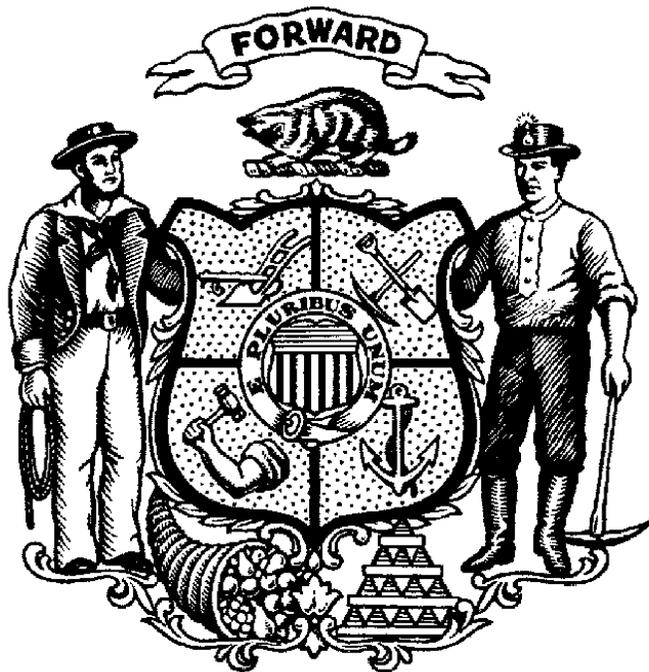


# State of Wisconsin

## Department of Veterans Affairs



Biennial Report  
2017

## **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 these services 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 February 2013, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs opened a new 72-bed 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).

## **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:**

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 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 veteran's 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 is Smithsonian affiliated and 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. The museum also coordinates several traveling exhibits throughout the state.

### **AFFILIATED BOARD AND COUNCIL**

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

The Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs is a nine-member, part-time, citizen board that provides advice to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Each of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts is represented by a Board member who must be a veteran meeting the requirements of §45.01 (12), Wis. Stats. There is one at-large member. 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 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.

Members of the Board include:

- Larry Kutschma of Lake Geneva, 1<sup>st</sup> District
- John M. Gaedke of Merrimac , 2<sup>nd</sup> District
- Daniel Bohlin of Stitzer, 3<sup>rd</sup> District
- Carl Krueger of Cudahy, 4<sup>th</sup> District
- Kevin Nicholson of Wauwatosa, 5<sup>th</sup> District
- John Townsend of Fond du Lac, 6<sup>th</sup> District
- Cathy Gorst of Marshfield, 7<sup>th</sup> District
- Leigh Neville-Neil of Green Bay, 8<sup>th</sup> 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. Created under § 15.497(2), Wis. Stats., the Council advises 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**

- Provided \$2,000,000 in additional funding in FY2016 and \$1,000,000 additional funding in FY2017.
- Transferred administration of the Veterans Employment Grant Program from the Department of Workforce development to WDVA.
- Provided \$258,100 in FY2016 and \$518,000 in FY2017 of additional funding for the Veterans Housing and Recovery Program.
- Eliminated the state residency requirement from the eligibility criteria for assistance to needy veterans program.

## **INITIATIVES FOR 2015-17**

- 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.
- Continue to construct 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.
- Provide additional staffing for the Wisconsin Veterans Homes to adjust to the changing demographics that include higher ages with needs for more medical attention.
- Decrease overall overtime and agency staffing levels at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes.
- Continue to provide five star service to all members at the Department's skill nursing facilities.
- Introduce a new non-profit grant program.
- Develop the new entrepreneurship grant program.
- Incorporating trauma-informed principles (fostering futures) in various program areas.
- Develop the new zero veteran suicide initiative.

## **DIVISION SUMMARIES**

### **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.

#### *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.
- Grants to Nonprofit Organizations that provide financial assistance, entrepreneurship training and other services.
- Grants to employers who hire veterans with a service-connected Federal VA disability rating of at least 50%.
- Interments for veterans and eligible family members at state veterans cemeteries, together with Military Funeral Honors
- Provides veterans improved access to information about state and federal benefit through the Veterans Benefits Resource Center (VBRC).
- Establish eligibility for state veteran benefits, programs and services and certifies veteran status for other state agencies that provides benefits for veterans.

The Division is divided into two bureaus: the Bureau of Veterans Benefits 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 Veterans Benefits**

The Bureau of Veterans Benefits offers an array of benefits to qualified Wisconsin veterans statewide. The bureau consists of the Grants Unit, Eligibility Unit and the Veterans Benefits Resource Center (VBRC).

### **Grants Unit:**

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, Veterans service organization grants, and grants to municipalities, nonprofit organizations and employers.

- 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 8 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.
- Tribal Veterans Service Office (TVSO) Grants – Supplements the operations of Tribal Veterans Service Offices. The department made annual grants of up to \$15,000 to eligible, federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands.
- Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Grants – Provided financial assistance to veterans service organizations of up to \$70,000 for each

organization assisting veterans with claims for benefits from the USDVA.

- 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.
- Grants to Local Governments – Provided up to \$150,000 in one-time grants to local governments, cities, villages, and towns that provide services: such as police and fire support, solid waste disposal and road maintenance to veterans nursing homes.
- Grants to Nonprofit Organizations that assist Veterans and their families – Provides funding of up to \$250,000 for grants to nonprofit organizations who provide financial assistance or other services to Wisconsin veterans and their families.
- Grants to Nonprofit Organizations that assist Veteran Entrepreneurs – Provides funding of up to \$400,000 for grants to nonprofits that provides entrepreneurship training, technical or business assistance, or other assistance to veteran entrepreneurs to improve employment outcomes.
- Grants to Employers – Provides funding of up to \$100,000 to employers that hire veterans with a service-connected Federal VA disability rating of at least 50%.

