



December 18, 2020

Dear WDVA staff,

As we celebrate the holidays and begin to look toward a new year, I want to take a moment to thank you for your hard work and all you have accomplished in 2020.

Faced with an unimaginable challenge, we buckled down and persevered.

Our Homes frontline workers have continued to battle COVID-19. And while our collective hearts broke when we lost members of our community to this terrible virus, you all kept up the good fight to keep so many safe and healthy. Our cemetery staff faced and rose to the challenge of providing an honorable resting place to our nation's heroes in the midst of a global pandemic. Our outreach and recovery coordinators adapted and learned how to provide direct services to at-risk and vulnerable veterans in new ways. We launched our first-ever completely online Memorial and Veterans Day observances, and our museum staff swiftly switched gears to offer virtual programming.

So many of us kept on providing critical services to veterans and their families from our kitchen tables, home offices, or whatever space we could carve out, often while navigating this new world as a make-shift virtual teacher, coach, and counselor for our families. While we cannot list every accomplishment here, the list really does go on and on. Even during a pandemic, WDVA found ways to continue to partner with fellow state agencies, veterans service organizations, community organizations, and others to make Wisconsin a better place to live for veterans and their families.

I am overwhelmingly proud of and deeply thankful for all of you.

What a year 2020 has been and no doubt a difficult one, but watching all of you continue to successfully fulfill our mission of serving Wisconsin veterans and their families has given me so much hope. While things may never be back to "normal," let us look forward to 2021 and the opportunities that await. Wishing you and your family a joyous holiday season and a happy new year. Stay safe!

Mary M. Kolar
Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret)

Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs