Southern. Secured a \$2.2 million grant from USDVA for columbarium expansion, curb and gutter installation, signage, and an irrigation system.
- Secured a \$1.22 million grant from USDVA for Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery for master plan development, including a columbarium addition, urn garden sites, extension of the irrigation system, and signage improvements.
- Erected a Battle Cross Monument, funded by private donations from Battle Cross, Ltd, at Southern in September 2012.
- Re-landscaped the grounds surrounding the administration building/chapel at Southern.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Begin construction of new columbarium, new curb and gutter, and improvements to existing irrigation system at Southern in the spring of 2014.
- Begin construction of columbarium, urn gardens, and irrigation system at Northern in the spring of 2014.
- Expand the number of burial services available at both Southern and Northern to meet growing demand.
- Construct a permanent canopy over the Southern chapel/multi-purpose room entrance to provide covered space for firing details. Construction to be completed mid-September 2013.
- Develop a uniform plot and scheduling program for all three state veterans cemeteries to improve availability and quality of burial services.
- Develop initial plans for the expansion of services, amenities, and possible columbarium at Central.
- Research the possibility of securing 50 additional acres to expand the size of Northern.  
Explore the placement of a Battle Cross monument at the Northern.



# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

## **Division Description**

The Division of Veterans Services provides programs, services, benefit and employment information to Wisconsin veterans and their families. The division is organized into the Bureau of Claims and Bureau of Programs and Services.

## **Division Mission**

The primary mission is to provide a seamless continuum of services accessed by veterans, their families and their survivors—which result in obtaining all federal and state benefits to which they are entitled.

### *Programs and Services include:*

- Federal VA claims
- Eligibility for veterans benefits
- State Approving Agency (SAA)
- Veterans benefit outreach and employment assistance
- Veterans Benefit Resource Center (VBRC)

# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

## Federal VA Claims

### Program Summary

The Bureau of Claims assists Wisconsin veterans and their dependents with federal claims for VA compensation, pension, education, medical care, and death benefits. The bureau also supplies accreditation and continuing education training to the state County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) community to provide initial accreditation and accreditation continuing education credits. The bureau is located at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Regional Office in Milwaukee.

### *Accomplishments 2011 - 2013*

- In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2011 Wisconsin veterans received a total of \$970 million in compensation and pension benefits from the USDVA.
- Directly contributed to \$173.8 million in compensation and pension benefits received by Wisconsin Veterans in FFY 2011.
- In FFY 2012 Wisconsin veterans received a total of \$861.1 million in compensation and pension benefits from the USDVA.
- Directly contributed to \$332.4 million in compensation and pension benefits received by Wisconsin veterans in FFY 2012.
- Reorganized the claims office structure to enhance effectiveness of staff and operations, quality of work, and responsiveness to claims office customers.
- During FY 2013, the WDVA claims office became paperless and fully automated in its operations.
- Developed a mail delivery system to CVSOs that uses electronic media, saving the department \$13,000 in mail costs.
- Developed an electronic mail delivery system for the CVSOs to use to send claims via email, saving mail time and mail costs for the counties, thereby enabling WDVA to deliver claims to USDVA on average 4-5 days faster.
- Partnered with USDVA to improve the decision time on Fully Developed Claims (FDC) by 45%.
- Developed an ongoing training plan for accredited representatives.
- Conducted three accreditation classes that accredited 48 new CVSOs or CVSO staff personnel to act as representatives for WDVA before USDVA on veterans' claims for benefits.
- Participated in four semi-annual CVSO conferences to provide continued education credits for accreditation maintenance.
- Developed an office team system that devoted three claims officers to reviewing incoming and old appeal/notice of disagreement issues. This system has resulted in benefits realized for Wisconsin veterans that total \$2.5 million from January 1, 2013 to June 30, 2013.
- Developed and implemented standard operating procedures.
- Responded to, on average, more than 70 phone calls, 50 pieces of mail, and 10-15 walk-in veterans and dependents about new and existing claims on a daily basis.
- Assisted in outreach to Wisconsin veterans by participating in benefit fairs, stand-down events, local county events and various job fairs and summits. The claims office participated in 25 outreach events in FY 2013.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Conduct semi- or tri-annual seminars for CVSO continued accreditation training in partnership with the USDVA and the WI National Guard via video conference training.
- Conduct accreditation training as required for additional CVSO and staff needs for new representatives.
- Using the USDVA electronic claims system, Stakeholders Enterprise Portal (SEP), improve the delivery time of claims to the USDVA and provide collaboration to improve the delivery of benefits to Wisconsin veterans.
- Continue community outreach and support of county veteran events to reach more veterans concerning USDVA benefits.