Total Veterans Trust Fund Benefits and Services Disbursed  
*July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017<sup>1</sup>*

<i>Program</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Veterans Retraining Grants	46	\$110,623
Aid to Needy Veterans Grants	756	\$644,072
Veterans Education Reimbursement	151	\$395,405
County Veterans Service Office Grants	137	\$1,327,657
Tribal Veterans Service Office Grants	18	\$147,050
Transportation Grants	73	\$440,000
Veterans Service Organization Grants	9	\$279,677
Military Funeral Honors	14,820	\$669,250

---

<sup>1</sup> Data source: VBATS

Totals	16,010	\$4,013,734
--------	--------	-------------

Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Developed and implemented a Veterans Benefits Application Tracking System (VBATS) Access and Data Sharing Agreement (Agreement) for each CVSO and TVSO Office. This Agreement allowed CVSOs and TVSOs access to the WDVA VBATS database without restriction and remove the requirement for release forms signed by the veteran, dependents, survivors, or duly authorized representatives; and to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information created, processed, stored, aggregated, and transmitted by WDVA.
- Streamlined and automated the application processes.
- Improved business processes within the unit in an effort to enhance effectiveness of staff and operations, quality of work, and responsiveness to unit customers.
- Developed and implemented standard operating procedures.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Incorporating online application process for Retraining Grant and Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant, allowing veterans to apply through the MyWisVets self-service portal.
- Explore changes to health care aid grant that will result in more effective treatment of the dental needs of veterans.
- Applying advanced training plans and strategies to ensure there is no single point of failure, and all grants veterans specialists will be trained on all grant programs.

**Eligibility Unit:**

The eligibility unit determines eligibility and 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 2015-2017:

- Approved 10,293 Chapter 45 eligibility determinations for Wisconsin veteran benefits programs.
- Certified 4,740 veterans to receive the WI GI Bill Tuition Remission Waiver for the Wisconsin Technical College and UW Systems.
- Certified 2,566 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 2 – 3 weeks to 2 – 3 days.
- Implemented an ongoing training plan.
- Issued professional or occupational license fee waivers to 1,105 veterans for the Veterans Fee Waiver program.
- Issued 135 veterans a DNR Returning Service Member License Voucher to receive a free hunting or fishing license from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- Verified the eligibility of 12,008 veterans to receive the Department of Transportation's veteran identifier on their driver's license or photo I.D. card.
- Approved 151 Veterans Education Reimbursement Grants (VetEd)
- Approved 46 Veterans Retraining Grants.
- Incorporated DMDC (Defense Manpower Data Center) data into reporting, eligibility determinations, and mailing process, increasing efficiency and saving time, manpower, and office supplies as a result.
- Adopted business practices that significantly minimized the processing time for various Veteran benefits applications and increased the standard of work of the unit.
- Developed advanced training plans and strategies, allowing for multiple new staff members to be trained simultaneously.

### 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.
- Developing and perfecting Veteran-Owned Business online application procedures and training staff in an effort to streamline the certification process.
- Updating and improving standard operating procedures.
- Improving methods of collection of application materials and supporting

documentation in order to increase efficiency.

**Veterans Benefit Resource Center (VBRC):**

The Veterans Benefits Resource Center (VBRC) that 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 that is trained to provide information about the department’s programs, benefits and 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:

- Veteran Identifier 20,628
- Wisconsin GI Bill benefits 1,354
- ‘MyWisVets’ Self Service Portal 1,278
- Property tax credit 1,259

The top four service periods of all contacts:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 713
- Vietnam veterans 974
- Operation Desert Shield/Storm 668
- Peace-Time Era 516

The top two methods of contact:

- Voice/Phone 68,921
- Online Chat 12,880

**Accomplishments 2015-2017:**

- Sent out over 12,566 informational packets regarding state and federal benefits and employment resource to recently separated veterans.
- Processed 203 discharge upgrades and medals requests for veterans and/or their family members.

- Certified 1,105 veterans to receive a fee waiver for certain professional and occupational licenses.
- Issued 62 Disabled Veterans Owned Business Certifications to increase the opportunity for disabled veteran firms to sell its products and services to the State of Wisconsin.
- Established higher customer satisfaction utilizing pre-chat and post-chat survey's within the Veteran Information System (VIS) and the Live Chat feature.
- Developed advanced training plans and strategies for purposes of training multiple new staff members simultaneously.
- Developed and began using more consistent reference materials and standard operating procedures, leading to improved customer support.
- Ensured staff has been properly trained on crisis management and suicide prevention.
- Improved communication with and allowed for increased database access to veterans service organizations, leading to more efficient service to customers overall.
- Promoted myWisVets, leading to more electronic benefits applications and quicker processing time.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Developing improved methods for obtaining and tracking data from customers, helping the division to better meet the customers' needs and develop future initiatives.
- Updating and improving standard operating procedures.
- Continue promoting myWisVets and improve its functionality to allow for new types of applications to be submitted electronically.
- Improving organization of reference materials in electronic form, allowing staff to more quickly and effectively respond to customer inquiries, as well as making this information more readily available.

**Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services**

The Bureau of Cemeteries and Memorial Services manages three state veterans' cemeteries:

Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spooner, Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at King and Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Union Grove, the fifth busiest state veteran's

cemetery in the nation. The Bureau also administers the Military Funeral Honors Program. The 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 veteran's service organizations that perform military funeral honors.

