



Jim Doyle, Governor
John A. Scocos, Secretary

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

Attention Newsroom—News Release

October 7, 2004
For Immediate Release

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

Veterans Benefits Information Fair in Hayward provides outreach to northwestern Wisconsin veterans

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs begins month of outreach events for Native American and northern Wisconsin veterans

(MADISON) - A main goal of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Secretary John A. Scocos, as part of the "I Owe You" campaign and the new "Mission: Welcome Home" initiative, is to expand the department's outreach to northern Wisconsin, and especially to the state's Native American veterans and their families.

As one of four outreach events this autumn hosted by the WDVA as part of a statewide effort to ensure that Wisconsin veterans are receiving the millions of dollars of federal benefits for which they are eligible, a one-day *Veterans Benefits Information Fair* (VBIF) was held last Thursday, September 30, 2004, at the Lac Courtes Oreilles Lodge in Hayward, serving about 150 veterans and their family members. The event, presented in conjunction with other agencies such as the VA Hospital, VA Benefits Administration, veterans service organizations, and County Veterans Services Officers from northwestern Wisconsin, boosted to 17,150 the number of Wisconsin veterans and their family members who have been reached by the "I Owe You" campaign, resulting in \$250 million in new federal VA funding to assist Wisconsin veterans.

"This *Veterans Benefits Information Fair* was one of four planned to take place on or near tribal reservations," said Secretary Scocos. "It's part of my new outreach for all American veterans. Our tribal veterans have done so much for the country."

"The 'one-stop shop' at the Lac Courtes Oreilles (LCO) Lodge presents a forum for federal, state and local agencies to provide assistance to veterans, including information on federal VA health care benefits, state and federal home mortgage and home improvement loans, education and job training grants, and a host of information about other services and benefits," said Scocos.

Duane Timm, a 60-year-old Air Force veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars and also a member of the Lac Courtes Oreilles tribe's honor guard, said he heard about the VBIF through the AMVETS. Timm came to the Fair to find out about medals he'd earned and to inquire about federal Native American home loans. "I live within reservation boundaries," Timm said, "but I own my own property. I talked to the people here about a home mortgage loan."

John D. Kending, a 77-year-old World War II veteran from Trego, Wisconsin, was pleased to find out about the medals he had earned. Kending said he was already enrolled in the U.S. Veterans Affairs health care system.

(more)

"I came here today because I wanted to get the medals I earned," Kending said. My Korean service records were not complete because I spent the last six months of service in the hospital."

"When I was 25 (years old) I didn't think about my medals earned," Kending said. "But today I found out that they (WDVA) can help me get my WWII Victory medal, Occupation medal WWII, Korean Service medal, and I should have a United Nations medal and a Purple Heart."

Another World War II veteran, "soon to be 80," who volunteered to help work the Veterans of Foreign Wars booth, was Arvid H. Vallem, who was born and raised in Hayward. He was assigned to the 41st Infantry Division overseas and went to Japan a month after the war, when his division disbanded and worked as a Sergeant in recruiting overseas for another year. Later, Vallem was a member of the Wisconsin National Guard 32nd Infantry Division's, 724th Engineer Battalion, until he retired in 1980. He was called up for ten months to Fort Lewis, Washington during the Berlin Crisis in 1961. He also said that just prior to that call-up, he swore in his cousin, Major General Jerome Berard, former Adjutant General of the Wisconsin National Guard, who retired over six years ago. Vallem said, "There are opportunities for veterans to ask questions about any subject. There are a lot of display materials on hand."

Corwin Allar of Hayward, also a WWII veteran, was in the occupation forces on Okinawa and said, "Luckily, I wasn't injured. But, I'm getting older, and it was time to find out about VA Health Care." His wife Jean added, "I'm glad they had this (fair) here."

Billie Two Feathers, also from Lac Courtes Oreilles, said, "There's a lot of information here."

Sawyer County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) Ray Boeckman said, "The Fair was successful, with the visibility in knowing through this type of event that things are available to them -- it has stirred up a new interest in veterans' benefits and services."

On September 20th, Secretary Scocos announced a new "Mission: Welcome Home" initiative, to encourage citizens, especially those who are veterans themselves, to help integrate and reintegrate soldiers back in to their communities, by providing information, welcome home materials, and a social support network. "Clearly, the outreach by WDVA to veterans is intertwined with the work we do welcoming new veterans -- my department is here as a resource for all veterans, including those newly returning to Wisconsin."

Veterans and their spouses and survivors who were unable to attend the LCO-Hayward VBIF are strongly encouraged to attend the next event, coming up on **Friday, October 15, 2004, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at the **National Guard Armory in Superior**, located at 32 N. 21st Street. Or, contact a local county veterans service officer (CVSO), visit the WDVA website (<http://dva.state.wi.us>), or call WDVA toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387).