

ANTRIM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

2015 Annual Report

May 12, 2016

Submitted by Deborah Peters, Director

Expenditures for 2015

Expenditures totaled \$37,038.34, ending the year under budget by \$2,961.66. We received thirteen less emergency relief applications than last year and twelve less burial applications.

Outreach

- Tim very graciously agreed to man a table at the Antrim County Fair. Unfortunately, we discovered that the venue is not an effective means of outreach.
- In July we participated in the Senior Expo that was held at the Bellaire High School. Turnout was good and we made contact with approximately fifteen veterans and/or spouses of veterans. It also served as a good networking opportunity.
- I meet with veterans at the Elk Rapids AMVETS Post on a requested basis.
- We plan to do a mass distribution of our office brochures via the Antrim Review in September of this year. The brochures will be inserted in the newspapers that are distributed to area subscribers, newsstands, etc.

State Expenditures for FY 2014/2015

The Michigan Veterans Trust Fund approved emergency relief applications to Antrim County residents in the amount of \$4,678.

Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office Report

The report from the VA outlining expenditures to individual Michigan counties for the year of 2015 is not available at this time. Each commissioner will be provided with a copy as soon as the report becomes available.

Training

As in the past, maintaining county veteran service officer accreditation for both Tim and I through the National Association of County Veterans Services Officers (NACVSO) is done by attending the Michigan Association of County Veterans Counselors (MACVC) spring training conference each year. The spring conference enables us to earn the continuing education units (CEU's) necessary to maintain accreditation.

I hold accreditation with the following veterans' service organizations: The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of Purple Heart, Vietnam Veterans of America, The Veterans of Foreign Wars, NACVSO and the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA).

Tim holds accreditation with The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, The Veterans of Foreign Wars, NACVSO and the MVAA.

Holding accreditation with the service organizations places us in essentially the same category as the service officers who work in the Detroit VA building. When a veteran appoints a service organization that we are accredited with to assist with his/her claim, it allows us access to their VA computer records. This enables us to see a current and complete snapshot of the veterans' claim process which in turn enables us to better advocate on the veterans' behalf. It also allows VA staff to speak freely with us regarding the veterans' claim.

Tim and I both attended Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). It was an intense two day training that we found extremely valuable. At least 22 veterans commit suicide every day. Young male veterans under the age of 30 are three times more likely to commit suicide when compared to civilian males of the same age group.

Miscellaneous

- The majority of our time is spent on obtaining monthly monetary benefits from the VA for veterans and/or their family members. This office has been directly responsible for substantial retroactive monies awarded to our clients. In 2015 there were numerous awards granted in the neighborhood of \$10,000 to \$40,000.
- We assist veterans reentering the community from prison as well as those who are incarcerated in our local jail.
- We assist veterans in need of emergency substance abuse and mental health treatment.
- Tim attends the monthly Antrim County Community Collaborative meeting.

- We take part in the recently established Region 2 Veterans Community Action Team (VCAT) which was established by the MVAA. Region 2 consists of 10 northwest counties. VCAT is a community-based system of care for veterans and their families, where networks of service providers employ best practices, information and tools to connect veterans with services and serve them more quickly and completely. Service providers include federal, state and local resources.

- It has become apparent over the last several years that a local support group of war time veterans could be highly beneficial to the Antrim County veteran community. Currently there are support groups held at the Gaylord VA Outpatient Clinic, the Traverse City VA Outpatient Clinic and the Traverse City Vet Center. The location and meeting time of those groups often make it difficult for local veterans to attend, especially the younger veterans who work or go to school during the day. Tim and I have had numerous discussions with the mental health team at the Saginaw VA Medical Center along with the Vet to Vet group facilitator in Gaylord. After years of seeing the need and trying to figure out how to start a local support group, I am extremely elated to say the first group meeting will be held at the end of May! Tim has graciously stepped forward and enthusiastically agreed to facilitate the group. The group will be modeled after the Vet to Vet self-help program that Moe Armstrong started in 1997. The goal is to give veterans an opportunity to help each other live with mental health issues, overcome substance abuse and deal with other issues they face in their lives. Vet to Vet is based on the concept of mutual help. Their motto is "each one, reach one, teach one". The meetings will be held in the evening at the Forest Home Township Hall.

I have attached a presentation that was given at one of the VCAT meetings by Chuck Lerchen, Director of Grand Traverse County Veterans Affairs. It is titled Veterans Benefits – 101 and gives a rather interesting history lesson on the VA.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to stop in. Thank you.