## **Eligibility for Veterans Benefits**

### **Program Summary**

The eligibility unit determines eligibility and also certifies veteran status for other state agencies providing benefits for veterans. To qualify for most Wisconsin state veterans' benefits, programs, or services, a veteran must first establish general eligibility for Wisconsin state veterans' benefits. Eligibility criteria for Wisconsin state veterans' benefits, programs, and services, are set in state law.

### *Accomplishments 2011 – 2013*

- Reorganized and transferred the eligibility unit to the Division of Veterans Services to enhance the effectiveness of the unit.
- Approved 6,897 Chapter 45 eligibility determinations for Wisconsin veteran benefits programs.
- Certified 5,139 veterans to receive the WI GI Bill Tuition Remission Waiver for the Wisconsin Technical College and UW Systems.
- Certified 2,712 veterans and their eligible unremarried surviving spouses for the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouse Property Tax Credit for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.
- Reduced the application processing time from 6 – 8 weeks to 2 – 3 weeks.
- Developed an ongoing training plan.

### *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Study and improve business processes within the unit in an effort to enhance effectiveness of staff and operations, quality of work, and responsiveness to unit customers.
- Develop and implement standard operating procedures.
- Streamline and automate application processes.

## **State Approving Agency (SAA)**

### **Program Summary**

The federally funded SAA provides institutional oversight for Wisconsin colleges, universities and vocational training facilities under Title 38 US Code and Title 10 US Code for eligibility under federal GI Bill education benefits. The SAA conducts compliance survey visits at these institutions to determine compliance with

# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

requirements of state and federal law. The SAA is responsible for evaluating programs at all new facilities and testing organizations and making a determination to approve or deny approval for GI Bill eligibility. In addition, the SAA has jurisdiction for any program approval changes in all private, for-profit institutions; Non-College Degree (NCD) institutions; and non-accredited institutions. The SAA also provides consultation and technical assistance to school officials; veterans and other eligible persons; and other individuals, organizations and agencies regarding federal GI Bill benefits and approval criteria.

## *Accomplishments 2009-2011<sup>1</sup>*

- Conducted 100% of the compliance survey visits required by the federal VA contract.
- Responded within 10 days to 100% of notices of denial of benefits to veterans.
- Submitted 100% of visit reports within 35 calendar days of the visit.
- Submitted 100% of contract reimbursement invoices within 45 days of the end of the quarter.
- Received a rating of satisfactory from the Joint Peer Review Group (JPRG).
- Attended and supported the 2013 annual WACRAO (Wisconsin Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers) Veterans' Benefits Workshop at Western Technical College, La Crosse. The conference targets Wisconsin schools approved for federal education benefits and was attended by about 120 personnel including VA officials, school certifying officials and others.
- Participated in monthly teleconferences with the Regional Processing Office, St. Louis, dealing with challenges and improvements to the compliance survey process.

<sup>1</sup> Reported accomplishments are for federal fiscal year 2013.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Adaptation and implementation of an online calculator for the Post-9/11 GI Bill when doing compliance surveys.

## **Veterans Benefit Outreach and Employment Assistance**

### **Program Summary**

The outreach unit works actively to inform veterans about accessing federal and state benefits, programs and services, assists unemployed and under-employed veterans in seeking and obtaining employment, and educates employers on the benefits of hiring veterans. Governor Scott Walker proclaimed 2012 the "Year of the Veteran". This proclamation resulted in several outreach events being conducted to inform and assist veterans in receiving state and federal veterans' benefits and provide employment assistance.

