

2019 Annual Report

# Brown County Veterans Service Office

“Connecting Veterans With Their Benefits”



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## Table of Contents

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Brown County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) Staff & Accreditation..... | Page 2 |
| Brown County Veterans Service Office Mission Statement & Vision.....   | Page 3 |
| County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) History.....                     | Page 3 |
| Brown CVSO Office 2020 Goals.....                                      | Page 4 |
| Serving Those Who Served: Why We Do What We Do.....                    | Page 5 |
| Brown County CVSO Impact.....  | Page 6 |
| State and Federal Veteran Affairs Benefits.....                        | Page 7 |
| Economic Impact Study.....   | Page 8 |
| Veteran Testimonials.....  | Page 9 |

**Veterans Service Director:**

Joseph G. Aulik- Accredited with National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion (AL), Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (WDVA), American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

**Senior Benefit Specialist:**

Matthew Franklin - Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, and WDVA.

**Veterans Benefit Specialist(s):**

Laurie Eucke- Accredited with NACVSO, VFW, AL, WDVA.

Krina Christensen - Accredited with AL and WDVA.

**Veteran Benefit Specialist/ Administrative Assistant:**

Nathan Thomas – Accredited with WDVA.

**Accreditations:**

The Veteran Administration (VA) accreditation is for the sole purpose of providing representation services to claimants. Yearly training and education requirements are required by the VA in order to maintain accreditation. The accreditation also allow our staff with full access to federal databases and files to further assist our veterans, dependents, and widows and allows the staff to file claims and appeals up to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington D.C.

- Formal Studies prove veterans receive 50% more benefits and larger awards by using professional veterans service representation (i.e., Brown County Department of Veterans Services) than if he or she file independently or with a non-professional.



## Brown County Veteran Service Office Mission Statement:

“We believe in strengthening the lives of our veterans and their families by connecting them with their earned benefits.”

## Our Vision:

“Improving the quality of life for Brown County Veterans and their dependents through assessing all available benefits that were earned by the sacrifice and service to their country.”

## County Veterans Service Office History

The first County Veterans Service Offices were self-appointed concerned veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) who took it upon themselves to aid and assist the veterans, dependents and survivors of their counties.

- The first CVSO, Leo Promen, was appointed in Fond du Lac County in 1932.
- The WI CVSO Association was established in 1935.
- Legislation was passed in 1946 requiring each county to have a CVSO and required each CVSO to have served in a branch of the Armed Forces (State Statute 45.80).
- Legislation was passed in 1973 authorizing a state grant for the CVSO office.



**Goal I: Provide excellent veterans customer service and assistance to maximize Veterans benefits.**

*The office continues to strive at providing good customer service and flexible meeting schedules to accomplish meeting our veteran's needs. We continue to increase our community visibility and involvement to reach all veterans and dependents using local partnerships, community event attendance, Facebook and monthly newsletter emails. We continue to be a 1-stop shop for veterans' issues and collaborate with other veterans programs such as the Green Bay Vet Center, Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP), Center for Veterans Issues (CVI), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), and the Brown County Veterans Treatment Court Program.*

**Goal II: Provide outreach to veterans and dependents through public meetings, and special events to increase benefit utilization.**

*The office held a VA Benefit Expo at the Brown County Fair in partnership with local Veteran Service Organizations and stakeholders. The office participated in many different events this year to include, Humana Veteran Resource Fair, VA 2K walk, Ageless Aviation, Post 11 Open House, ARDC Veterans Lunches, VA Benefit Briefing all Brown County Funeral Homes, UWGB Veteran Open House, Concordia Veterans Resource Fair, Military Officers Club of NEW, Greater Green Bay USBC Bowling Association Brightening Veterans Lives, Brown County Suicide Coalition, 4<sup>th</sup> Hooyah Ruck Sack Suicide event, Retired Men's Club, Youth Government Day, Green Bay Vet Center Booyah Bash, Stars and Stripes Honor Flight. The office continues to submit Veteran related events and information to the Brown County Veteran Service Office website and Facebook page.*

**Goal III: Provide veteran benefit and outreach services to Veterans in the Brown County Corrections System.**

*The office receives email update every Monday morning from Brown County Corrections Staff. We review this information against our current database to identify veterans. We will also be working with the Veterans Treatment Court case manager to expand outreach to the County Court and Jail systems to educate veterans of their potential benefits.*

**Why we do what we do:** Pure numbers cannot quantify the value of what Brown County Veterans Service Office does, although we do bring a great deal of additional federal funding to the county every year. There is a real, human value, to the service we provide, which is seen and felt by the Brown County veterans and families we help. **Behind the numbers are real lives that have sacrificed mentally and physically to serve their country.** Following are some of their stories.

#### **Veteran Unaware of WI Property Tax Refund Program**

A 100% service-connected veteran made an appointment to complete an insurance form. It is our practice to review VA benefits when a veterans calls or visits the office. The veteran was made aware of the WI Veterans Property Tax Refund Program for 100% service-connected veterans. Application forms were completed and the veteran was approved. Veteran was able to go back four years and receive his property tax refund of \$10,000. The veteran will continue to receive the refund each year AND he will no longer have to borrow against his VA life insurance to make ends meet each year.