ANTRIM COUNTY DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STATISTICS

Office Visits

2007 = 292
2008 = 285
2009 = 362
2010 = 494
2011 = 516
2012 = 507
2013 = 686
2014 = 600
2015 = 549

County Burial Benefit Applications

2006 = 48
2007 = 40
2008 = 53
2009 = 51
2010 = 64
2011 = 58
2012 = 33
2013 = 37
2014 = 41
2015 = 29

Emergency Relief Fund Applications

2006 = 25
2007 = 56
2008 = 72
2009 = 52
2010 = 53
2011 = 43
2012 = 53
2013 = 62
2014 = 42
2015 = 29

Yearly Committee Expenditures

2007 = \$53,314.82
2008 = \$62,764.92
2009 = \$44,934.96
2010 = \$41,232.02
2011 = \$53,650.17
2012 = \$32,077.90
2013 = \$43,299.37
2014 = \$35,653.24
2015 = \$37,038.34

**VA Distributions to Antrim County Veterans
Compensation and Pension**

2006 = \$2,885,000
2007 = \$3,043,000
2008 = \$3,489,000
2009 = \$4,026,000
2010 = \$4,339,000
2011 = \$5,716,000
2012 = \$5,054,000
2013 = \$6,191,000
2014 = \$7,717,000
2015 = currently not available

ANALYSIS OF VETERANS RELIEF FUND APPLICATIONS 2015

ASST. TYPE	AMOUNT
Attorney	1000.00
Auto Repair	501.50
Auto Ins./Reg.	495.00
Auto Payments	1758.38
Dental	1530.00
Gas Cards	50.00
Groceries	894.73
Heating Fuel	1842.25
Home Repair	9732.00
Medical	27.49
Property Taxes	2477.25
Rent/Mortgage	4106.19
Utilities	1469.29
TOTAL	25884.08

MUNICIPALITY	AMOUNT
Alden	3437.42
Bellaire	2762.47
Boyne City	0.00
Central Lake	4805.64
Charlevoix	0.00
East Jordan	3211.91
Eastport	0.00
Elk Rapids	0.00
Ellsworth	1377.49
Elmira	295.86
Homeless	0.00
Kewadin	0.00
Mancelona	8693.29
Rapid City	1300.00
TOTAL	25884.08

29 applications 27 approved 2 denied

BURIAL REPORT 2006

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	Peacetime	Amount Pd
48	38	10	5	43	19	6	11	2	\$12,900

BURIAL REPORT 2007

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	Peacetime	Amount Pd
40	31	9	8	32	18	2	8	3	\$9,600

BURIAL REPORT 2008

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	Peacetime	Amount Pd
53	39	14	5	48	18	14	6	1	\$14,400

BURIAL REPORT 2009

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	Peacetime	Amount Pd
51	36	15	3	48	23	6	5	2	\$14,400

BURIAL REPORT 2010

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	Peacetime	Amount Pd
64	46	18	3	61	31	7	7	1	\$18,300

BURIAL REPORT 2011

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	OIF/OEF	Peacetime	Amount Pd
58	40	18	0	58	20	11	8	1	0	\$17,400

BURIAL REPORT 2012

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	OIF/OEF	Peacetime	Amount Pd
33	19	14	2	31	7	4	6	0	2	\$9,300

BURIAL REPORT 2013

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	OIF/OEF	Peacetime	Amount Pd
37	30	7	2	35	15	6	8	0	1	\$10,500

BURIAL REPORT 2014

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	OIF/OEF	Peacetime	Amount Pd
41	30	11	2	39	17	6	15	1	1	\$11,700

BURIAL REPORT 2015

Applications	Veterans	Spouses	Denied	Approved	WWII	KW	VN	OIF/OEF	Peacetime	Amount Pd
29	19	10	4	25	7	4	6	0	2	\$7,500

VETERANS BENEFITS - 101

*An introduction to V.A. benefits and the role of the
County Veterans Service Officer*

*By: Charles Lerchen, Accredited County Veterans
Service Officer*

Grand Traverse, Leelanau & Benzie Counties

WHAT IS THE "V.A".???

- A BRIEF HISTORY -

- ▶ The United States has the most comprehensive system of assistance, entitlements' and benefits for military veterans of any nation in the world.
- ▶ This benefits system traces its roots back to 1636, when the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony were at war with the Pequot Indians. The Pilgrims passed a law which stated that disabled soldiers would be supported by the colony.
- ▶ During the Revolutionary War enlistments were encouraged by providing pensions for wounded soldiers. Direct medical care was provided by the local communities.



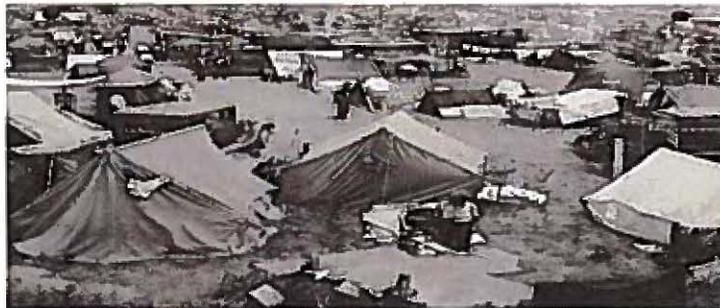
HISTORY OF V.A.

