DISCOVERING DVA

NEWS FROM WITHIN THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MAY 2023

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tony Evers, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, do hereby proclaim May 7 – 13, 2023, as

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

and May 9, 2023, as

STATE EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY

throughout the State of Wisconsin and I commend this observance to all our state's residents.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Madison this 28th day of April 2023.

TONY EVERS
GOVERNOR

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

To the Employees of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs:

I have served my country in the Marines, and I have served Wisconsin as a state employee. The connection between the two is not lost on me—in both cases, I was called to work in service of a greater purpose.

This week, Gov. Evers proclaimed May 7 through May 13, 2023, as Public Service Recognition Week and May 9, 2023, as State Employee Appreciation Day in Wisconsin. I wanted to extend a personal thank you to all of you—the Veterans Homes, the Division of Veterans Benefits, the Veterans Museum, Division of Enterprise Services, and everyone who is a part of the WDVA mission of serving our state's veterans and their families.

Your commitment to service and your unwavering dedication to the well-being of our veterans is a shining example of what it means to be a public servant. Your hard work and dedication make a real difference in the lives of our veterans, and for that, I thank every one of you.

My sincerest appreciation,

James Bond

2023 MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONIES AT WDVA CEMETERIES

WDVA will be holding Memorial Day Weekend ceremonies at our three veteran memorial cemeteries located in King, Spooner, and Union Grove, WI. You are invited to join veterans and their families in honoring the service and sacrifices of those who bravely fought for our country. This year's Memorial Day theme is "175 Years of Wisconsin Service & Sacrifice."

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY DATES, TIMES, & LOCATIONS

SATURDAY, MAY 27 – 1:00 P.M.

NORTHERN WISCONSIN
VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

SPOONER, WI

SUNDAY, MAY 28 – 11:00 A.M.

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN
VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

UNION GROVE, WI

MONDAY, MAY 29 – 10:00 A.M.

CENTRAL WISCONSIN
VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

KING, WI

Volunteers are also requested to assist with placing flags on headstones and grave markers in advance of Memorial Day events at our cemeteries. Please refer to the following directions, dates, and times regarding any interested volunteers for flag placement:

NORTHERN - FRIDAY, MAY 26 AT 11:00 A.M.

Volunteers should register in advance at nwvmc@dva.wisconsin.gov or call (715) 635-5360.

CENTRAL - FRIDAY, MAY 26 AT 5:00 P.M

No pre-registration needed. Volunteers should meet in our main in our shelter area for directions.

SOUTHERN - SATURDAY, MAY 27 AT 7:30 A.M.

Volunteers should arrive at 7:30 a.m. No pre-registration required. There will be a briefing at 8:00 a.m. at the main administration building. It is recommended that volunteers should bring their own tool for poking holes in the ground for flags (example: screwdriver).

More information about our three WDVA veteran memorial cemeteries, including directions, can be found here.

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR STAFF UPDATES

Congratulations, Sheila Lowe! Sheila Lowe is retiring after 17 years of dedicated HR service to King Veterans Home. We are so happy for Sheila and are excited to hear about all of her new retirement adventures. Thank you for all of your hard work. You will be missed by all!

The HR team will welcome two new summer interns this year that were hired through the State of Wisconsin Student Diversity Internship program. Please help us welcome them!

Hope Ngirwe will be joining us as an HR Assistant Advanced and will be providing outreach support related to goals in WDVA's Equity and Inclusion Plan. Hope is graduating this May from the University of Wisconsin – Madison with a BS in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She will also graduate with certificates in African Studies and Global Health.

Alexander Gratz will be joining our team as an IS Support Technician and will be supporting our team with building electronic forms, organizing records and building standard formats for HR policy, forms and procedures. Alex is studying at the University of Wisconsin – Madison and plans to graduate in May 2024 with a degree in International Studies.

ATTENTION STAFF AT KING AND UNION GROVE VETERANS HOMES – JOIN US!

WDVA wants your valuable input for the department's next Equity and Inclusion Plan. We are looking for a couple of employees from each location who would like to join our Cultivating Culture Committee. If you are interested, please consult with leadership and then contact Angela Zilliox or Racheal Harris

WELCOME!

We are excited to welcome many new employees to the department. Patrick Meyer (Materials Management Director); Kia Lor (Veterans Program Supervisor); Melissa Doud, Keith Lucas, and Isaac Spencer (Human Services Program Coordinators); Reid Aaron (Regulatory Specialist); Dylan Moss (Operations Program Associate); Brennan Gilson (Veterans Claims Officer); and Ryan Dieter and Derek Healey (Cemetery Caretakers) join us in the central office.

