



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Charlene Cobb
Veterans Service Officer

March 4, 2016

To: Sheboygan County Board of Supervisors
County Administrator Adam N. Payne

Subj: 2015 Veterans Service Department / Commission Annual Report

Enclosed is the 2015 Annual Report of the Veterans Service Department and Veterans Service Commission. The Veterans Service Commission ended the year with a positive variance of \$36,709 and the Veterans Service Office ended with a negative variance of \$874 due to personnel costs.

Our client base consists of over 8,900 Veterans from WW II, Korea, Vietnam, 1st Gulf War, Operation Enduring /Iraqi Freedom, Cold War, Peacetime, the continuing War on Terrorism and their families. We provided assistance and advocacy for these residents helping to bring almost \$31 million dollars of state and federal benefits into the County.

Longtime County employee and a highly valued member of the Veterans Service Office team, Julie Jekenewicz submitted her letter in 2015 for retirement on January 6, 2016.

I am extremely proud of the hard work and dedication of our staff from Assistant Veterans Service Officer, Todd Richter who has tackled learning his job this last year with passion and vigor, Julie Jekenewicz, who continued to give 200% even though a short-timer, part time Senior Aid (federal grant) worker, Sue, who tackles any job with grace and precision, and a part time VA Work Study veteran, Buck, who not only aids in the day-to-day operations of the office but is the representative for the Commission. They are all excellent ambassadors for the County assisting our Veterans and their families with the myriad of state and federal programs and issues.

We thank you for the continuing support and trust you have placed in us and look forward to 2016 training another new person our Veteran Service Specialist, Craig, who has taken Julie's place on the team and meeting the ever changing needs of our Veterans and their families. We invite your inquiries and feedback throughout the year and will be happy to provide additional information as may be needed.

Sincerely,

Charlene K Cobb
Veterans Service Officer

Enclosure

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED SINCE 1933

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2015 ANNUAL REPORT

VETERANS SERVICE DEPARTMENT

I MISSION STATEMENT AND SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Veterans Service Department's mission statement is:

The Sheboygan County Veterans Service Department will provide timely and quality service for veterans seeking assistance with local, state, and federal benefit programs. We advocate for and support the military veterans and their families in our county.

"Serving Those Who Served"

The Veterans Service Department exists under Chapter 45, Wisconsin Statutes, which mandates that each county in Wisconsin shall elect/appoint an honorably discharged veteran of the U S military service to the position of County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO). The CVSOs primary function is to act as an advocate for veterans, their dependents and survivors. These duties include:

- Advise persons living in the service officer's county who served in the U S armed forces regarding local, state, and federal benefits to which they may be entitled.
- Assist in resolving any problems veterans encounter accessing the programs provided by the federal or state Veteran's Administration.
- Provide service and assistance to qualified dependents and/or surviving spouse to ensure they are informed of benefits they may be entitled to.
- Maintain a record of burials of all veterans within the county.
- Cooperate with other local, state, and federal agencies to provide services to veterans and answer questions regarding veteran's issues.
- Serve as executive secretary of the Veterans Service Commission.
- Ensure Veterans and their spouses are interred in a decent and respectable manner in any cemetery in this state.
- Furnish information about veterans' burial places within the county.
- Responsible for case management of federal and state Veterans' Service programs which may include Compensation, Pension, Education, Burial, Survivor Benefits, VA Loans, Grants, and Insurance.
- Work independently to apply State and Federal policy and procedures to dynamic situations to ensure accurate benefit determinations.
- Work in a fast paced environment handling multiple interactions daily covering a wide variety of topics and benefits.
- Handles urgent inquiries relating to health, home and family needs in a time sensitive manner.
- Assist with applications for Wisconsin G.I. Bill education benefits for veterans and eligible dependents.
- Assist with Vocational rehabilitation benefits for disabled veterans.
- Assist with federal and state home loans, personal loans and home improvement loans.
- Provide burial benefits (i.e. cemeteries, markers, burial flags, funeral honors, etc.).
- Provide dependent and survivor benefits (i.e. healthcare, education, pensions, etc.).
- Enrollment of veterans into VA medical system.
- Register discharge papers/DD-214 with county.
- Assist military retirees and their surviving families with Department of Defense (DOD) benefits and services.
- Coordinate Transportation to and from medical care.

- Help determine eligibility and complete paperwork for veterans' homes and long-term care.
- Provide and/or refer veterans to appropriate federal, state and non-governmental emergency financial aid.
- Assist homeless veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless.
- Assist with applications for Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) benefits.
- Assist with applications and verification for 100% disabled Veterans and eligible surviving spouses to receive their Property Tax credit.
- Assist with applications for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources veterans' park pass benefits.
- Assist with applications for Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicle veteran's identifier.

II GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED IN 2015

Conduct basic training for the Assistant County Veterans Service Officer (ACVSO)

The ACVSO was hired in February and on the job training started immediately. We were also able to get him to formal accreditation training with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and with the National County Veterans Service Officer Association. He has accomplished the training requirements for Veterans Affairs (VA) to receive his Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card that is a credential that provides the attributes of security, authentication, trust and privacy and can be used to verify identities in order to gain access to federal computer networks.

Maintain NACVSO Accreditation.

I maintained my accreditation with the National County Veterans Service Officer Association, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Hearts, Retired Enlisted Association, and the Vietnam Veterans of America through continuing education credits. I also have my PIV card that allows access to the federal VA website when assisting our clients.

Train the office staff to increase their proficiency in assisting Veterans and their families.

I hold regular meetings with the staff to receive process improvement ideas from them and to train on office procedures and requirements as well as to update ourselves on the multitude of changes to federal and state benefits. We also work closely with the Veterans Service organizations in our area to share information on helping Veterans access the programs and benefits to which they are entitled.

Outreach to the community partners and the Counties Veteran Service Organizations to brief them on VA benefits.

We support the County Veterans Service Organizations in their various programs and ceremonies conducted throughout the year. We have participated with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Wisconsin Military Networks, and Sheboygan Area Veterans Treatment Court as well as local schools and businesses. Our intent is to heighten visibility along with honoring our currently serving Veterans and educate the citizenry of their presence in our communities.

III BUDGET

The Veterans Service Department was over by \$874.34 of its \$196,716 tax levy + \$13,000 grant budget for 2015. The shortage was due to the additional personnel related expenses. The 2016 department budget is \$225,836.00 tax levy + \$13,000 grant; an increase of \$27,504 from the 2015 budget, which encompasses the additional funding for both the Veteran Service Officer and Assistant Veterans Service Officer position due to the Gallagher study.

IV ISSUES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

The Veterans Service Department continues to face an enormous workload with the many Veterans and their families that are seeking assistance. In 2015, Sheboygan County had 1222 clients file claims for federal benefits and 212 for state benefits. We continue to lose our World War II, Korean and Vietnam Veterans, 337 in 2015 and that impacts the workload as we ensure they are honored at their passing and that their dependents receive all their entitlements.

We estimate that each case (federal, state, death) requires a minimum of 3 hours work on our part. That equates to 5313 hours just on those claims. That doesn't include all the other tasks (phone calls, walk-ins, general correspondence, meetings, etc.) that need to be handled each week. Still, we assisted county Veterans in receiving \$30,698,000 in federal benefits and \$153,745 in state benefits. We also have 57 students using the WI GI Bill. This avails them of up to 128 credits at a Wisconsin University or Technical college tuition free.

V GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016

Our goals and objectives include:

1. Hire and train a Veteran Services Specialist
2. CVSO and ACVSO to maintain current accreditation with continuing education units
3. Publish the Office Procedure Manual
4. Conduct training in the office to keep current on new federal and state programs as well as changes to their current programs.
5. Outreach to the community partners and Veterans Service Organizations

2015 ANNUAL REPORT VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION

I MISSION STATEMENT AND SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The County Veterans Service Commission (CVSC) exists under Chapter 45 (45.81) of the Wisconsin statutes which mandates that each county in Wisconsin have in place a three member CVSC to provide financial aid to needy veterans, their survivors and dependents. The Commission consists of three honorably discharged veterans who are (appointed) to serve staggered three year terms. From among them they annually elect a Chairperson and Secretary.

CVSC Members

David C Williams, Chairman
Konrad K Kaczkowski, Secretary
Buck Wendorf, Member

II GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED IN 2015

The following is a composite of the activities of the Commission for 2015.

Cases Accepted	50
Cases Not Accepted	10

III BUDGET

The 2015 CVSC budget was \$44,683. We ended the year under budget by \$36,709. The Commission disbursed \$7,974 in assistance to needy veterans.

IV ISSUES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

The Commission continues to work at reaching a balance of helping our needy Veterans while being fiscally responsible with those tax dollars. The Commission is for emergency assistance only; it is to be a solution to a problem and not intended to be used as a supplement to income or to facilitate mismanagement of income. We are pursuing other areas that we can be of assistance to our Veterans in the coming year.

V GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016

1. Monitor, revise, and update the 2016 policy for the Commission to reflect Veteran's needs.
2. Build a database of community partners to provide alternative assistance for our Veterans.
3. Convert our files to an electronic database to facilitate claims processing.