### *Accomplishments 2011-2013*

The outreach unit coordinated and/or participated in more than 256 events throughout the state to include (but not limited to):

- Conducted eight business symposiums with over 210 new businesses participating and agreeing to increase their effort in hiring veterans.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

- Planned and partnered on 31 career and benefit fairs and one virtual career fair with Federal, State and local agencies such as the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), US Chamber of Commerce, Department of Military Affairs (DMA) through the Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection (WERC) and County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO). Over 5300 veterans in attendance have been serviced.
- Conducted six veterans benefits expos where over 1,100 veterans attended and were serviced.
- Presented at 14 re-integrations conducted with over 1,700 returning Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND) veterans being provided services.
- Partnered on and participated in five summits (Women Veterans Health, Wounded Warrior, Veterans Mental Health, Governor's Small Business and Homeless Veterans) held in Madison, Milwaukee, Minocqua, La Crosse and Tomah respectively.
- Coordinated the UW football veterans game, Veterans Day and Memorial Day events, attended CVSO regional meetings and conventions, 2012 and 2013 annual veteran service organization conferences, participated in military retiree events, veterans stand downs, state and county fairs.
- Conducted benefits, programs and services training for CVSOs and their support staff.
- Provided benefit briefings to 384 incarcerated veterans, 323 of which were to newly-incarcerated veterans as they entered the Wisconsin prison system through the Department of Corrections in-take facility at Dodge Correctional Institution (DCI), Waupun.
- Provided veterans benefits training to the Department of Corrections staff at eight facilities.
- Received and responded to over 200 individual veteran and/or legislative inquiries that came through the department (i.e. Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit, military discharge upgrades, Federal and Wisconsin GI Bill Benefits, military medals).
- Developed a new women veterans online media web page and social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) to establish a further reach women veterans.
- Hosted two women veteran conferences and five women veteran expos with the focus on women veterans health along with providing information on benefits, services and programs specifically aimed to target and help women veterans feel comfortable in their environment in order to work through unique issues.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Place greater emphasis on employer outreach, which is intended to expand the number of job openings available with employers who are favorably inclined to hire veterans.
- Promote innovative employment training programs, such as Veterans in Piping which is an initiative preparing veterans for careers in the piping trades as well as other opportunities for veterans to translate their skills into a new career.
- Continue to strengthen the partnership with Department of Workforce Development, Department of Military Affairs and Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection (WERC) in order to address employment needs of Wisconsin veterans.
- Place emphasis on using the state's Veterans Noncompetitive Hiring Program.
- Develop and implement a women veterans' employment initiative, which is intended to expand employment opportunities for women veterans.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

- Begin planning for the transfer of the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program which includes the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) program, from the Department of Workforce Development to WDVA's Division of Veterans Services.
- Provide training to DVOP specialists and LVERs regarding the department's mission, programs, services and benefits.
- Place greater emphasis on the delivery of intensive services (e.g., counseling, assessment, career guidance and referral to training), which better prepare veteran jobseekers to compete for job openings.
- Provide six months of personal case management and enhanced job services at Wisconsin Job Centers, through the DVOPs and LVERs, including access to counselors to help navigate and coordinate job searches, connecting veterans with employers and job banks, working with them on translating their military specialties into civilian skills and providing them guidance on training.
- Work with promoters, sponsors, other agencies and coordinators in planning Wisconsin Wounded Warrior Summit, dedication for Vietnam era veterans, women veterans conference and health summits, homeless veterans summit and stand downs, employment and benefit career fairs and veteran benefit expos.
- Coordinate with the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS), the Hispanic Veterans Council and the Urban League of Wisconsin to provide targeted outreach efforts to the state's minority veteran community. Contact media outlets in urban areas, with formats that appeal to the state's minority veteran population to promote interview and panel style discussions on veterans benefits, program and services.
- Continue to improve upon and implement new ideas and approaches to reach veterans through social media markets (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn...), internet campaigns and develop a newsletter highlighting the different events WDVA and its partners are planning.
- Engage veteran representatives at schools to collaborate on scheduling and conducting "Campus Open Houses" to highlight what benefits, programs and services are available to their student veteran population and develop relationships with the various veterans groups and organizations on campuses to provide benefits, program and services information briefings to their respective members.

## Veterans Benefit Resource Center (VBRC)

### *Program Summary:*

In March 2012, the WDVA created the Veterans Benefits Resource Center (VBRC) which provides veterans improved access to information about the department's programs, benefits and services via phone, chat (through WDVA's website), walk in and email communications. The goal of the VBRC is to ensure that veterans who contact WDVA during business hours will be able to immediately speak to center support staff who are trained to provide information about the department's programs, benefits and services.



# DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

The VBRC uses an information system that enables customer service history and physical mailing of information to the veteran when needed. The VBRC records metrics that capture trends in veteran's requests and enable quality improvement efforts to be based on data.

