

DISCOVERING DVA

NEWS FROM WITHIN THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MARCH 2023



WISCONSIN GUN SHOP PROJECT AND SAFE STORAGE

Curtis Lemke, Program and Policy Analyst for Division of Veterans Benefits, recently presented at Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and US Dept. of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Governor's Challenge Implementation Academy sharing information about Wisconsin's Gun Shop Project and Safe Storage Network with states new to the Governor's Challenge Program. Teams from seven states came together to collaborate between agencies, share information, and develop implementation strategies to reduce

Veteran Suicide across the country. Curtis' goal is to grow the safe storage network to all 50 states making firearm safe storage opportunities available to everyone, and sharing information on Suicide prevention with firearm retailers and owners that could potentially save lives. Wisconsin's Gun Shop Project and Safe Storage network currently includes 33 Firearm retailers and one Police department offering Safe storage to individuals who need to temporarily remove a firearm from their home as part of individual safety planning.

INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.BETHEREWIS.COM UNDER THE LIVE TODAY – PUT IT AWAY TAB. Sharing this information with friends, colleagues, and gun shops in your local area is highly encouraged!

HUMAN RESOURCES



WELCOME!

We are excited to welcome many new employees to the department. Christopher McElgunn (Deputy Secretary) and Joseph Hoey (Assistant Deputy Secretary) join the Office of the Secretary. Kaustubh Zol (IS Systems Development Services) joins the enterprise services team.

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at King welcomes Victoria Nipps (Nurse Clinician), Emily Stiebs (Cook), and Violet Bono (Custodian).

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove welcomes Daniel Thom (Food Service Assistant).

Erick Vigil (Auto Equipment Tech) joins the team at Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

ELECTION DAY - VOTING AND BEING A POLL WORKER

April 4, 2023, is Election Day. The processes for reporting time for voting during work hours and serving as a poll worker have changed slightly. Please be sure to read the emails addressing these two processes. Questions can be directed to DVAMBCOPayroll@wisconsin.gov.

BENEFITS STATEMENT

ETF send benefit statements in the spring each year. Watch your mailbox!

CONTACTING PAYROLL

We receive a significant number of emails each day from our customers. To help us help you better, below are a few tips:

- Send all emails to the DVAMBCOPayroll@wisconsin.gov mailbox rather than to individual Payroll staff. This will allow access to your email to all Payroll staff in the event Payroll staff are out of the office.
- Provide as much detail as possible in your email, i.e., who, what, where, when and why. Also, if you are receiving an error message, please send a screenshot of the error message.
- Often inquiries require research and take some time to respond - we appreciate your patience. Please refrain from sending duplicate emails.

STATE OF WISCONSIN STUDENT DIVERSITY INTERNSHIP (SWSDIP)

We are very excited that DVA's Veterans Museum is participating in the SWSDIP program again this year. If you know a student who might be interested in participating next year, have them watch wisc.jobs in the winter months for the job posting. There are a broad range of internship opportunities with different agencies throughout the enterprise.



HONORING BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT WDVA

The central office Human Resources team attended presentations held in the Rimrock State Office Building in honor of Black History Month. The final presenter to close out this month was Ruben Anthony, President and CEO, of Urban League of Greater Madison who presented information of the great work the organization is doing in the community. Ruben's wife, Wanda Anthony, is a member of our Region 4 Human Resources Team.

(Above L-R: Neil Swingen, Maggie Davis, Linda Weber, Wanda Anthony, Ruben Anthony and Rene Marquardt)

HR BOOK NOOK

[Outliers: The Story of Success by Malcolm Gladwell](#)

This older book is a great read if you are interested in learning what sets high achievers apart.

HR HOT TOPICS

Watch your email for links to attend!

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE & MEDIATION

The equity and inclusion team will discuss working in a respectful workplace and how to handle concerns related to hostile workplace situations.

Date: March 15, 2023 at 12pm

LIFE EVENTS AND BENEFITS

Learn about Life Events such as marriage, birth, adoption, divorce, etc., and how they typically allow a change in benefit plans within 30 days of the event.

Date: April 18, 2023 at 12pm

DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

Q&A WITH STEVIE SCOTT REGION 11 VORP COORDINATOR

Q: What do you do for WDVA/VORP?