Accomplishments 2015-2017:

**Cemeteries:**

- Interred 3,163 veterans, spouses and dependents over the biennium, of which 2,297 were interred at Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery alone. An increase of 344 interments over previous biennium.
- The King Cemetery under the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, now known as the "Central Wisconsin Veterans Cemetery (CWVMC)" officially transferred operations and staff effective July 1, 2015.
- In 2015 developed Master Plan to help fill needs of the CWVMC to guide its growth in an ecological and respectful way for the next 50 years.
- Submitted and received U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs State Cemetery Grants Program pre-application for federal assistance for development project that included a new entrance , public information / office building , maintenance garage, road improvements, new cremation sites , columbarium niches, landscaping and supporting infrastructure
- Completed \$1.6 M federal funded Phase IV construction project at SWVMC.
- Completed \$1.2M federal funded Phase III construction project at NWVMC.
- Received intent from Washburn County regarding resolution to further provide 50 additional acres to provide 40-70 years capacity to optimize land development as expansion is required.
- Revised / updated project scope for SWVMC Operational & Maintenance (O&M) to ensure submission for pre-application further considerations.
- Developed and updated "Cemetery Grounds Operational Manual for state cemeteries.
- Developed and implemented 5-day training and orientation program for all new hires to introduce new staff towards mission, policies, operations and responsibilities.

### **Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP):**

- Military Funeral Honors program (MFHP) coordinated honors for 14,820 military funeral over the biennium. An increase of 41% over the last biennium.
- The program members themselves performed or assisted with 1,298 services either at SWVMC or in the field.
- Since July 1, 2015 the MFHP provided training to seven new posts that were previously never certified. They also conducted recertification events for 36 additional posts.

### **Upcoming Initiatives:**

- Roll out CemNet program within the Tri-Cemetery system and re-align office procedures to CemNet processes.
- Review, confirm and verify internal historical records for the Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery to ensure they are accurate.
- Revise/update Cemeteries policies and procedure for Tri-Cemeteries.
- Develop donation program for Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery based on desire of families and veterans that contribute to the cemetery beautification and master plan.
- Continue to establish goals for monument order and timelessness placement of headstones for the Tri-Cemeteries to ensure that graves at state cemeteries are marked in a reasonable time.
- Plan, organize and prepare for up-coming NCA Compliance review at CWVMC in 2018
- Ensure that viable burial options continue at existing state cemeteries so there is no interruption of services for families.
- Develop and implement grounds maintenance plan that the Tri-cemeteries to ensure grounds maintenance and appearance.
- Continue to make up-grades to the Honors system software to better streamline operations including improved data displays, system warnings to prevent service conflicts and enhance search capabilities

## **DIVISION OF VETERANS HOMES**

The Division of Veterans Homes provides long-term and short-term rehabilitative care to veterans, eligible spouses and gold star parents at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes located in King and Union Grove, and Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The Veterans Home at King provides skilled nursing services for up to 721 veterans. 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.

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

## **Wisconsin Veterans Home – King**

The Veterans Home - King is located on a 42-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, with four nursing care buildings.

The individual skilled nursing facilities at King are licensed for the following:

- 205-bed Ainsworth Hall,
- 116-bed MacArthur Hall,
- 200-bed Olson Hall and,
- 200-bed Stordock Hall.

Each of these four buildings is separately licensed. More than three-quarters of all beds are located in private rooms. King is Medicare certified. In addition to skilled nursing, dietary, maintenance and housekeeping, the following services are provided:

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

### Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Implemented a new electronic health record system, Point Click Care, throughout all four nursing care buildings.
- Completed the CMS required comprehensive Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) Plan
- Maintained a five star rating in the Quality Measures domain of the Five Star Quality Report for all four nursing care buildings.
- Implemented Payroll Based Journal (PBJ) system for reporting care hours to CMS, as mandated by CMS.
- Remained under the CMS re-hospitalization rate for all four nursing care buildings.
- Implemented Phase One CMS Requirements of Participation (Policy revision / development, staff education / training)
- Developed a nursing recruiter position to lead efforts at King in filling vacancies.
- Implemented pet therapy program in Stordock Hall. Sophie came to work at King in July.
- Initiated a free scrub exchange for staff to reduce costs for staff who wear uniforms to work.
- Initiated the Crop-Coop that is a free exchange of produce between staff.
- Developed and began publication of a staff newsletter, the King Konnection.
- Developed the Equity and Diversity committee
- Implemented an every other weekend schedule for certified nursing assistants
- Obtained Medicare Certification

### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Expand Namaste-related Program in all four nursing care buildings. Namaste is a one-to-one care program geared for dementia and end-of-life members.
- Exploration of a new nursing staff care delivery model with the objectives of: decreasing CNA vacancies, increasing professional care delivery, decreasing a majority of agency staff and decreasing overtime.
- Continue plans for the opening of the new 192-bed Moses building.
- Development of phase 2 requirement of a Facility Assessment and an Emergency Preparedness Plan that includes collaboration with other facilities and stakeholders in Waupaca County.

- Exploring day care program options

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

The Veterans Home at Union Grove is located on the campus of the Southern Wisconsin Center (SWC). The Veterans Home at Union Grove includes a 40-bed assisted living facility (Fairchild Hall) and a 158-bed skilled nursing facility (Boland Hall). Boland Hall, a 158-bed licensed skilled nursing facility, offers the following services:

- Skilled nursing care
- Memory Care
- Physical, occupational and speech therapy
- Visits by physicians and nurse practitioners
- Dental services
- Podiatry services
- Social Work services
- Hospice care
- Activities
- Family Support Group

Fairchild Hall is licensed as a 40-bed Community-Based Residential Facility (CBRF) provides quality assisted living care and memory care services. The CBRF provides the following services:

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

The campuses activity center in Maurer Hall houses member activities including ceramics, woodworking shop, leather crafts, and library and computer center.

### Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Successfully implemented a new state-of-the-art Electronic Medical Record (Point click Care) to improve the quality of care and accountability.
- Developed and implement an innovative memory care program entitled “Music and Memory” which has greatly enhanced the quality of life for members challenged with dementia/Alzheimer. This program has been publicly applauded by governmental and private sector officials in the nursing home industry.
- Implemented a Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement program (QAPI) that has greatly improved the quality of care and medical outcomes delivered to members.

### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Continue to enhance revenue generation and gain efficiencies in expense management.
- Achieve a federal CMS 5 star quality rating (now 4 Stars) (state average is 3.5 Stars).