## The top four reasons for contacting the VBRC:



## The top four service periods of all contacts:



## The top two methods of contact:



## Accomplishments 2011-2013

- Sent out over 10,000 informational packets regarding state and federal benefits and employment resource to recently separated veterans.
- Processed 241 discharge upgrades and medals requests for veterans and/or their family members.
- Certified 248 veterans to receive a fee waiver for certain professional and occupational licenses.
- Issued 50 Disabled Veterans Owned Business Certifications to increase the opportunity for disabled veteran firms to sell its products and services to the State of Wisconsin.
- Attended nine veterans benefits expos around Wisconsin.
- Established the Battle Book, a central resource available to department staff on the WDVA intranet which reflects valuable information that can easily be shared with veterans via E-mail.
- Developed and implemented standard operating procedures.
- Established higher customer satisfaction utilizing pre-chat and post-chat survey's within the Veteran Information System (VIS) and the Live Chat feature.
- Developed an ongoing training plan for the section to increase staff knowledge of the department's programs, services and benefits.
- Attended and presented at the Wisconsin Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (WACRO) regarding federal and state education benefits.

## Upcoming Initiatives

- Develop and implement standard operating procedures.
- Continue to improve business processes within the unit in an effort to enhance effectiveness of staff and operations, quality of work, and responsiveness to unit customers.
- Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of information and communications provided by the VBRC to veterans.
- Obtain more useable data from customers to help gauge more accurately their needs.

# DIVISION OF VETERANS HOMES

## Division Description

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs – Division of Veterans Homes consists of three campuses located at King, Union Grove, and Chippewa Falls. The Veterans Home at King provides skilled nursing home services for up to 721 veterans. The Veterans Home at Union Grove provides skilled nursing home services for up to 158 veterans, and is currently licensed to serve up to 40 veterans at the assisted living level of care. The Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls is a newly constructed 72-bed skilled nursing home which opened for business in February 2013.

## Division Mission

### Wisconsin Veterans Homes

**Our Vision-** To be the best at caring for our nations heroes and serving as an exemplary model to all veterans homes across the country.

**Our Mission-** To serve those who served as we pioneer an environment of excellence in the provision of healthcare services.

**Our Values-** “What matters most to us”

- Our nation’s heroes
- Our competent and caring employees
- The trust of all veterans and veteran stakeholders
- Our commitment to professionalism
- LEAN processes at all levels within the division
- Financial solvency
- A “can do” attitude



### Programs and Services

- Skilled nursing services
- Long term care
- Short term rehabilitation services
- Restorative nursing care
- Pharmacy services
- Dementia and Alzheimer care
- Radiology and EKG
- Dental care
- Laboratory services
- Dietary and nutritional services
- Social services
- Podiatry



# DIVISION OF VETERANS HOMES

- Optometry
- Audiology
- Respiratory therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Speech therapy
- Medical transportation
- Recreational therapy
- Physician services and consultants

## Wisconsin Veterans Home at King

The Veterans Home at King is located on a 325 acre campus, one mile southwest of the town of Waupaca. The facility was founded in 1887 by the Grand Army of the Republic, a Civil War Veterans Organization. The Home is the largest skilled nursing facility in the state, serving up to 721 members.

The individual skilled nursing facilities at King include the 205 bed Ainsworth Hall, the 116 bed MacArthur Hall, the 200 bed Olson Hall and the 200 bed Stordock Hall. Each of these four buildings is separately licensed. Three-quarters of all beds are located in private rooms.

In addition to skilled nursing, dietary, maintenance and housekeeping, the following person-centered services are provided to our members:

- Physician/dentist
- Physical therapy/occupational therapy/speech therapy
- Social services
- Pharmacy
- Laboratory/X-ray
- Medical and recreational transport
- Group and one-on-one activities
- Marden Center (bowling, theater, coffee shop, fitness room, wood shop, library, computer center)
- Boating/fishing
- Barber/beautician
- Security/fire protection
- Laundry
- Ministerial support
- Work therapy



# DIVISION OF VETERANS HOMES

Beyond the items listed above, the factor that makes the Veterans Home at King both special and unique are the 300 plus volunteers, many associated with Veteran Services Organizations (VSO), that donate tens of thousands of hours to our members every year. And if that were not enough, the VSOs also donate tens of thousands of dollars to our members every year.

