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## **John A. Scocos Column: Camp American Legion**

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs has many great partners in taking care of Wisconsin veterans, including many great veterans service organizations. Through Camp American Legion and other programs, the American Legion – Department of Wisconsin is one of those great partners.

The American Legion has operated Camp American Legion since 1925 on land owned by the State of Wisconsin and managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Located in the town of Lake Tomahawk, 22 miles north of Rhinelander, the camp conducts programs free of charge to honorably discharged Wisconsin veterans of all ages and all wars, active duty, Reserve and National Guard military personnel and their respective families.

Camp American Legion provides a peaceful, fun stay at a camp on the lake, serving those who have a physical or psychological medical condition, any and all types of service and non-service related illnesses, injuries or disabilities.

Our current and most recent wars have brought veterans issues and needs again to the forefront of our minds, but thankfully we have had in place programs like Camp American Legion to help our veterans as they return home. The camp has lakefront cabins dedicated exclusively for the use of veterans who have returned from Iraq and/or Afghanistan. These private cabins are designed to allow families to reunite and spend quality time together to reunify as a family.

Veterans returning to Wisconsin from service in Iraq and Afghanistan are not alone in restoring their lives to normalcy. Combat veterans from all eras deal with stresses that effect their family and professional lives. Camp American Legion hosts weekly peer group counseling sessions to assist veterans deal with post-traumatic and combat operational stress. In addition, there are many programs at the camp to assist veterans: homeless veterans, wounded warriors, women veterans, among others.

The American Legion is looking to further partner with the DNR and WDVA to make new substantial improvements to the camp. Planned and potential improvements include new structures and hunting blinds for disabled hunters to better serve veterans. The Legion is actively seeking partnerships with the UW and its hospitals to further the Camp's central mission of rehabilitation. The WDVA is proud to be a partner of the Legion in serving our veterans and looks forward to a continuing relationship that serves our veterans.

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*(John A. Scocos is the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. He is an Iraq War veteran.)*