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Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes Joins WDVA in Recognizing Community Partners Assisting At-Risk Military Veterans

State-run program has connected nearly 1,000 veterans with life-changing services and resources

WEST ALLIS — The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) on Sunday, August 11, honored various organizations that have partnered with the agency to offer life-sustaining assistance to homeless and at-risk veterans across Wisconsin.

Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes joined WDVA Deputy Secretary James Bond at the Wisconsin State Fair in recognizing several groups that have helped the agency's Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) achieve its mission of serving at-risk veterans in Wisconsin.

Since receiving temporary funding in April 2018, the VORP has successfully served nearly 1,000 veterans in all areas of the state with mental health services, financial and employment assistance, substance use resources, emergency housing and food, and much more. The overwhelming success of the program led to Gov. Tony Evers and Lt. Gov. Barnes including a \$1.45 million provision in the recently-signed biennial budget to make the VORP permanent in all 72 of Wisconsin's counties.

Partners that were honored include:

- **The American Red Cross:** Assists veterans throughout the state by providing emergency funds when they are affected by disasters big and small. The Red Cross helps members of the military, veterans and their families prepare for, cope with, and respond to, the challenges of military service.
- **Salute the Troops:** Provides financial, emotional, and professional resources to service members, veterans, and families in the Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, and Dodge County areas. All donations stay local and benefit local military families and the programs that serve them.
- **Fox Valley Veterans Council:** Comprised of veteran service organizations and associate members from the Fox Valley, they provide emergency funding for basic needs to area veterans, those still serving, their dependents and their survivors.
- **Green Bay Police Department Behavioral Health Team:** Works closely with VORP whenever there's an emergency call involving a veteran to ensure the situation gets properly handed, and the veteran receives appropriate resources. The Green Bay Police Department also sits on the Brown County Suicide Prevention Coalition and the Veterans and First Responders Task Force, which help curb, find solutions and raise awareness to suicide in our communities.
- **County Veterans Service Officer Association of Wisconsin:** Comprised of professional veteran advocates who work in every county throughout the state, this group works tirelessly to get Wisconsin veterans the benefits and services they rightfully earned, and they are the "boots on the ground" to help veterans in our communities.

- **Wisconsin Veterans Network:** Nonprofit organization staffed by veterans who serve veterans that bridges a gap in the veterans benefit system and helps identify and connect at-risk veterans to benefits and programs they earned through their military service.
- **Southern Wisconsin Community Action Program:** Assists people throughout the southwestern part of Wisconsin with housing and other programs that can help veterans overcome challenges such as poverty.
- **Milwaukee Vet Center:** Provides community-based counseling for those in Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Appleton and Green Bay. Staff provide a wide range of social and psychological services. Additionally, they offer readjustment counseling for those separating from the military, helping their transition to civilian life be seamless.

The ceremony took place at the Wisconsin State Fair on Veterans and Military Appreciation Day, sponsored by Miller High Life. Veterans, military personnel and family members received free admission into the fair on until 4 p.m. on Sunday.

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