## *Accomplishments 2011-2013*

- Completed a lean government project on member admission process. Increased census from 697 in July, 2012 to 712 a year later. Process changes will lead to a permanent improvement in census and associated revenue.
- Installed a member freedom (CodeAlert) member wandering system that allows the King Home staff to better ensure that members don't place themselves in dangerous situations.
- To improve member safety the campus went from being partially sprinklered to fully sprinklered.
- To improve member safety, a railing was installed along the lakeshore adjacent to the campus.
- Reduced employee overtime from a peak of greater than 5.2% of total hours worked to just under 3.0% of hours worked.
- Celebrated the veteran homes 125th anniversary in 2012.
- Removed locks from member room doors, reducing risk for members and associated liability for the state in event of emergency.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Through greater attention to risk management, decrease worker's compensation costs by 10%.
- By filling vacant positions and through implementation of staffing strategies, decrease employee overtime.
- To increase revenue potential and to provide a more comprehensive service to area veterans, become Medicare certified for all 721 beds by April 2014.
- To improve revenue, increase the Wisconsin Veterans Home-King's aggregate case mix index (CMI) score by 10% on or before July 1, 2015.
- To increase staff satisfaction, increase to 75% the number of staff working no more than alternate weekends. Complete this by July of 2015.
- Construct a new 200 bed skilled nursing facility at King to replace a similar sized aged facility.

## **Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove**

The Veterans Home at Union Grove is located on the campus of the Southern Wisconsin Center (SWC). The facilities at Union Grove include a 40 bed community-based residential facility (CBRF) which in addition to assisted living (AL) care also provides memory care services for veterans and their spouses and a 158 bed skilled nursing facility (SNF).

Boland Hall, a 120 bed SNF, offers the following services:

- Skilled nursing care
- Physical, occupational and speech therapy
- Visits by physicians and nurse practitioners

# DIVISION OF VETERANS HOMES

- Dental services
- Podiatry services
- Social Work services
- Hospice care
- Activities

The completion of the renovations of Gates Hall has added an additional 38 skilled nursing beds to the Boland Hall license. Gates Hall is connected to Boland Hall via a covered walkway.

Fairchild Hall is licensed as a 40 bed CBRF providing assisted living and memory care. The CBRF provides the following services:

- Nursing services
- Medication management
- Social work services
- Transportation to off-site medical services
- Activities
- Member Council

Maurer Hall is connected to Boland Hall and houses the administrative offices, kitchen, chapel and other spaces dedicated for member activities including ceramics, woodworking shop, leather crafts, library and computer center.

## *Accomplishments 2011-2013*

- Completed the conversion of Gates Hall from a 42 bed assisted living facility into a 38 bed skilled nursing home which is now operating at 99% occupancy.
- Successfully completed an annual federal survey with no deficiencies.
- Lease agreement completed with federal VA to convert Shemanske Hall (closed CBRF) into a Community Based Outpatient Center (CBOC).
- Completed Phase II renovations to Fairchild Hall including new laundry facility, replace carpeting, replace metal ceiling, improved lighting and redesigned courtyards.
- Reduced overtime cost by approximately \$160,000.
- Installed wander guard system for Boland Hall elevators.
- Upgrades to HVAC systems in Fairchild and Shemanske Hall completed.
- Implemented the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) for members in the CBRF and Certified Nursing Assistants documentation in the CBRF and skilled nursing facility.
- Reduced nurse staffing agency costs by approximately \$450,000 annually.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Construct garage/storage building.
- Replace thirty year old generator in Shemanske Hall.
- Design walkway/connector to link CBRF, Maurer Hall and the Federal VA CBOC for members' safety.
- Create a distinct Medicare Part A transitional care unit to receive additional federal reimbursement.
- Reduce workers compensation claims by 10%.

# OFFICE OF BUDGET, FINANCE AND FACILITIES

## Description

The Office of Budget, Finance and Facilities (OBFF) consists of two bureaus; the Bureau of Policy, Planning and Budget (BPPB) and the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS). They work collaboratively to achieve the department's strategic financial operational responsibilities.