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at King welcomes Abdul Rauf Iddrisu and Jessica Johnson (Nurse Clinicians); Jodie Schulz (Food Service Administrator); Gregory Allhands (Cook); and Georgiana Schamber (Custodian).

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove welcomes Dorothy Riley (Nurse Clinician); Ramona Moncher (Office Operations Associate); and Alexander Flones (Food Service Assistant).

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Good News! Region 4 HR-Employee Relations is putting a lot of energy into improving our investigatory process by participating in a DOA Continuous Improvement project. Alenka Dries, ER Specialist in Region 4- DOR is our Continuous Improvement/Yellow Belt Project Lead.

This project will continue through September of this year. If you have questions on this project, please contact Alenka Dries or Angela Keelan.

HR HOT TOPICS

Watch your email for links to attend!

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY

Understanding the leave request process, time entry and accrued leave balances.

Presenters: Victoria Simonson and Payroll

Date: May 18, 2023 at 12pm

HR BOOK NOOK

Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know by Adam Grant

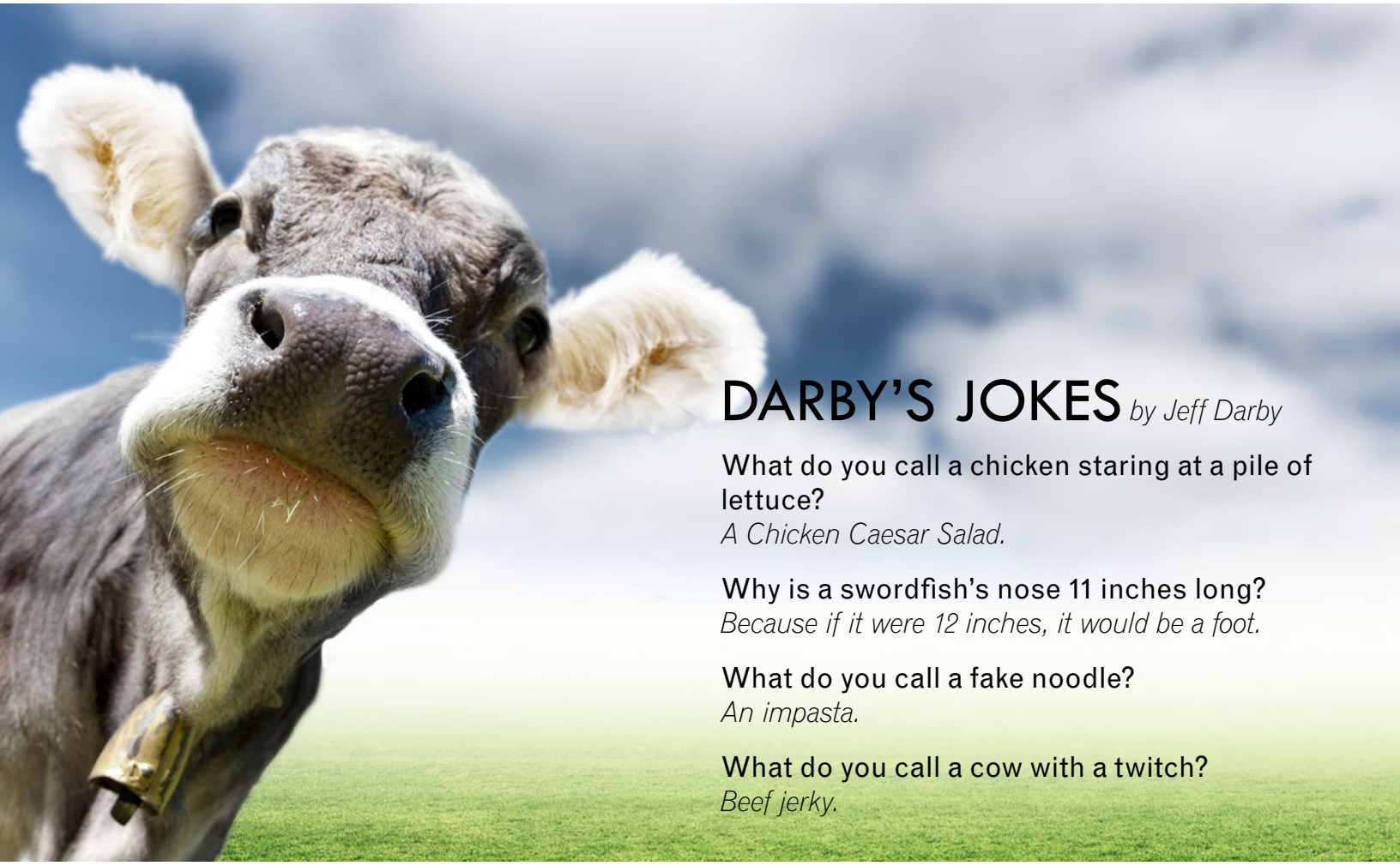
This book weaves together research and storytelling to help us build the intellectual and emotional muscle we need to stay curious enough about the world to actually change it.

