



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

30 West Mifflin Street, P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843

PHONE: (608) 266-1311 1-800-947-8387 (WIS VETS)

WEB SITE: <http://dva.state.wi.us>

E-MAIL: Headquarters@dva.state.wi.us

FAX: (608) 264-7616

Jim Doyle, Governor
John A. Scocos, Secretary

Attention Newsroom—News Release

September 23, 2005
For Immediate Release

Contact: Andrew Schuster 608-267-1797
or Kathleen Scholl 608-267-3582

Northeastern Wisconsin Veterans learn about benefits and services at a Veterans Benefits Information Fair in Green Bay

(MADISON) – Hundreds of veterans and their families came out on a weekday to a Veterans Benefits Information Fair hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) at the Oneida-Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Green Bay on Thursday, September 21. The "one-stop shop" information fair where **350 attendees** learned about federal and state benefits and services in one location was the fifth of six outreach events the department is hosting for 2005.

"The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs has a mission to reach out to all veterans in our state, young and old, to assist them in finding out about and applying for benefits and services they may be eligible for," said Secretary John A. Scocos, head of the department. "Holding this information fair on the Oneida Tribal Reservation provides an opportunity for the department to continue outreach to Native American veterans."

Since November of 2000, 22 outreach events have been presented by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs including four targeted to tribal veterans.

"As part of the WDVA's 'I Owe You' campaign and 'Mission: Welcome Home' program to assist service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan -- our newest veterans -- we want to make sure that all Wisconsin veterans receive the quality benefits they deserve for their service," said Scocos.

Father and son veterans Tom and Matt Bamke of Shawano came to the fair together. "We've got four generations of Bamkes who have served their country as combat veterans," said the elder Bamke, who served in Vietnam from 1961 - 1965. His son Matt served for 7 1/2 years, including Operation Desert Storm, and served for a short time as a bodyguard for President George W. Bush. Tom Bamke came to the information fair to talk to federal Veterans Affairs Health Care representatives because "I'm trying to get my disability pushed through -- I lost my hearing in my left ear and shattered my heel," he said.

Elmer Kitzerow, 81, from Wayside in southern Brown County, is a World War II veteran who served in Italy during the war. He came to the fair because, "I wanted to see what benefits there are. I wanted to get literature and keep informed about what's going on."

There were over 50 provider booths at the fair. Elaina Koltz, a veterans representative of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, said, "There's been a lot of interest. The new Act 25 has kind of kick-started things for us." Wisconsin Act 25, the 2005-2007 state biennial budget, provided new education benefits for Wisconsin veterans through the "Wisconsin G.I. Bill."

(more)

As service members return home from Iraq and Afghanistan, these newest veterans receive transition assistance through the WDVA's "Mission: Welcome Home" program. One young veteran, 24-year-old Robert Ecke from Green Bay, had recently finished his enlistment with the Marine Corps. He served in Operation Iraqi Freedom from March 2003 through June 2003. "I came here today," said Ecke, "because I wanted to see if I could get my DD-214 discharge papers updated due to some clerical errors. I got the form I need and it's self-explanatory what I need to do." Ecke said he was currently taking advantage of the state's education benefits for veterans because he wants to continue his schooling to become a police officer.

One more state veterans outreach event is being planned for 2005, a two-day *Supermarket of Veterans Benefits*, at the Wisconsin Products Pavilion of the Wisconsin State Fair Park, from noon to 6 p.m. on Friday, October 14, and from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 15.

For more information on "I Owe You" events, visit WDVA's website at www.dva.state.wi.us, contact a County Veterans Service Officer or Tribal Veterans Service Officer, or call WDVA toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387).