## Bureau of Policy, Planning and Budget

### Description

The Bureau of Policy, Planning and Budget (BPPB) develops, monitors and manages the department's annual and biennial capital and operating budgets and provides financial, policy and statistical analysis of department programs. BPPB staff monitors and manages all construction and building projects for the department. This includes acting as the project managers for the Department, applying for federal funding and acting as the department liaison with the Department of Administration's (DOA) Division of Facilities Development (DFD). The bureau coordinates operational risk assessments, risk management (liability and property), internal control development and internal audit services. The bureau is responsible for maintaining effective working relationships with the State Budget Office in the Department of Administration, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) and United States Department of Veterans Affairs officials (USDVA). BPPB also coordinates the collection and analysis of demographic data concerning Wisconsin veterans and is responsible for department-wide planning and development of internal policies, administrative procedures, business improvement strategies and the implementation of strategic planning.

### Accomplishments 2011-13:

- Ensured the solvency of the Veteran's Trust Fund.
- Conducted an internal audit of the gifts and bequests programs.
- Created an extensive capital budget process manual.
- Assisted in the approval of the Joint Preservation Storage Facility.
- Completed the construction of 72 bed skilled nursing facility in Chippewa Falls.
- Completed the construction of a 38 bed skilled nursing facility in Union Grove.
- Created an outstanding debt report by campus, by building and by project.
- Fully staffed the bureau after an 80% turnover of staff since FY12.



# OFFICE OF BUDGET, FINANCE AND FACILITIES

## *Upcoming Initiatives:*

- Perform an operational risk assessment.
- After legislative approval, coordinate the construction of a new 200 bed skilled nursing facility at King.
- Remove several buildings from the historic preservation list to allow for updated facilities.
- Analyze the department's current financial software.
- Conduct an internal audit of department purchasing card usage.
- Submit the department budget (including capital budget) in September of 2014.
- Participate on the Future of Veterans Homes Task Force
- Complete a master plan for the King campus
- Submitted 12 federal grant submissions (seven homes grants, two cemetery grants, a museum grant, a VA rehab grant for the Southern VAP, and a sensory garden grant)
- Appraise the current value of all 88 buildings of the department.

## **Bureau of Fiscal Services**

### **Description**

The mission of the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS) is to deliver high levels of financial services for accounts payable, accounts receivable and loan program accounting, as well as maintaining high levels of internal controls, compliance, and review procedures for all WDVA financial operations. Services provided by the bureau include:

- Accounts payable processing (e.g., operating costs, travel vouchers, loan and grant disbursements).
- Accounts receivable and receipts processing.
- Loan accounting, servicing and credit bureau reporting.
- Maintaining MFIT, WDVA's internal budget tracking and expenditure reporting control system.
- Maintenance of internal controls and compliance for fiscal transactions.
- Pre- and post-audit of financial transactions.
- Financial reporting to internal and external customers.
- Contract, purchase order and purchase card oversight.

### *Accomplishments 2011-13:*

- Assisted in the creation of a new front-end system for financial and budget management (MFIT).
- Successfully installed and implemented phase one of a document imaging software package.
- Conducted extensive research and compiled the necessary data with the information technology bureau to move to a user friendly financial and budget reporting system (MFIT). and created a training video for new users.
- As a team member, reviewed and negotiated a vendor contract for a new skilled nursing facility in Chippewa Falls. Created complex coding strings and cross walks with the vendor accounting system to the state's financial systems.
- Streamlined administrative coding for accounts payables.
- Fully staffed the central office after a 60% turnover since FY12.

# OFFICE OF BUDGET, FINANCE AND FACILITIES

## *Upcoming Initiatives:*

- Re-evaluate the current asset inventory system and implement a new software package.
- Phase two of document imaging implementation including expansion to the admissions area.
- Rollout a new centralized inventory concept for the Homes to control, standardize, improve compliance and quality.
- Work with the Bureau of Information Systems to create programming for debt service allocations.
- Establish a roles and responsibilities worksheet to look for efficiencies in staffing and work load.
- Cross train positions to avoid potential loss of experience as staff turnover.
- Standardize internal financial written procedures.
- Standardize electronic charting system accounts receivable billing systems at King and Union Grove to achieve billing efficiencies.



# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

## Description

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) operates two museums accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. Its main facility, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum—Madison (WVMM), is located on the Capitol Square; the Wisconsin Veterans Museum—King (WVMK), is located in the F. A. Marden Memorial building on the grounds of the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.