### **The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls**

The Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls is located in the city of Chippewa Falls. It is licensed as a Skilled Nursing Facility with 72 beds.

### Accomplishments 2015 – 2017:

- Maintained 98.6% occupancy.
- Overall rating of 5-Stars for 31 consecutive months (State average is 3.5 Stars).
  - Reduced non-essential urinary catheter usage from 8.6% to 0%.
  - Reduced depressive symptoms from 7.8% to 1.6%.
  - Reduced urinary tract infections from 10.6% to 4.4%.
- Achieved a deficiency-free Federal VA survey in 2017.
  - Life Safety Surveys have been deficiency-free for three consecutive years.
- Renewed the Management and Operational Services contract with Health Dimensions Group for another three years effective October 1, 2017.

### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Maintain occupancy at 98.6%.
- Improve our Quality Measures subset from 3 Stars to 5 Stars
- Implement “eMenuCHOICE” to enhance food choices and healthy eating
- Improve member satisfaction
  - Replace the annual My Innerview member satisfaction survey with the quarterly Abaqis system to improve timeliness of corrective action.
- Improve employee engagement and retention and implement a formalized mentorship program covering the entire first year of employment for all new hires.

## **DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES**

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

### Programs and Services include:

- Federal VA Claims
- State Approving Agency (SAA)
- Veterans Outreach/Marketing Team
- Veteran Housing & Recovery Programs (VHRP)
- Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP)

### **Federal VA Claims**

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 follow on accreditation continuing education credits. The bureau is located at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Regional Office in Milwaukee.

### Accomplishments FY 2015-FY 2017:

- Number of walk in veteran clients was 6,548, with a monthly average of 272 veterans.
- Economic yearly impact of the claims completed by DVA is over \$35 million each fiscal year.

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

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 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 FY 2015-FY 2017:**

- Received a rating of satisfactory from the JPRG (Joint Peer Review Group).
- Attended and supported the annual WACRAO (WI Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers) Veterans' Benefits Workshops held.
- Participated in monthly teleconferences with the Regional Processing Office, St. Louis, dealing with challenges and improvements to the compliance survey process.
- Conducted twenty-two compliance surveys of state educational facilities.

## **Veterans Outreach/Marketing Team**

The Outreach/Marketing team works actively to inform veterans about accessing federal and state benefits, programs and services.

### **Accomplishments FY 2015-FY 2017:**

- The Outreach Team coordinated and/or participated in more than 200 events throughout the State.
- Participated and planned various female Veteran Outreach events and conferences.

- Provided outreach and supportive services to the 11 Native American Tribes located in Wisconsin.
- Continued to engage veterans at Campus Open Houses to highlight benefits, programs and services available to student veterans.
- Continued to participate in various workshops, conferences and other events offered by other agencies and organizations in order to promote services and benefits to veterans.
- Continued to meet with the Federal VA, Department of Corrections to identify needs for veterans being released from incarceration.

### **Veterans Housing and Recovery Program**

The VHRP is a federal grant program designed for homeless veterans and those who are at risk of becoming homeless. These programs are located at three different locations within the state; Chippewa Falls, King and Union Grove with a total of 86 beds for veterans. The programs offer stable, secure and safe housing to these veterans while they receive the training and other services necessary for them to become self-supporting.

#### **Accomplishments FY 2015-FY 2017:**

- Served 124 veterans amongst the three locations.
- Participated in the various Veteran Stand downs conducted throughout the state.
- Met or exceeded all program goals established for each program.
- Conducted a variety of outreach activities to further promote the programs.

### **Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP):**

A Federal grant program intended to provide mental health and substance Abuse assistance for homeless, chronic and at risk of homeless veterans. Case managers go to the street and locate veterans and then provide appropriate services that they will need.

#### **Accomplishments FY 2015-FY 2017:**

- Provided/connected 805 veterans provided a variety of services
- 330 veterans requested mental health or substance abuse services
- Just under 1,500 services have been provided to these veterans

- Participated in various mental health events sponsored by the Federal VA and other organizations.

### **DIVISION OF ENTERPRISE SERVICES**

The Division of Enterprise Services (DES) provides management and program support to all the Department's operating units and works collaboratively to achieve a streamlined administrative process. The DES also works closely with the Department of Administration, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the Legislative Audit Bureau, and the Legislative Reference Bureau. The DES represents the department on multiple councils.

#### *Services provided include:*

- Human resource management.
- Payroll and benefits management.
- Financial management
- Budget management.
- Capital budget management.
- Health, safety and risk management services.
- Records management.
- Open records administration.
- Mail and fleet.
- 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 Human Resources:**

The mission of the Bureau of Human Resources 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 2015-2017:

- Realigned the HR Bureau to provide a dedicated staffing, classification, and compensation section for the agency.
- Scanned personnel files to electronic format for Union Grove and Central Offices.
- Hired an Affirmative Action Officer to lead the agency affirmative action committee (AAAC), provide hiring oversight, conduct investigations, and ensure consistent policy application.
- Hired an Employment Relations Specialist to lead the agency disciplinary process and policy implementation.
- Reorganized the bureau network drive to increase sharing across locations and enforce security provisions for HR roles.

### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Scan personnel files to electronic format at King.
- Implement an electronic recruitment tracking system that will have a secondary purpose of storing agency position descriptions for future use.
- Develop workflow mapping and standard operating procedures for the electronic recruitment tracking system and implement agency-wide staffing training for supervisors.
- Develop workflow mapping standard operating procedures and forms for new hire, transfer, and termination processing into HCM.
- Develop a standard operating procedure for tracking LTE hours to ensure thresholds are not exceeded and annuitants have not adverse impact.
- Develop workflow mapping and standard operating procedures for reclassification/reallocation requests to ensure timely processing and transparency.
- Reevaluate the WDVA DMC/DERA policy to increase flexible application for future iterations.
- Hire a Human Resources Assistant to bridge the payroll and HR gap for processing personnel transaction in STAR PeopleSoft and to perform random transaction auditing at all HR locations.
- Develop standard operating procedures for auditing required recruitment folders to meet compliance expectations.
- Develop workflow mapping and standard operating procedures for disciplinary actions with a common policy and approach utilized across the agency.

