

**ANNUAL REPORT
 OZAUKEE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE
 PORT WASHINGTON, WI
 March 2, 2011**

**TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
 OZAUKEE COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

I hereby submit the report of activities of the Veterans Service Office for the period of January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010.

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits

Primary Mortgage Loan.....	\$	0
Home Improvement Loan.....	\$	0
Property Tax Rebate	\$	134,818.00
Personal Loan Program.....	\$	5,000
Emergency Grants (Health or Subsistence Aid).....	\$	0
Education Grants.....	\$	<u>43,869.62</u>
TOTAL State Benefits	\$	183,687.62

Federal Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits

Primary Mortgage Loan.....	\$	13,651,959
Compensation (Disability) & Pension.....	\$	7,449,000
Death Indemnity Compensation/ Insurance.....	\$	802,000
Education and Vocational Rehabilitation	\$	736,000
VA Healthcare	\$	<u>5,804,000</u>
TOTAL Federal Benefits.....	\$	28,442,959

The State of Wisconsin Primary Home Loan program had no funding during 2010, hence, no loans were available. Lack of utilization of other State of Wisconsin Benefits can be attributed to the significant “tightening” of the various programs eligibility criteria. The addition of the Property Tax Rebate Program for severely disabled veterans shows the only significant input to the veterans community from the State of Wisconsin. This is a direct result of the WDVA 10-Year Solvency Plan. Federal Benefits continued to increase over prior years.

Veterans Service Office Annual Report for FY' 2010 (cont.)

Since 1998 we have seen significant changes to eligibility for VA health care. Even accounting for increased cost of Healthcare overall, we have seen another increase in utilization by our County's Veteran population during the past year.

During 2010 our office has provided transportation to 290 veterans for hospital appointments and day surgeries. This number appears to have stabilized, in comparison to the past years, despite the loss of some of our "regular clients". The average age of a WWII veteran is now over 88. The Korean War population has now reached the age where increased medical care is required, and the oldest of our Vietnam veterans have started to become a factor in this increased demand as well. Our newest veterans returning from conflicts overseas are also making a regular appearance in our office. We started charging veterans for transport to their appointments at the VA Medical Center during 2003. In 2010 we collected \$1970 from this co-pay arrangement. The Veterans Service Commission has waived the co-pay requirement for 12 veterans to date, due to their low-income status. WDVA has also added new reporting requirements for the Transportation Grant Program.

We changed contractors effective January 1, 2009 for our out-of-county wheelchair transport of veterans. The previous contractor (Johnson Bus – West Bend) did not wish to renew. We have subsequently contracted with Ohana Ambulance and Transport Services out of Port Washington and the renewed their contract for FY' 2011. They have been providing timely, quality and caring services.

We saw approximately 550 veterans/surviving family members during the past year in the office. This represents just a fraction of total assisted due the volume of telephone inquiries we deal with on a routine basis. We have opened 55 new files and said farewell to 158 of our county's veterans.

The Veterans' Homes at King and at Union Grove have continued their operations, and our county's residents continue to be reluctant to make application to those facilities, due primarily to their desire to remain near their relatives, and the local community. I currently have no applications pending to Union Grove or to King.

The coming year should provide quite a challenge on both the State and Federal levels. We are continuing to see many "returnees" from the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This influx of new veterans will in turn be seeking to avail themselves of their benefits. The advent of the Wisconsin GI Bill has been a real boon to our State's veterans. With the implementation of the Federal "Post 9/11—GI Bill" we will face some challenges in integrating it with our own WI GI Bill; those challenges continue to vex a number of us in the veterans' community.

Veterans Service Office Annual Report for FY' 2010 (cont.)

The Veterans Trust Fund at the State level has not been in the best of financial health, and all of the veterans groups have been asked to “prioritize” the benefits that need to be continued. This process will be addressed by the State Legislature, again. The financial picture for the Trust Fund has shown little improvement, and the CVSO community will be lobbying to preserve existing benefits. Some in-roads were made during the past year on the Legislative level, but a great deal more needs to be done to restore programs restricted by the Solvency Plan. If the legislature fails to address this issue, State Veterans benefits will cease to exist in 2013, except for the Nursing Homes.

On the federal level, there never has been, nor will there ever be, enough funding to care for every veteran seeking healthcare. The VA has directed all of their medical centers to place a higher priority on new veterans returning from the war overseas, than on the existing veterans population. These new “returnees” have a five year “window” of eligibility for healthcare through the VA, even if they do not have any service-connected disabilities. Veterans with Service Connected disabilities will continue to receive the highest priority.

My staff assistant, who began here in her new position in July 2009, has proven to be highly motivated and willing to learn as much as she can about Veterans Benefits. She and I will continue to provide the highest quality service possible to the veterans of our county, while remaining within budgetary limits.

I would like to thank County Veterans Commission and the Veterans of Ozaukee County for their support during this past year. It has been a rewarding year. I look forward to continuing to serve the veterans of this county in the coming years.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenneth A. Brown
Veterans Service Officer