## Mission

The mission of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum is to commemorate, acknowledge, and affirm the role of Wisconsin citizens in American military history, past and present. (§ 45.014, Wis. Stats.)

## Division Goals

- Continue planning of Wisconsin History Center and State Archives Preservation Facility.
- Honor veterans and their role in shaping our nation's history.
- Increase retail net profitability by 10%.
- Operate with financial and staffing efficiency to support the mission of WDVA.
- Increase public program attendance by 10% annually.

## Strategic Evaluation

- Evaluate all public programs and services – formative and summative evaluations.
- Perform comprehensive budget analysis to control costs and maximize efficiency.
- Identify opportunities to expand historic interpretation at King Veterans Home and Union Grove.

## Programs and Activities

- Public programs and exhibitions
- Marketing and development
- Museum research center/archives
- Education
- Store operations and visitor services
- Collections management program
- Wisconsin National Guard Museum<sup>6</sup>

## Public Programs and Exhibitions

Support the Museum's mission by developing educational outreach materials, conceiving and developing exhibits and public programs.

## Accomplishments 2011-2013

- Achieved 71% increase in outreach numbers from FY11 (11,220) to FY13 (19,269).
- Achieved 15% increase in museum attendance from FY11 (81,362) to FY13 (94,132).

<sup>6</sup>This institution was operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs during the 11-13 biennium but transferred to the Department of Military Affairs on July 1, 2013.

# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

- Successfully developed and installed two major Civil War Sesquicentennial exhibits – From Paper to Iron and The Last Full Measure: Wisconsin in the Civil War, 1863-65.
- Redeveloped street-level exhibit window featuring a Vietnam theme in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the conflict.
- Planned, executed and managed Operation: Greatest Generation, a public event held in Green Bay, Wisconsin, honoring Wisconsin's WWII veterans.
- Redeveloped core components of the museum's permanent galleries – updated Huey helicopter to wartime appearance and augmented permanent Vietnam exhibit with additional artifacts; installed new multimedia interactive component in WWI exhibit.
- Continued growth and expansion of existing partnerships with the Wisconsin Book Festival, Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission, Monona Terrace and the University of Wisconsin.
- Launched online Civil War database.
- Established Wisconsin Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission.
- Mounted Medal of Honor exhibit at Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Chippewa Falls Veterans Home.
- Installed bronze figures at Wisconsin Veterans Home at King and the Union Grove Veterans Home.
- Designed, conceived and oversaw elements of the construction and installation of Wisconsin Medal of Honor Monument at Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.
- Planned and implemented Korea Remembered: 1950-53, a public event held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to honor Wisconsin's Korean War veterans.
- Rededicated Camp Randall Arch.
- Upgraded Multitouch table, improving performance, reliability while adding multimedia-based information.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Plan and implement installation of Medal of Honor exhibit at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum (WVM).
- Develop and install WWII aerial gunnery interactive at WVM.
- Plan, develop and manage redevelopment of Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.
- Plan and implement major public program Operation Dust Off: Vietnam Remembered.
- Develop public programming to augment and complement The Last Full Measure.
- Complete development of Visitor Experience Plan for joint museum.
- Design, conceive and oversee installation of Civil War monument at Camp Randall.



# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

## Marketing and Development

Support the museum and its programs by increasing the positive public perception of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Work as the department liaison with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation; assist with foundation fundraising efforts and donor management.

### *Accomplishments*

- Secured \$1 million joint donation for new museum project campaign.
  - Increased fundraising income 17% from FY12 (\$142,062) to FY13 (\$166,200).
  - Increased website visits 77% from FY12 (32,417) to FY13 (57,647).
  - Launched Museum Membership Program, 427 members; \$40,986 YTD revenue since March 2011.
  - Developed additional marketing tools in conjunction with a long term marketing plan.
  - Produced and aired a television commercial to promote the museum.
  - Launched micro website: [www.wisvetstories.com](http://www.wisvetstories.com).
  - Launched new museum website: [www.wisvetmuseum.com](http://www.wisvetmuseum.com).
  - Received Silver Telly Award in FY 12 for production of marketing video.
  - Launched Facebook page, 1,431 likes to date; 10 new friends on weekly average.
  - Promulgated three Memorandums of Understanding that govern joint capital campaign activities between Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation (WVMF) and Wisconsin Historical Society Foundation.
  - Completed foundation assessment study.
  - Completed feasibility study for new museum capital campaign.
  - Hired interim managing director of the WVMF in order to launch major capital campaign.
- Upcoming Initiatives
- Increase public awareness via a comprehensive state-wide marketing campaign, including brand identification; targeted outreach; and major media efforts under contract with Milwaukee-based advertising/PR firm.
  - Hire three full-time, permanent foundation employees including managing director, major gifts officer and annual gifts officer.
  - Launch combined capital campaign for joint museum initiative.