- Develop a standard step-by-step disciplinary process form packet for distribution to agency supervisors to ensure compliance with applicable policy and laws.
- Implement an on-going supervisor training for disciplinary and employee performance issues.
- Hire an HR Training Coordinator to identify training gaps, facilitate vendor-training opportunities, and act as a resource for disciplinary and performance issues.
- Implement an exit interview process, which is aligned with employee termination processing, to determine issue trends for management decision making.
- Develop workflow mapping and standard operating procedures for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to maintain consistent application and tracking across the agency.
- Develop workflow mapping and standard operating procedures for requests for unpaid leave of absence to provide appointing authority oversight and tracking across the agency.

### **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), technical support (network and desktop) and application development. BOIS provides IT support for network hardware and software, desktop/laptop hardware and software, security, and telecommunication equipment. BOIS develops and maintains automated systems or processes the agency uses to support its business programs and to provide service to its customers who include department staff, veterans and their families, County Veteran and Tribal Veteran Service Offices, School Officials and Veteran Service Organizations.

### **Accomplishments 2015-2017:**

- Implementation of STAR PeopleSoft agency-wide and providing data for migration as needed.
- Implementation of the department's intranet redesign using SharePoint.
- Developed the CemNet Cemetery Operations System for all DVA Cemetery sites.

- Made changes to the Veterans Benefits Application Tracking System to allow County Veterans Services Offices and Tribal Veterans Services Offices more access to more effectively serve veterans and their families.
- Assist Museum with OHMS veteran oral history interview project.
- Network infrastructure planning for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum/Wisconsin Historical Society State Archives Preservation Facility construction project.
- Completion of the King Voice over IP (VOIP) phone system project.
- Create a timekeeping method to capture direct care staff hours to comply with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services requirement of Payroll Based Journal quarterly submission requirement for Skilled Nursing Facilities.
- Assisted with implementation of PointClickCare Electronic Health Record system at Veterans Homes at King and Union Grove.
- Installed kiosks at Veterans Homes at King and Union Grove for Nursing staff to access PointClickCare throughout the member floors.
- Network infrastructure planning for Moses Hall construction project at Veterans Home at King.
- Pharmacy Pyxis upgrade for the Veterans Homes at King and Union Grove.
- Upgraded Channel 900 equipment for on-site information/entertainment local channel at King to provide local programming and the potential for live feed of events.
- Security Camera Expansion project at Veterans Home at King, expanding from 14 to 56 cameras.
- Upgraded all computer network infrastructure equipment at the Veterans Home at Union Grove.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Plan and execute IT Central Office move to Department of Revenue building.
- Implementation of a 3-year computer upgrade program for the agency, budget permitting.
- Wireless network upgrade at Central Office, Museum and the Veterans Homes at King and Union Grove.
- Migrate to new email system.
- Upgrade client computers to Windows 10 and Office 2016 or Office 365.
- Upgrade MyWisVets.com Veteran portal.
- Upgrade Veterans Benefits Application Tracking System (VBATS).

- Install IT equipment in Wisconsin Veterans Museum/Wisconsin Historical Society State Archives Preservation Facility when construction is finished.
- Evaluate and procure a Staff Scheduling System for the Veterans Homes for 24/7 staff to replace Agency Scheduling.
- Implementation of time capture devices at Veterans Homes.
- Expand Virtual Desktop Infrastructure to Veterans Homes at King and Union Grove.
- Install IT equipment in Moses Hall at King when construction is finished.
- Implementation of Linga Point-of-Sale system at King.

### **Bureau of Budget, Policy and Facilities:**

The Bureau of Budget, Policy and Facilities (BBPF) 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 2015-2017:**

- Continued to coordinate the construction of a new 192-bed skilled nursing facility at King.
- Completed signage project at King.
- Continued to fine-tune the budget staff's capabilities in STAR.
- Successfully monitored the operating budgets of the Department.
- Conducted internal audits on disabled American Veterans (DAV) and Veterans Assistance Program (VAP).

- Submitted the department budget (including capital budget) in September of 2016.
- Completed three major projects at Chippewa Falls (bath Heat, flag pole and court yard)
- Completed ADA bath renovations at King
- Continued to submit and monitor grants for fourteen (14) federal construction projects.
- Completed Phase 1A of the Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery.
- Completed the heating plant and generator project at King.
- Completed the canopy project at Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery.
- Completed the roofing projects at Union Grove.
- Renovated the King electrical substation.
- Completed the arc flash evaluations at King and Union Grove.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Remove the cottages at King from the historic preservation list to allow for updated facilities.
- Continue to monitor the 192-bed Moses Hall Project.
- Conduct Audits on WDVA grants, as necessary.
- Complete promulgation of rule VA-6 – Homes Rate setting.
- Apply to the Federal government for funding for the Veterans Homeless Recovery Program (VHRP).
- Prepare for the FY2019-21 Biennial Budget (Budget due in September 2018).

**Bureau of Fiscal Services:**

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

- Accounts payable processing (e.g., operating costs, travel vouchers, loan and grant disbursements, master lease, debt services, bond calls).
- Accounts receivable and receipts processing (agency, members, collection, donations).

- Loan accounting, mortgages, and foreclosures.
- Maintenance of internal controls and compliance for fiscal transactions.
- Pre and post audit of financial transactions.
- Financial reporting to internal and external customers (grants, cost reports, rates, gifts and bequest, projects, etc.).
- Contract administration, requisition, purchase order and purchase card oversight to ensure compliance with state procurement manual.
- Inventory control of medical and facility supplies.
- Asset and surplus property management.
- Year-end closing and CAFR reporting.

