

2024 Annual Report

# Brown County Veterans Service Office

“Connecting Veterans With Their Benefits”



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**Director, Brown County Veterans Service Office:**

Joseph G. Aulik- Federally Accredited with Veterans Administration, 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), and Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

**Assistant Brown County Veterans Service Officer:**

Matthew Franklin – Federally Accredited with Veterans Administration, NACVSO, VFW, AL, and WDVA.

**Veterans Benefit Specialists:**

Mike Keon – Federally Accredited with Veterans Administration, NACVSO, AL, and WDVA.

Melisa Young – Federally Accredited with Veterans Administration, NACVSO, DAV, AL, VFW, and WDVA.

Quinton Nelson – Federally Accredited with Veterans Administration, NACVSO, WDVA, AL, and VFW.

**Accreditations: What it means.**

The Veteran Administration (VA) Accreditation by the VA Office of General Counsel is for the sole purpose of providing legal representation services to claimants. Yearly attorney level training and education requirements are required by the VA to maintain accreditation. The accreditation also allows 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 and argue those claims in front of Law Judges up to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington D.C.

We are Federally Accredited through the VA Office of General Counsel. This requires us to be knowledgeable and skilled in the use of the 38 Code of Federal Regulations and VA Manual 21-1. We can prosecute, argue, and submit written legal briefs to VA Regional Offices up to the Board of Veterans Appels (BVA) and litigate before Law Judges in BVA hearings. Essentially, we are quasi (just like) attorneys practicing VA law.



## 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, appointed in Fond du Lac County in 1932.
- The first meeting of 18 CVSO was in Fond Du Lac County on December 30, 1935.
- The WI CVSO Association was established in December 29, 1936 in Brown County WI.
- 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.



**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.**

**This is just one of the many stories we encounter in the office:** A surviving spouse' husband passed away in 2014. She filed a death benefits application with the Social Security Administration. Unknowingly to the Veterans Administration due to an obscure rule, this is also a claim filed with the Veterans Administration even though the Veterans Administration is not aware of the claim or sometimes if the veteran has passed away.

The spouse read some of our marketing materials we have in the community and called the office about her husband passing away from heart disease and wanted to know if that condition could have been caused by Agent Orange. Heart disease is one of the sixty conditions caused by Agent Orange.

The office filed a Dependency and Indemnity Claim for a service-connected death with the Veterans Administration, and we pointed out in the Manual 21-1 – Adjudication Manual, that a claim filed with the Social Security Administration is also a claim filed with the Veterans Administration simultaneously.

The claim was subsequently adjudicated by the Veterans Administration correctly due to our knowledge and guidance of the M21-1 and granted a service-connected death. This claim paid back to the effective date of 2014 because of the Social Security death benefit application and the surviving spouse was issued a \$150,000 tax free check. She will also receive \$1,640 per month, free supplemental insurance to Medicare, and her Wisconsin property taxes will be refunded to her each year.



**Our Impact:**

Brown County veterans and their dependents have received a total disbursement of Federal VA benefits of \$163.3 million in 2023, this is an increase of \$28.3 million over 2022.

Furthermore, Compensation and Pension increased over \$15.5 million from \$65.4 million in 2022 to \$79.9 million in 2023. Retroactive cash payouts (tax free) amounted to **over \$6.2 million in 2024**. Veterans and their dependents use these non-taxable payouts to pay taxes and purchase goods and services within Brown County.

CVSO Measure of Efficiency in Delivering Federal VA Benefits		
Brown County Total CVSO Budget Investment	Projected Twelve Month VA Benefits Payout	Return on Investment
\$458,664	\$42,784,524	9,228%



## 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	\$10,500
▪ WI Property Tax Credit (566)	<u>\$2,073,073</u>
<b>Total State Benefits</b>	<b>\$1,651,516</b>

In 2023 our office received a \$14,300 CVSO 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 (\$6mil Increase)	\$85,125,000
▪ Education & Vocational Rehabilitation	\$6,167,000
▪ Insurance & Indemnities	\$776,000
▪ Grave Markers & Flags	\$140,000
▪ VA Health Care	\$78,166,000
▪ Federal VA Home Loans (399 Loans)	<u>\$64,000,000</u>
<b>Total Federal Benefits</b>	<b>\$234,374,000</b>
<b>Total of Federal and State Combined Benefits</b>	<b>\$236,025,516</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 2024 Economic Impact

Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Total Income	Industry Sales
Direct Effect	469	\$60,600,000	\$60,700,000	\$85,100,000
Indirect Effect	108	\$7,000,300	\$10,600,000	\$20,800,000
Induced Effect	<u>783</u>	<u>\$44,200,400</u>	<u>\$81,700,000</u>	<u>\$139,700,000</u>
<b>Total Effect</b>	<b>1,360</b>	<b>\$111,800,000</b>	<b>\$154,000,00</b>	<b>\$254,600,000</b>

State & Local Government Revenues: **\$34,570,000**

**TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$554,970,00.00 (\$93,508,400 INCREASE OVER 2023)**

- 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

## 5 Year Trends

The current CVSO, Joe Aulik, started in January 2019. Under his leadership, implementing the “Skip the Trip” service model to allow veterans and family members to file VA benefits by phone along with increased community engagement and staff training, the results have been unprecedented. Following are the improved metrics:

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>INCREASE</u>
VA BENEFITS	\$182 million	\$236 million	\$54 million
COMPENSATION AND PENSION	\$50 million	\$85 million	\$35 million
CLAIMS FILED	1,000 per yr	1,500 per yr	500 per year
CLAIMS FILED	3.0 per day	5.7 per day	2.7 per day
VETERAN/FAMILY CONTACTS	na	20,000 per yr 76 per day	na
EMAILS IN/OUT	na	25,000 per yr 96 per day	na

With the passage of the PACT ACT in 2022 the VA estimated over 4 million additional claims will be filed. VA backlog is over 1 million.

Brown County is ranked #1 with comparable size offices and those offices are scheduling appointments two months out. With our model, we have same day/same week claim services and only schedule in-office appointments when needed. We able to process more claims faster.

The average claim load for the Brown County Veterans Service office is 900 claims pending at the VA. The office is directly responsible for managing 700 of those claims. That means over 77% of the claim work going to the VA is coming from the Brown County Veterans Service Office. The CVSO and staff average claims loads of 150 each.

## 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 say thanks for all you do and everything you have done for me. You have made my life so so much better for the good. It is quite like having a celestial guardian angel when everyone ahs said “no”! You have my thanks and gratitude forever. You are decent humans and comrades. Thank you so much again for helping navigate my Veterans Administration claim. A happy Veteran.

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“Thank you again for all the help with my husband’s claim Also, thank you for the advice in getting the benefits for him. I am sure I will have more questions in the future, so thank you in advance. I am so glad to know your office is there with any and all questions I have no matter what – spouse of a veteran.

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I cannot thank you enough for all your help. Without it, I would not have gotten the good news yesterday that my claim was approved. Your help is and was greatly appreciated. Without your assistance, I would never have been able to navigate through all the paperwork and research necessary to file my claim. You are and were a pleasure to work with and your kindness, thoroughness, and efficiency are appreciated. I love that you cut to the chase so often and pointed out just what was needed. I'm sure we'll be communicating in the future, but I want to say THANK YOU for your help a spouse of a veteran.