

WAUSHARA COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT – 2010

The Waushara County Veterans Service office is staffed with a full time County Veteran's Service Officer and full time Administrative Assistant. These two personnel manage records for 7,767 living and deceased veterans. The County Veterans Service Office is located in room 121, in the North Annex, at 230 West Parks Street, Wautoma, WI. Office hours are 8AM to 4:30PM, Monday thru Friday. Throughout 2010, the majority of client contacts were through appointments and outreach efforts although the office continues to see many walk-ins.

The CVSO office is governed by sections 45.80 and 45.81 of the Wisconsin statutes. The Oversight Committee for the office is the Veterans Service Committee, which is made up of three Waushara County Supervisors, appointed by the Waushara County Board Chairperson. The Committee meets the 1st Monday of every other month at 8:15 AM in the CVSO Office. The office is further assisted by the Veterans Service Commission, which helps to adjudicate financial decisions. The Veterans Service Commission is made up of three Waushara County residents, who are veterans. They are appointed for a 3 year term by the County Board Chairperson, and meet as needed to decide financial matters outside of the limitations of the VSO.

In 2010, funding for the office and services was supplemented by the successful application for, and receipt of; the WDVA CVSO Grant of \$10,000.00, the WDVA Transportation grant of \$2317.04, and by \$7,666.94 in transportation co-pays collected to offset transportation costs.

The year was the first full year with the new CVSO, Accreditation Training was a major focal point in 2010, and subsequently, the administrative assistant gained accreditation with the American Legion, training and access for the WDVA VPN One computer system, and continuing education training through the WI CVSO Association Fall training conference. The assistant also hosted training for the CVSO Assistants in the subjects of Parkinson's disease, Selected Reserve and Regular Army Education Benefits. The CVSO completed WDVA Accreditation training conducted by WDVA, National Accreditation training and testing conducted by NACVSO, and Lobbyist Training conducted by the WDVA. The CVSO completed continuing education training through attendance at the WI CVSO Association Fall training conference.

In 2010, the Veterans Services Office continued to be a conduit for revenue coming into the county. During the year, the office gained 161 new veterans, and provided direct services to over 983 veterans and their dependents. Through this assistance, Waushara County Veterans received nearly \$11,000,000 in Federal benefits, consisting of; \$5,493,000 for compensation and pension, \$176,000.00 for Education & Vocational Rehabilitation and \$242,000.00 from Insurance and Indemnities. Veterans also received over \$4,963,000.00 in Medical Care from the VA, providing some relief to other county, and state assets.

Although the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs had not published their financial statements at the time of this report, preliminary numbers indicate a significant departure from the previous year's consumption of State Veterans Benefits. This is due in a great part to a reduction in available revenue, and the resultant restrictions on approved applications, and the Wisconsin School systems use of Federal funds (Post 9/11 GI Bill) to supplant the Wisconsin GI Bill benefit. Waushara County Veterans received \$19,885 in Wisconsin benefits in 2010. The breakdown of these benefits is; Personal Loan Programs \$2,000, Educational Grants \$3,000, and Aid to Needy Veterans Grants \$14,885. In addition this office processed 18 new applications for the Wisconsin

GI Bill, with an estimated value of \$231,493. Waushara county veterans received \$146,744 in State Property Tax refunds.

The amount in back checks awarded to Waushara County vets continues to increase, and 2010 was a phenomenal year. For claims settled in 2010, the back checks totaled \$651,000.

Transportation grants along with our budgeted money (\$21,000) allowed us to transport 494 veterans a total of 33,057 miles to their appointments in 2010. There was a slight decrease in usage in 2010. Unfortunately, the reason for the decrease was due to the death of some of the frequent riders.

The Veterans Service Commission provided \$4631 in financial assistance to our needy veterans. The Commission grant was assisted by the donation of \$313.00 from Waushara County EMS "red shirt" sales. The grant is a one time assistance grant used to help veterans through tough times. It can be used to address any need, however, this is only granted when it will substantively aid in a permanent fix to a problem, rather than simply offering temporary relief.

The VA One VPN Computer system, which allows access to the VA computer information for updates on what is happening with claims, proved to be a major administrative burden, and multiple contacts with the VARO's technical staff have been fruitless in gaining and maintaining continual access.

Outreach is still our number one goal for the office and we continue to be involved in the following activities:

- Monthly Newsletter (VETS VANTAGE) now available to be e-mailed
- Our Web Site
- Newspaper articles
- Monthly visits to Waushara County meal sites
- Home visits when veterans are unable to come to the office
- Monthly veterans group at the Redgranite Correctional Institution
- Booth at the Waushara County Fair
- Public speaking opportunities
- Visits to the regions skilled nursing facilities

The CVSO and his assistant participate in the following educational programs and training:

- Fall CVSO Association of Wisconsin Conferences
- VISN Medical Centers Update Meetings
- SW CVSO Meetings
- WDVA Board Meetings and CVSO Advisory Council meetings
- Assistant and CVSO completed Continuing Education benefits training.
- CVSO completed National Accreditation Training and Testing

Goals for 2011; The educational goals for the CVSO are attendance at the 2011 National CVSOA Conference to attend Continuing Education Credit to maintain National Accreditation, as well as TRIPP Training to gain access to the VA One VPN computer system. Educational goals for the assistant are attendance at the National CVSOA Conference to gain National Accreditation, and continuing credit training through WI CVSOA conferences.