#### **Disabled Veterans Unable to Work**

Veteran was suffering from his service-connected conditions he contracted while serving in the Gulf War. He was having difficulty working even a part-time job and did not know what to do. We advised him of the Individual Unemployability 100% benefit for veterans unable to work. He was unaware of this benefit. He decided to stop working and apply for this benefit. We assisted the veteran with the complicated paperwork and submitted the claim with additional medical evidence that we guided him to obtain from his physician. We tagged the claim as financial hardship and the claim was worked expeditiously by the VA. Three months after submitting the claim he was approved for the 100% and received a retroactive payment of \$6,000, and will receive a monthly payment of \$3,139. All VA payment are tax free. This then opened the door for him to receive the WI Veterans Property Tax refund, and FREE healthcare and college education for his spouse and children. These benefits alone can reach into the thousands. The veteran will now apply for Social Security Disability and use the VA documentation to win his claim. He will receive this payment in addition to his VA payment. This will allow him to now focus on stabilizing his health and quality of life. Without our direction this veteran would not have received this benefit.



**Our Impact:**

Brown County veterans and their dependents have received a total disbursement of combined Federal VA benefits of \$104 million in 2018, this is an increase of \$342,000 from 2017.

Furthermore, our office tracked over \$1.7 million in retroactive non-taxable cash payouts in 2019 to veterans and their dependents. Veterans and their dependents use these non-taxable payouts to pay taxes and purchase goods and services within Brown County.

| <b>CVSO Measure of Efficiency in Delivering Federal VA Benefits</b> |  |                             |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Brown County Total CVSO Budget Investment</b>                    | <b>Projected Twelve Month VA Benefits Payout</b> | <b>Return on Investment</b> |
| \$359,466<br>6% Invested  | \$5,400,000<br>94% Return                        | 1,402.27%                   |



## STATE BENEFITS WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The office assists veterans and dependents in applying for Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs provides benefits. Application for various benefits are received, adjudicated and awarded or denied based on eligibility requirements.

| <u>Type of Benefit</u>        | <u>Amount</u>      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| ▪ Aid to Needy Veterans Grant | \$14,053           |
| ▪ WI Property Tax Credit      | <u>\$1,240,349</u> |
| <b>Total State Benefits</b>   | <b>\$1,254,402</b> |

In 2017 our office received a \$13,000 CVS0 Grant from the WDVA. This money was used to enhance services to our veterans.

## FEDERAL BENEFITS US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

| <u>Type of Benefit</u>                              | <u>Amount</u>        |
|---|----------------------|
| ▪ Compensation & Pension                            | \$50,408,000         |
| ▪ Education & Vocational Rehabilitation             | \$5,797,000          |
| ▪ Insurance & Indemnities                           | \$1,486,000          |
| ▪ Grave Markers & Flags                             | \$129,000            |
| ▪ VA Health Care                                    | \$46,366,000         |
| ▪ Federal VA Home Loans                             | <u>\$77,060,751</u>  |
| <b>Total Federal Benefits</b>                       | <b>\$181,246,751</b> |
| <b>Total of Federal and State Combined Benefits</b> | <b>\$182,501,153</b> |



The University of Wisconsin-Madison office performed an analysis of the economic impact Veterans Administration expenditures had on the economy of Brown County for 2019. UW-Madison used the following economic metrics (e.g., jobs, labor income, etc.) and nature of the multipliers (direct, indirect, induced and total) to determine totals. The impacts are summarized as follows:

### Brown County VA 2019 Impact

| Impact              | Employment   | Labor Income        | Total Income         | Industry Sales       |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Direct Effect       | 301          | \$50,408,000        | \$50,408,000         | \$104,057,400        |
| Indirect Effect     | 79           | \$4,107,800         | \$7,344,900          | \$12,360,100         |
| Induced Effect      | <u>646</u>   | <u>\$28,705,200</u> | <u>\$48,636,600</u>  | <u>\$83,913,700</u>  |
| <b>Total Effect</b> | <b>1,026</b> | <b>\$83,221,000</b> | <b>\$106,389,400</b> | <b>\$200,311,100</b> |

#### State & Local Government Revenues: \$6,905,500

- Employment: Jobs, *not* full-time equivalent
- Labor Income: Wages, salaries, proprietor income
- Total Income: Labor income plus all other sources of income (e.g., social security, pensions, etc)
- Industry Sales: Industry revenues
- Direct effect: VA spending
- Indirect effect: Multiplier effect from business to business expenditures
- Induced effect: People (labor) spending income.
- Total effect: Direct plus Indirect plus Induced

## Feedback from those we have Served

**Our passion is driven from the feedback we received from those we serve because what we do not only improves the quality of life for the veteran but their families and those affects are felt for many generations. Following are just a few testimonials we received this year:**

“I just wanted to personally reach out and thank you for your help and continued service to all Veterans. Being a disabled Veteran I have had many unpleasant experiences trying to navigate the VA system for assistance and benefits. My experiences over time left me disheartened and untrusting in a system I considered unhelpful or accommodating. Initially walking into your office without an appointment I didn’t expect much, I was in the area and wanted to schedule an appointment. You greeted me, introduced yourself, and invited me into your office. I was very surprised as my previous experiences with Veteran Service Officers were so rigid. You then stated that you don’t work for the VA, you work for us the Veterans. You were patient, you asked questions, you payed attention to my concerns, and together we were able to find a path forward that I felt comfortable with. Your overall knowledge and professionalism was refreshing which drastically changed my view and restored my confidence in that there are people who truly care. I have since recommended you to every Veteran that I know who needs help and I look forward to working with you in the future.” - Arty

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“Those who give of their time are truly generous. Just saying “thank you” doesn’t seem enough. I hope you know how appreciated you really are.” -Patrick

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“Your dedication to help our “finest” men and women with guidance and “going the distance” provides us with deep appreciation and honor aimed at you. We will be forever grateful to you, your boss, the encouragement and support thru this journey.” -Jim & Kathy

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