Accomplishments 2015-17:

- Completed conversion and implementation to a new Official State Accounting System PeopleSoft.
- Completed conversion and implementation to Point Click Care (PCC) at the homes for long-term care.
- Completed and received Medicare Certification at the King Home.
- Audited by Legislative Audit Bureau and the Federal Veterans Administration with minimal findings.
- Increase P-Card spend to create efficiencies and to increase the agencies P-Card rebate from DOA to offset other bills. From FY2015 to FY2017 increased P-Card spend by over \$1.3 million dollars.
- Created an interagency partnership with the Department of Health Services to house at Union Grove, an Economic Support Worker from Racine County to complete and assist members and their families with Medicaid applications.
- Onboarding of a Purchasing Agent Objective to assist the department with purchasing and contracts.
- Developed and updated a new Fiscal Services Intranet page for easy access and resources for DVA staff.
- Restructured the responsibility of the copays for Medicare B services to members creating better symmetry in the homes.
- Changed the Theda Care contract so physicians bill Medicare for physician visits.
- Mandated the use of the state WISBuy system to ensure better control and compliance with mandatory state contracts and the state procurement manual.
- Continue to have \$0.00 interest payments on invoices for late payments
- Completed tagging of all assets in the agency per policy.

- Completed review and analysis of building content value for all DVA facilities for insurance purposes.
- Created Department specific Job Aids for PeopleSoft implementation.
- Prepared and completed department-wide PeopleSoft training for Accounts Payable, Direct Payment Requests, Expense Reports, Purchasing Card Reconciliation, and Requisition/Purchase Order processing.
- Modified the centralized Purchase Order invoice processing to utilize PeopleSoft notification capabilities via Accounts Payable Voucher.
- Centralized printing and mailing of 1098 and 1099 tax forms for Mortgage and Education loans.
- Consolidated in-house delinquent loan database notes with Mortgage Servicer System to eliminate maintaining two databases.
- Troubleshoot PeopleSoft Finance problems and issues.
- Fielded Inventory Control PeopleSoft system at King Veterans Home as one of only a few select State Agencies to do so.
- Established Medical Supply Working Group with leadership at the King Veterans Home for continuous quality improvement on:
  - Beds and mattresses
  - Incontinent products
  - Respiratory services
  - Wound care
  - Slings and lifts
  - Patient monitoring equipment

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Continue to increase P-Card spend to create efficiencies and to increase rebate received from DOA which is based on P-Card spend by agency.
- Sell DVA's mortgage loan portfolio.
- Complete updated Internal Control Plan.
- Improve reporting out of PeopleSoft for end users to include budget, spend, revenue and cash balances.
- Creating a contract with Aurora for inpatient visits by the physicians for the service connected members.
- Restructuring all contracts specific to members that have a billing implication to ensure compliance with CRF VA 38.51.
- Improve asset management for non-capital asset, inventory and custodian.

- Review, update and create policies and procedures for PeopleSoft now that the system is more stable and consistent. This includes year-end processes.
- Continue to document roles and responsibilities for all Bureau of Fiscal Services staff to look for efficiencies in staffing and work load.
- Continue to cross train positions to ensure adequate backup of all Fiscal Services duties.
- Continue to write step-by-step procedures for daily processes in the Bureau.
- Complete interval audits for Pcard, travel and accounts payable.
- Possibly request Delegation Authority for procurement from DOA.
- Create on-line donation site to try and increase amounts donated to the agency.
- Clean-up finance folders and outdated documentation/records.
- Review supply contract and purchasing trends for cost savings.
- Review copier contracts, amount of copies, cost of toner and replacement process to reduce copier cost for the agency.
- Automate the file transfer process with the Department of Revenue State Debt Collection, mandatory file change to .XML format by January 2018.
- Review Loan accounts for charge-off and uncollectible loans, reduces the loan database size.
- Finalize the department-wide collection policy.
- Environmentally and fiscally address surplus buildings at King Campus in preparation for the new Moses Hall skilled nursing facility.
- Furniture and equipment improvements for Stordock Hall in preparation for transition to new Moses Hall.

### **WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM**

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) operates two museums are Smithsonian affiliated and 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.

#### *Programs and Activities:*

- Public programs and exhibitions

- Marketing
- Museum research center/archives
- Education
- Retail operations and visitor services
- Collections Management program
- Wisconsin Veterans Museum-King

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Continue planning, packing, and conduct the relocation of archives and artifacts to the State Archives Preservation Facility by November 2018.
- Continue observance of the WWI Centennial through public programs; including a major scholarly symposium in October 2017.
- Open new exhibit in museum space at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King.
- Develop new exhibit featuring WWII art for exhibition in 2019.
- Implement online retail marketing strategy to increase net store revenue.
- Increase retail net profitability by 10%.
- Operate with financial and staffing efficiency to support the mission of WDVA.
- Augment our established statewide traveling exhibits program with newly developed exhibits.

**Public Programs and Exhibitions:**

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

Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Achieved 774% increase in outreach numbers from FY15 (22,696) to FY17 (198,426).
- Achieved 158% increase in museum attendance from FY15 (113,546) to FY17 (293,928).
- Successful launched the traveling exhibit “Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name” featuring photographs of every Wisconsin service member killed in action during the Vietnam War in partnership with WPR and WPT.

