

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**OZAUKEE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE**  
**PORT WASHINGTON, WI**  
**FEBRUARY 16, 2004**

**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, 2003 through December 31, 2003.

**Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits**

Primary Mortgage Loan.....	\$ 1,762,358
Home Improvement Loan.....	\$ 50,000
Personal Loan Program.....	\$ 78,143 Emergency
Grants (Health or Subsistence Aid).....	\$ 2,850 Education
Grants.....	<u>\$ 32,875</u>
<b>TOTAL State Benefits</b>	<b>\$ 1,926,226</b>

**Federal Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits**

Primary Mortgage Loan.....	\$ 9,952,513
Compensation ( Disability ) & Pension.....	\$ 4,074,090
Death Indemnity Compensation.....	\$ 625,625
Burial Allowances .....	\$ 3,500
Government Life Insurance Proceeds .....	\$ 48,500
Education and Vocational Rehabilitation .....	\$ 193,974
VA Healthcare .....	\$ 2,463,000
<b>TOTAL Federal Benefits.....</b>	<b>\$ 17,361,202</b>

This is the first year we have had fiscal estimates from the VA regarding healthcare expenditures by county. The number is based on what they call "unique" patients. Our County has far more veterans enrolled than what VA statistics reflect for "unique" patients. Therefore I suspect that the actual expenditure is nearly double what is listed.

Since 1998 we have seen significant changes to eligibility for VA health care, whose full impact is only now becoming fully apparent. The federal budget for FY 2003 has included another significant increase for the VA Healthcare System. In January of 2003, the Department of Veterans Affairs "froze" new applications for individuals who exceed their maximum income caps. This "suspension" of enrollments was continued into 2004.

During the past year our office has provided transportation to 320 veterans for hospital appointments and day surgeries, we have record of more than 3900 scheduled appointments at the VA Medical Center for the last year. **This number has more than tripled since 2000.** This number is expected to continue to increase in the coming year, due to the aging veteran population as well as the large number of Ozaukee veterans who have enrolled during the past five years. The average age of a WWII veteran is now over 80. 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, not to mention our newest veterans returning from conflicts overseas.

Our office has seen approximately 1100 veterans/surviving family members during the past year. We have opened 280 new files and said farewell to 98 of our county's veterans.

We have six residents at the state retirement home at King, and one at the Assisted Living Facility in Union Grove. I continue to get negative responses from veterans regarding enrollment at King, primarily because of the distance from family and friends. We will have to see if there will be any increased interest in enrollment in state run veteran's nursing home facilities, as the Southern Wisconsin Center plans near completion. Southern Center began its' first phase of operations in 2001, with a Community Based Residential Facility (CBRF). Funding for construction of the nursing home has been allocated at both the State and Federal levels, and we anticipate the facility to be functional sometime in late 2005.

The coming year should provide quite a challenge on both the State and Federal levels. We are now seeing the first of what will be many "returnees" from the War on Terrorism, as well as the War in Iraq. This influx of new veterans will in turn be seeking to avail themselves of their benefits.

The Veterans Trust Fund at the State level is not in the best of financial health, and all of the veterans groups have been asked to "prioritize" the benefits that need to be continued. and those that may face restrictions or elimination.

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. This will undoubtedly create shortfalls.

Veterans with Service Connected disabilities will continue to receive the highest priority.

On the local level, we have completed the move to the Justice Center, and have more or less settled into our new surroundings. The cutbacks in staffing of the office will have a negative impact on the timely delivery of services.

We have started charging veterans for transport to their appointments at the VA Medical Center. The process of billing and recording of payments, adds yet another paperwork burden on my staff and myself.

My staff and I will naturally strive to minimize any negative impact, but delays may become unavoidable. I have communicated this to the county's veteran's community, and hope that they will be understanding.

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