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## Attention Newsroom—News Release

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### **Veterans Benefits Information Fair reaches out to veterans and their families in southwestern Wisconsin and Iowa**

(PLATTEVILLE) – The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), as part of its “I Owe You” campaign and new “Mission: Welcome Home” initiative hosted a *Veterans Benefits Information Fair* in Platteville, expanding the department’s outreach to Wisconsin veterans.

“The Veterans Benefits Fair provided a ‘one-stop shop’ event for southwestern Wisconsin and neighboring Iowa veterans to find out about the benefits and services they may be eligible for,” said department Secretary John A. Scocos. “This fair was one of six outreach events for this year and is the continuation of the success in reaching out to Wisconsin veterans. These *Supermarkets* have been very important to the department’s outreach to veterans at different locations statewide,” said Scocos. “Through the ‘I Owe You’ campaign and the new ‘Mission: Welcome Home’ program, we want to make sure that our veterans in Wisconsin receive the quality benefits they deserve for their service.”

The information fair was held on May 20th at the National Guard Armory in Platteville, serving over 160 veterans and their families. Presented in conjunction with other agencies such as the VA Hospital, VA Benefits Administration, veterans service organizations, County Veterans Services Officers, and other local services, the Platteville *Veterans Benefits Information Fair* brings to almost **20,000** the number of veterans and their family members who have been reached by the “I Owe You” campaign, resulting in over \$350 million in new federal VA funding to assist Wisconsin veterans since the campaign’s inception in 2000.

Rep. Gabe Loeffelholz (R-Platteville), Chair of the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs, talked with many veterans and their families. “We’re all here to help each other, whether it’s medical issues or veterans education. We certainly believe in the State of Wisconsin we have the best education system in the country. We are looking out for not just the veteran but spouses and other family members. Even if we help just one veteran we have done a lot,” Loeffelholz said. “Veterans can talk to county veterans service officers to check on benefits, and they can guide veterans to the right sources.”

Bill Eherenman, 88, a World War II veteran from Platteville, came to the fair to change his retirement beneficiary. “I like what I see here today,” he said.

Marine Corps Sergeant Chad Freymiller, 29, is a service member newly returned from Iraq. Originally from Fennimore, he was deployed to Iraq with the 229<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company in Prairie du Chien and now lives in Platteville, where he currently works with the Wisconsin Army National Guard Recruiting staff. He talked about the value of the “Mission: Welcome Home” program to assist new veterans.

(more)

“I had trouble with my family care plan for my son I have 50 percent custody of,” Freymiller said. “ My mother helped me with temporary custody of my son through grandparents rights while I was deployed for over a year. When I came back, that’s all I really thought about (caring for my son). Before I left, I was self-employed as a contractor. I had some situations with transitioning back – insurance and reestablishing my business. For new veterans, I believe health care is a big need, also training and retraining and job placement. Mentoring is the most important. Veterans need a person to talk to who has experienced similar situations.”

About the information fair, Peter Moran, Secretary of the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs, said, “This fair is a great opportunity for veterans from the area to come out and learn about their benefits.”

Grant County Veterans Service Officer Tom Taber, who was very instrumental in helping coordinate the fair, said, “It was tremendous for Grant County veterans as well as those from the area.”

Clarence Womack, 82, a World War II veteran from Highland, came to the fair with his wife Anastasia. Clarence lost both hands on December 19, 1944. After three years and 20 days in the hospital he returned to Wisconsin. He served from 1941-1947. He has been receiving assistance from the Veterans Administration ever since. He stopped by today and learned about benefits he is eligible for and spoke highly of the fair.

Upcoming “I Owe You” events are also planned for later this year Fort McCoy (September 2), Oneida-Green Bay (September 21), and Milwaukee in October.

For more information on “I Owe You” events, visit WDVA’s website at [www.dva.state.wi.us](http://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).