- Continued retrofit of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Galleries with LED lighting – offering greater energy efficiency, better color rendering, and less light impact upon artifacts.
- Held a special program entitled “Recognizing the Hmong: The Secret War in Laos” to commemorate Wisconsin’s Hmong citizens’ contributions to the Vietnam War in November 2015.
- Incorporated the Wisconsin Hmong veterans’ story to the permanent Vietnam exhibit at WVM – Madison, including an exhibit video highlighting oral histories collected by WVM.
- Worked with partner organizations (including the American Legion) to secure the Company B, La Crosse Light Guard flag for preservation in the permanent collection and installed it as a new interpretive artifact in the Civil War gallery.
- Implemented the ‘Return to Camp Randall – Civil War Encampment and Monument Dedication’ to officially close the State’s Sesquicentennial Commemorations of the Civil War in July 2015.
- Continued integration of new artifacts and stories from the USS *Cole* in the War on Terror permanent exhibit at WVM – Madison.
- Multiple partnerships including Distinguished Lecture Series with UW Madison’s History Department offering two lectures every spring and fall, and Wisconsin Historical Society Press book talks each season.
- Completed initial demolition work for King Exhibit renovation and monitored exhibit development with contractor Split Rock Studios.
- Designed, implemented, and installed two WWI exhibits commemorating the centennial of WWI - *The Art of Persuasion: Mobilizing the Masses* featuring WWI propaganda posters and *Beyond the Trenches: Stories from the Front* highlighting contributions of individual Wisconsin Veterans.
- Hosted the W. Britain Military History Symposium.
- Established Wisconsin’s WWI Centennial Commission.
- Worked with local partners and organizations to commemorate and raise awareness of the WWI centennial such as collaborating with Wisconsin Brewing Company for their new “Red Arrow” product and provided supporting artifact display.
- Launched quarterly dinner-and-a-lecture program (Mess Night).
- Launched quarterly happy hour program (Cocktails with a Curator).
- Re-launched book club program (Warrior Book Club).
- Added a second day of cemetery tours for the public (candlelit tours).
- Introduced SPARK! program for people in early stages of memory loss due to Alzheimer’s and dementia.

### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Continue to build traveling exhibits offerings, adding a WWI traveling exhibit.
- Planning, coordinating, and implementing WW100 Symposium in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin–Madison History Department, Wisconsin Historical Society, and other local partners.
- Continue to lead the Wisconsin WWI Centennial Commission and associated activities during the centennial commemorations running from 2017 through 2019.
- Develop, design, and implement veteran art exhibit featuring the illustrations and artwork of soldiers in the field including Harold Schmitz from WWII for 2019.
- Begin development of a new exhibit featuring the souvenirs of service members from their experiences overseas from multiple eras of history.
- Continue to implement gallery lighting retrofit with LED replacements.
- Continue to update artifact displays in the galleries WVM – Madison.
- Construct and open the newly renovated gallery at WVM – King.
- Continue to grow Cocktails with a Curator audience and begin offering that program bi-monthly.
- Plan for 2018 Cemetery Tours as a celebration of the centennial of the WWI Armistice with more actors and stories.

### **Marketing:**

Support the museum and its programs by increasing the positive public perception of the WVM and the WDVA. Develops and maintains the museum's public identity and brand profile by supporting the Wisconsin Veterans Museum's vision to be regarded as the leading interpreter of the Wisconsin veteran experience through marketing initiatives focused on statewide awareness, museum and program attendance, and digital strategy implementation.

### Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Continued marketing campaigns with Laughing Constable FY16 & FY17, with PR Media estimated Impressions: 7,214,846 in FY16.
- Started marketing promotion of Wisconsin's WWI Centennial programs, events, and marketing efforts for all WWI related events.

- Wisconsin at War Stories booklet reproduction to include Native Americans DeNomie and Red Cloud.
- Development and printing of General Museum Flyer & Research Center Flyer to fall within brand standards of WVM.
- Development and printing of new outdoor banners for museum location to a fall within brand standards (includes veterans featured in Wisconsin at War Stories booklets) of WVM.
- Creative execution of (3) - 30 second radio spots and (4) billboards for both years.
- Launched Pinterest platform featuring content from the WVM archives department.
- Started website upgrade planning in FY16, to include mobile responsiveness of museum website, allowing the public to have a digital experience on any mobile platform.
- Managed content for the social media strategy (Facebook) advertisement to increase growth in Facebook community size and page engagement/reach, with geo-targeted group in Wisconsin, Chicago +50 mile radius. This obtained the museum sell out capacity for all paid events.
- Launched and completed marketing campaign from for temporary exhibit "THE ART OF PERSUASION MOBILIZING THE MASSES IN WWI." Resulting in website traffic increase 3.36% over the 90-day period with 2,368 clicks on 2,833,562 impressions resulting in a CTR of 0.08% (industry average is 0.05%). This campaign resulted in new web visitor increased by 8.95%. Cost per click was better than the estimated amount at \$1.67 CPC on an estimated \$4.00. Ad position was 1.2 overall, falling in the desired first position on the search page.
- Development, implementation, and launch of digital campaign with Laughlin Constable for temporary exhibit, "WWI BEYOND THE TRENCHES: STORIES FROM THE FRONT."
- Produced traveling exhibit brochures for new Traveling Art Exhibit program.
- Published (4) editions of The Bugle, WVM Quarterly Publication each year.
- Development and implementation of marketing content and strategy for WI WWI Commission. Content includes website, 3-minute video for WI WWI Commission Conference, WWI Symposium event.
- Overall marketing efforts resulted in:
  - Increased website visits 4.2% from FY16 (82,155) to FY17 (85,656)
  - Increased Facebook reach 33% from FY16 (1,195,603) FY17 (1,591,070)

### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Launch of new mobile responsive WVM website, new website will allow the public to have a digital experience on any mobile platform.
- Monitoring of results from Laughlin Constable of summer marketing campaign of temporary exhibit, “WWI BEYOND THE TRENCHES STORIES FROM THE FRONT.”
- Managing Laughlin Constable FY18 & FY19 marketing campaigns (\$100,000) with campaign initiatives focused on ecommerce strategy of new WVM web store.
- Launch of new mobile responsive WVM Store website, new website will allow the public to have a digital experience on any mobile platform and increase on-line sales.
- Development and implementation of new WVM Store e-commerce marketing strategy.
- Completion of General Museum Education Flyer to fall within brand standards of WVM.
- Execute marketing campaign for new Traveling Art Exhibit Program.
- Continued promotion of WWI Symposium and commemorative WWI events and programs.
- Continue development and implementation of WVM digital strategy.
- Manage marketing campaign efforts of next temporary exhibit.