A: What I do is help people. My job is to help veterans and their families who lack basic necessities like shelter, food, transportation, and employment. I also help veterans who are in need of mental health services.

Q: What motivates you in your role at WDVA in helping veterans? How long have you been with the department?

A: My motivation is the fact that I know I am making a difference in someone's life. I feel good about doing that. I have been with WDVA/VORP since January of 2023, and I am happy to be the newest member of the VORP team!

Q: What is the most rewarding part of your job either working with staff or veterans?

A: One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the support I receive from all staff members and community providers that I work with. The second and most rewarding part is the amount of gratitude that is shown by the veterans that I work with.

Q: Are you a veteran/Do you have any veterans in your family?

A: I am not a veteran however I have worked alongside many veterans at my previous employer. My stepfather is a proud Vietnam veteran. I am proud of him as well.



WELCOME!

Jason Satek will be joining the Division of Veterans Benefits team on Monday March 13, 2023, as an Operational Program Associate. He comes to the Department/Division from the private sector with experience in managing operations and supervising production. He has a Bachelor Degree in Philosophy with minors in English & Psychology going onto a Master's Degree in Political Studies. Jason Served with the United States Air Force as a Security Force Member. In some of his free time he is a volunteer with Verona Recreation as a coach for baseball and football.

Welcome aboard Jason!

BEST WISHES!

Best Wishes to **Shane Xiong** – Shane started with the Department in the Claims Section December of 2017 as a Claims Officer: Shane's last day with the Department was Friday March 3, 2023. Shane brought a positive energy to the office and exemplified what it means to be a team player. She is one of a couple of Claims Officers who volunteered to travel to Chippewa, and Green Bay to assisted VHRP Veterans in filing claims. Shane is starting a new adventure in Minnesota we wish her the best.

Thank you, Shane, for your 5+ years of exemplary service for Wisconsin Veterans!

THE FRIENDLY FACES OF WDVA

Emily Pollock (*right*) has served Wisconsin Veterans for three years with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Emily works in the Veterans Benefit Resource Center (VBRC). Emily's primary duties include processing applications, mail, and providing customer service via email, chat, phone, and walk-ins. Emily is very detail-oriented. She consistently goes above and beyond by exceeding her goals and objectives. Emily is an outstanding asset to the VBRC, Wisconsin veterans, and the entire Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Wisconsin Veterans have the best care out of all fifty states because WDVA employees like Emily are working directly for them each and every day.



Jacob Higgins (near left) is one of the newer members of the WDVA Military Funeral Honors Program (MFHP) team. Jacob grew up in a small town in Minnesota. After graduating Jacob joined the United States Air Force. He began his time in the Air Force as an Aircraft Electrical and Environmental Specialist. After an Afghanistan deployment Jacob returned to the states. He joined the Little Rock Air Force Base Honors Team. Jacob not only participated in many honors services, but became the programs lead trainer for new Base Honors Team members.

Jacob and his wife chose to make Wisconsin their home after leaving the Air Force. Jacob joined WDVA MFHP in May of 2022

Jacob has brought his experience and attention to detail to our Military Funeral Honors Program. Jacob indeed sets a standard we all look to achieve when providing the final tribute to our fellow state veterans and their families.

DARBY'S JOKES *by Jeff Darby*

Why did the bicycle fall over?

Because it was two tired.

What did the triangle say to the circle?

You're pointless.

What do lawyers wear to court?

Lawsuits.



WHERE IN WISCONSIN IS OUTREACH?

1. MILWAUKEE – MILWAUKEE VETERANS STAND DOWN
I AM NOT INVISIBLE 3.0 UNVEILING
ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY FOR OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM
VIETNAM VETERANS DAY
2. WAUSAU– MARATHON COUNTY VETERANS COALITION
3. WAUPACA – VETERANS BENEFIT EXPO
4. FOND DU LAC – VETERAN CAREER EXPO



UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 27 – MEMORIAL DAY AT NORTHERN WI VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY
 MAY 28 – MEMORIAL DAY AT SOUTHERN WI VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY
 MAY 29 - MEMORIAL DAY AT CENTRAL WI VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY
 JUNE 2-3 – WOMEN VETERANS RETREAT IN EAU CLAIRE