



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Jim Doyle, Governor

John A. Scocos, Secretary

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Ceremony to Open New Veterans Home draws Hundreds Senior Federal, State Officials Dedicate Gates Hall Assisted Living Center at Union Grove Veterans Home

(UNION GROVE) – The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) today dedicated the new Assisted Living Center – Gates Hall – at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove (WVH-UG).

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Deputy Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield was the special guest speaker at the event, attended by over 200 veterans, their family members, and state legislators. Gates Hall is licensed as a Residential Care Apartment Complex, which posthumously bears the name of World War II Army Nurse Marcia Gates, who cared for fellow servicemen and women while held captive in the Philippines, one of the “Angels of Bataan.”

Mansfield talked about the partnership between the federal and state veterans affairs programs.

“The VA is committed to the mission of outreach for veterans,” said Mansfield. “Here in Wisconsin, the ‘I Owe You’ program is an important way to make sure veterans receive benefits and services. The increase in federal funding for Wisconsin veterans’ programs has increased by half, if not more.”

Mansfield was introduced by WDVA Secretary John A. Scocos, who said it had been two years since the dedication of the first two buildings of the WVH-UG – Fairchild and Shemanske Halls, in August 2001, home to over 100 veterans.

“The addition of the new building we dedicate today will allow us to offer a total of 128 assisted living beds to the veterans of southeastern Wisconsin,” said Scocos. “However, we’re not finished yet. The initial phases of construction have begun on a new 120-bed Skilled Nursing Facility, with a formal groundbreaking ceremony on August 20th.”

Scocos went on to thank everyone involved with establishment of the veterans home, and crediting former Secretary Ray Boland, who also addressed the group. Secretary Scocos announced that the new Skilled Nursing Facility would be named in honor of former department secretary Boland, his mentor, and thanked him for helping to make the veterans home a reality.

Scocos also said, “We would not be able to do any of this without the terrific partnership we have with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Grants from the VA pay for up to 65 percent of the construction costs. For all these projects we have received or will be receiving a VA state home construction grant.”

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Also participating in the dedication ceremony were: Dr. Joan Cummings, Director of the Veterans Integrated Service Network; Frank Salvas, Director of the national State Veterans Homes Construction Grant Program; Walter Stenavich, President of the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs; representatives from the offices of U.S. Senators Russ Feingold and Herb Kohl and Congressman Paul Ryan; State Senator Cathy Stepp; State Representative John Lehman; Racine County Executive Bill McReynolds; and Fred Fry, nephew of Marcia Gates, as well as other members of her family.

In July 2003, Governor Jim Doyle announced at the WVH-UG, as construction was underway, that he had approved budget funding to open a new 120-bed skilled nursing facility. With the opening of the 42-bed Gates Hall, in addition to Fairchild and Shemanske Halls that house 43 each, a total of 128 veterans can receive care at the home.

The dedication ceremony took place in conjunction with a *Supermarket of Veterans Benefits* held on the grounds of the WVH-UG. This *Supermarket* was the ninth one hosted by the department, as part of the broader "I Owe You" WDVA outreach and marketing campaign aimed at educating and assisting more state veterans in accessing federal and state veterans programs for which they may be eligible. Over 16,000 veterans and family members have attended the *Supermarkets*. Previous events have been held in Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Racine, Madison, Green Bay, and Schofield, as two-day events.

Dedication attendees were provided with tours of Gates Hall immediately following the ceremony.

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