## Museum Research Center/Archives

Support the museum and its mission by acquiring, processing and safeguarding archival materials relevant to Wisconsin veterans.

### *Accomplishments*

- Expanded the Veterans Oral History Program to over 1,800 interviews.
- Successfully merged accession records and acquisition procedures with object collections, providing critical links to shared collections resulting in more efficient and accessible processes.
- Promulgated a comprehensive collections policy in accord with museum mission.
- Increased outreach contacts by 125% between FY11 (3,632) and FY13 (8,160).
- Successfully handled reference requests originating from all 50 states, and 16 foreign countries.
- Developed and implemented searchable online Civil War database.
- Increased archival collections processing rate by 53% from FY11 (96) to FY13 (147).

# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Digitize photographic image collection and launch searchable online photographic image catalog to increase public accessibility to the collection.
- Develop and launch searchable online WWI veterans' database.
- Develop outreach partnership with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Journalism to create publicly-accessible oral history audio database.
- Hire .80 FTE oral historian.

## **Education**

In support of the museum's mission, promote lifelong learning through innovative public programs, exhibit-related support, and outreach activities.

## *Accomplishments*

- Completed a lean government project to improve the efficiency and customer service for school tour booking.
- Developed and promulgated a standard evaluation manual to guide assessments of all public programs, educational initiatives and exhibits.
- Conceived and implemented a formal internship program tied to public and private institutions of higher learning in Wisconsin.
- Set Talking Spirits attendance record in FY 12 (2,300).
- Served on average more than 5,000 students with the travel trunk outreach program.

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Establish a grant-supported travel stipend for lower income public and private schools.
- Establish a standing teachers' advisory committee to provide guidance in the development of standards-based educational programs.
- Develop and implement a state-wide distance learning program to increase educational outreach throughout the state.

## **Store Operations and Visitor Services**

### *Accomplishments*

- Realized six consecutive months of net profit beginning in the last quarter of FY 13 and into first quarter of FY14.
- Redeveloped store layout which increased square footage of retail space.
- Developed new mission-related product lines.
- Improved sales reporting and inventory systems and comparative analyses.
- Increased gross sales by 3% from FY11 (\$95,974) to FY13 (\$98,890).
- Added increased security measures to ensure safety of exhibits and associated collections.

# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Tie Museum store to institutional marketing plan and calendar through relevant product development based upon collections-based merchandising opportunities.
- Installation of new and more efficient point of sales system.
- Institutionalize customer service training to ensure the highest levels of professionalism and service.
- Identify and manage new tour programs using the latest technologies through iPad and Smartphone platforms.
- Update in-store Civil War database kiosk to touch screen technology.
- Increase net profits in both online and in-store sales.

## **Collections Management Program**

Collections management provides primary support by ensuring the accessibility, safety and preservation of the artifact collections.

## *Accomplishments*

- Completed integration of combined archives/objects collections policy.
- Integrated archives/objects acquisitions procedures, reducing unnecessary paperwork, creating more accountability and greater control of acquisitions.
- Completed 70% of comprehensive inventory project in advance of move to State Archives Preservation Facility including verification of location records and online upload of high quality photos for increased public accessibility through website.
- Hired and trained two project personnel staff members.
- Increased acquisitions by 35% from FY11 (575) to FY13 (775).
- Increased number of objects processed by 46% from FY11 (975) to FY13 (1425).

## *Upcoming Initiatives*

- Produce and implement a detailed move plan to guide the relocation of the collection to the State Archives Preservation Facility.
- Complete the comprehensive inventory project providing a high level of public accessibility to the collection.

## **Wisconsin National Guard Museum**

After a careful and thorough review of operations, the WDVA returned control of the Wisconsin National Guard Museum to the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs at the close of FY13. The challenges of maintaining supervisory integrity and administrative oversight from Madison over a long distance compelled the action.



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