### **Museum Research Center/Archives:**

Support the WVM and its mission by acquiring, processing, safeguarding, and making available to the public archival materials relevant to Wisconsin veterans.

### Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Launched online World War I database with information about 122,000 Wisconsin men and women in April 2017 to mark 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US entering that conflict.
- Completed digitization of over 1,700 Civil War photographs through IMLS Grant.
- Integrated oral history records into online PastPerfect Database.
- Launched OHMS (Oral History Metadata Synchronizer) on website to create better and useful access of recorded oral histories.

- Launched Wisconsin Life program in April 2017 featuring World War I veteran interviews in collaboration with WPR.
- Successfully handled over 4,000 reference requests from around the country and the world.
- Developed long-range digitization and storage protocols for oral history and archival collections.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Create multiple consistent points of access to highlight featured oral history interviews, to include audio blogs, podcast episodes, and partnering with public radio.
- Digitize the Collection's oral history interviews that are on analog video formats.
- Complete move of processed and unprocessed manuscript collections to the SAPF.
- Digitize analog VHS tapes in manuscript collections to improve access.
- Develop digital viewing stations in Research Center to accommodate patrons who wish to view materials being held at SAPF.
- Create greater oral history participation with service members who served in recent conflicts through a grant partnership with the Madison Public Library.

**Education:**

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

Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Developed STEM-based educational offerings and incorporated relevant STEM-based labels in the permanent exhibit galleries.
- Established School Days Off activities series.
- Re-started Girl Scout badge workshops.
- Re-vamped the travel trunks to include complete field kits for soldiers from each conflict; created new lesson plans for the travel trunks.
- Wrote new manuals for giving tours in the museum galleries.
- Increased number of regular volunteers in all departments from 19 people to 46.

- Held Volunteer Recognition lunch in 2017 and set up events and field trips for volunteers and staff.
- Restructured intern and volunteer processes.
- Developed online evaluations for use with all programs.
- Created paper evaluations for teachers to use on school tours.
- Participated in Wisconsin Science Festival in collaboration with Wisconsin Institute of Discovery.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Continue to grow WVM audience through additional new broad-based educational offerings.
- Continue to develop new and existing collaborative relationships with external organizations and community partners.
- Participate in LRNG digital badge pilot program for high schoolers in spring semester 2018 by developing digital platforms for learning through mobile devices.
- Develop and implement summer day camps for older elementary and middle school students beginning in summer 2018.

**Store Operations and Visitor Services:**

The retail store provides visitors with point of contact service and retail merchandise.

Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Posted two consecutive years of profitable Store Operations in FY14 and FY15 for the first time in nearly ten years.
- Increased the net sales of the Museum Gift Store by 38% from FY14 (\$85,058) to FY15 (\$116,860).
- Increased the net sales of the Online Operations by 5% from FY14 (\$3111) to FY15 (\$3250).
- Identified new vendors to introduce new, high quality product offerings that support the goals of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and improve the overall profitability of the Gift Store.
- Continued profitable relationships with companies such as Schott NYC and Cobi interlocking block toys.
- Improved selection of product to promote businesses that are either Veteran Owned (VO) or support Veterans Programs (VP) such as GI Joe

Coffee (VO), Doc Spartan (VO), Eagle Crest (VO), Duke Cannon (VP), and Desktop Dioramas (VP).

- Improved the fixtures and presentation of the Gift Store through the implementation of glass cubes in order to improve/maximize storage and sales spaces.
- Improved development of items that reflect the collections of the Museum and reflect a Made in the USA ethos with the Museum line WI Vintage line for T-Shirts, Cuppa, Heritage Metalworks for drinkware that is all Made in the USA.

#### Upcoming Initiatives:

- Continued emphasis on developing Online Operations to increase sales.
- Will be implementing digital marketing with assistance of Laughlin Constable for on-line store after launch of new store website, including using Instagram for main store marketing strategy focus.
- Identify new product lines through companies with military branch licensing and/or owned by US Veterans such as US Wings for military branch apparel and 2myhero for stationary/greeting cards.
- Implement a strategy to increase profitability by identifying products with lower wholesale cost, but higher price point that will reap a 2-1 profit margin or better.
- Collaborate with WVM Marketing to improve Store message to the public to increase overall sales, in-store, in ads, and on-line.
- Continue to develop product lines based upon collections of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.
- Continue to improve the customer service of the WVM Gift Store through training and improving staff knowledge of product and Museum events.
- Continue relationships with Madison-area groups to increase visibility and recognition of Veterans Museum bricks and mortar store.

#### **Collections Management Program:**

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

#### Accomplishments 2015-2017:

- Added and processed 442 new objects to the collection.

- Completed DNA testing to determine gender of the Civil War mascot, Old Abe.
- Completed conservation and stabilization of 17 artifacts.
- Surveyed the collection for radioactive materials and deaccessioned and disposed of five items found to be hazardous.
- Returned 15 military medals abandoned to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue in the early 1990s to the associated veteran or next of kin.
- Completed return and processing for 880 museum objects previously stored and/or on display at King.
- Uploaded all oral history catalog records to the PastPerfect database in order to streamline processing and searching and to make the records more accessible to the public.
- Added biographical search capabilities to the online collection database allowing researchers and veterans greater access to collections.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- Complete packing of the artifact collection in preparation for the move to SAPF.
- Relocate the collection and all pertinent staff and equipment to SAPF.
- Relocate the education collection to 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in preparation for termination of basement lease agreement.
- Artifact installation for the new exhibit at King.
- Process 92 artifacts found in collection that were previously deaccessioned.