EDVEST 529 COLLEGE SAVINGS

Help your children, grandchildren, and other loved ones avoid an overreliance on student loans by developing a higher education savings strategy today! In this session, Edvest 529, Wisconsin's college savings plan, will cover what 529 College Savings Plans are and how they work, the many benefits of saving with these accounts, the evolving cost of higher education, and other resources available to help you and your family plan and pay for college. Plus, individuals who open a new Edvest account between 5/22/2023 and 5/31/2023 can qualify for a special bonus of $50 or $100. Join this free session for details and to learn how to qualify.

THURSDAY, MAY 18 | 11:30AM-12:30PM | MICROSOFT TEAMS

Join the live presentation here or contact cheryl.rapp@dfi.wisconsin.gov or chelsea.wunnicke@dfi.wisconsin.gov with any questions you may have.



DARBY'S JOKES *by Jeff Darby*

What do you call a chicken staring at a pile of lettuce?
A Chicken Caesar Salad.

Why is a swordfish's nose 11 inches long?
Because if it were 12 inches, it would be a foot.

What do you call a fake noodle?
An impasta.

What do you call a cow with a twitch?
Beef jerky.

THE FRIENDLY FACES OF WDVA

Jason Satek has served Wisconsin veterans for 2 months with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans of Affairs. Jason works within the Division of Veterans Benefits as an Office Production Associate for VORP and VBRC. Jason's primary duties include entering applications, processing mail, coordinating records requests, running reports, monitoring inboxes, and clerical duties between the two sections. He comes to the Department/Division from the private sector with experience in managing operations and supervising production. He has a bachelor's 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. Jason enjoys volunteering with Verona Recreation as a Coach for Baseball and Football. Jason always maintains a positive attitude and is an outstanding asset to the Division, the entire Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, and Wisconsin veterans.

DIVISION OF VETERANS BENEFITS

Q&A WITH ISAAC SPENCER

REGION 12 VORP COORDINATOR

Q: What motivates you, or why do you "do what you do" to help veterans?

A: My motivation comes from years of working in conjunction with members of the community in my past roles. I believe everyone needs a hand up at a certain time in their lives. The veteran population is very deserving population and I believe I can help them reach their goals!

Q: What is the most rewarding part of helping or seeing veterans succeed?

A: The most rewarding part of helping veterans is seeing the change that impacts all parts of their lives. There is a sense of accomplishment and pride when you're part of the change.

Q: Any veterans in your family, or are you a veteran yourself?

A: My father, Jon Spencer, served in the Army. He was deployed from 1982 to 1984 in Germany and served in the Reserves until 1993. I do not have any military experience myself.

Isaac can be reached at 608.590.6137 or isaac.spencer1@dva.wi.gov.

Celebrate Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

CULTIVATING CULTURE COMMITTEE

May is Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage month, which celebrates the histories of the fastest-growing racial group in America. A rather broad term, Asian/Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants.

The AAPI population has increased more than 35% between 2010 and 2020 and is expected to quadruple by 2060 according to the Census Bureau. AAPI Heritage month is to honor the cultures, traditions, and history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. Celebrating the history of this diverse group is important, it is also important to raise awareness about the rise in hate crimes the AAPI have experienced, and work to break deep-rooted stereotypes and bias by exploring the history they are rooted in.

One stereotype is that all Asian Americans are of the same background or national heritage. Many people are either unable or unwilling to distinguish between different Asian ethnicities such as Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans. Indonesian American, etc. This becomes a problem because people generalize certain philosophies or practices about one or a few Asian Americans to the entire Asian American population. The result is that we may reduce or overlook important differences between Asian ethnic groups.

The second stereotype is that many non-Asians assume every Asian they meet, see, or listen to is a foreigner. People sometimes can't distinguish that many Asian American families live in and have been U.S. citizens for several generations. When Asian Americans are perceived as foreigners, it becomes easier to think of them as not fully American and deny them the same rights as Americans.

How can you celebrate AAPI heritage month? Listen to a podcase from the APPI community, watch a documentary about Asian American history, visit an AAPI museum, Learn how to pronounce Asian names, Learn the difference between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, learn how to help stop violence against AAPI communities.

WHERE IN WISCONSIN IS OUTREACH?

1. MADISON – WISCONSIN WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT GALA
2. MILWAUKEE – MILWAUKEE VETERAN MEET UP
3. STOUGHTON – VETERANS CLEAN UP, DAY OF SERVICE
4. FT. MCCOY – ARMED FORCES DAY

BARABOO – CENTRAL WISCONSIN VETERANS SUMMIT

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