- ▶ In 1811, the first medical facility for wounded veterans was authorized by the Federal Government.
- ▶ After the Civil War, all of States opened Veterans domiciliary care facilities. Indigent and disabled veterans of the Civil War, Indian Wars, Spanish-American War and Mexican Border period , as well as discharged regular members of the military were cared for at these homes.
- ▶ When the U.S. entered WW I, Congress established a new system of veterans benefits. Included were programs for disability pay, life insurance and vocational rehabilitation for disabled veterans.



HISTORY OF V.A.

- ▶ By the 1920's the various benefits were administered by three different Federal Agencies: The Veterans Bureau, the Bureau of Pensions and the National Home for Disabled Soldiers.
- ▶ In 1930 these three Bureau's were consolidated into the V.A. we know today.
- ▶ The new V.A. benefit system was tested in May 1932 when WW I veteran's protested in Washington demanding that their War Bonus be paid 13 years early due to the Great Depression. Their request was rebuffed leading to the great Bonus March and occupation of Washington in a tent city.



HISTORY OF V.A.

- ▶ The U.S. Army was ordered to remove them. Led by a young Major George Patton and Major Dwight Eisenhower an Army infantry and cavalry unit, supported by six tanks drove the veterans from the city and burned their shelters and belongings. Several veterans were killed and many injured.
- ▶ The bonuses' were finally paid in 1936 - 9 years early.
- ▶ WW II resulted in not only a vast increase in the veteran population, but also in a large number of new benefits for the VA to administer.
- ▶ The WW II "G.I. Bill of Rights", signed into law in 1944 is said to have had more impact on the American way of life than any other modern day law. It stands today as the blue print of modern day veterans benefits.

HISTORY OF V.A.

- ▶ The V.A. was elevated to a Presidential Cabinet level in 1990 creating the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. President Bush hailed the move by saying: "There is only one place for the veteran's of America...in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President...."



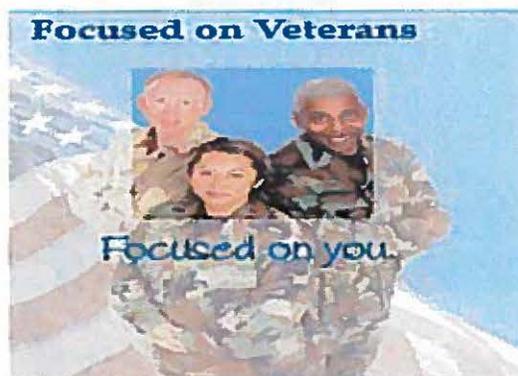
U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

HISTORY OF V.A.

- ▶ Today, the Department is tasked with caring for and administering the benefits for the Nations 21 million plus veterans and their families.
- ▶ To do this, the V.A. employs over 280,000 people and administers an annual budget in excess of \$160,000,000,000. (Billion).
- ▶ Spread throughout the Country the V.A. operates:
 - 150 Major Medical and Research hospitals
 - 820 Community Based Outpatient Clinics
 - 300 Vet Center Combat Counseling Centers
 - 131 National Cemeteries
 - and 56 Regional Offices processing disability claims

HISTORY OF V.A.

- ▶ TODAY'S V.A. -
 - 8.2 million veterans receive their medical care from V.A.
 - 6.64 million life insurance policies are administered
 - 2.07 million active V.A. Loans
 - 1.09 million veterans are using education benefits
 - 3.88 million veterans receive service incurred disability compensation
 - and 300,000 receive a V.A. pension benefit check



ROLE OF THE COUNTY VETRANS SERVICE OFFICER

- ▶ Throughout the Country the County Veterans Service Officer serves as most veterans first point of contact after being discharged from the military and later in life when a veteran needs to access the benefits they earned.
- ▶ Established at the local level, the CVSO is readily available to advocate and assist veterans, their families and the community in accessing and navigating the bureaucracy of the V.A. system.
- ▶ CVSO's are local government employees and are not V.A. employee's.
- ▶ CVSO's are specially trained in Veterans Administrative law and hold Federal Accreditation issued by the V.A. recognizing them to represent claims before the agency and allowing them access to their data base systems to assist veterans. Proficiency through an examination process and annual continuing education is required to be granted and maintain accreditation.



ROLE OF THE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

- ▶ Between 75 and 90% of the claims presented to the V.A. each year originate in a County Veterans Office.
- ▶ CVSO's administer the State and local veterans benefits and entitlement programs where they live.
- ▶ CVSO's act as the liaison for government officials, local agencies, veterans and their families on all veteran related issues and are expert in navigating the bureaucracy that veterans encounter when dealing with the V.A.

