

DISCOVERING VA

NEWS FROM WITHIN THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS JUNE 2024



HONORING MEMORIAL DAY 2024

WDVA held Memorial Day ceremonies at all three state veteran memorial cemeteries. Hundreds of community members, veterans, and volunteers gathered to honor the memory and sacrifice of those who died in service to our nation.

“As you know, WDVA’s mission is to serve Wisconsin’s veterans and honor their service and sacrifice to our state and nation. One of the ways we do that is by holding Memorial Day ceremonies at the three state veteran cemeteries in Spooner, Union Grove, and King. I was honored to speak at all three this year and wanted to acknowledge the hard work and diligence of our cemetery staff. WDVA’s Cemeteries reflect the care and reverence we all have for Wisconsin veterans. Thank you to everyone who worked to make these ceremonies happen and for always putting in the extra effort to provide a dignified resting place for the fallen.”



Secretary James Bond





Did curators Greg Krueger and Kevin Hampton know that decades of playing Risk would be useful in their work as they laid out the D-Day invasion scene?

THE WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

If you're taking a stroll on the Capitol Square, be sure to stop by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum to see two new window displays. In one set of windows, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum marked the 80th anniversary of the Allied forces landing on the beaches of Normandy. Museum staff set out to remember our veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice on June 6, 1944 and to tell the stories of those who survived.

The fallen are remembered on a memorial wall in the window and on an interactive map on the museum website. One staff goal for the installation is to emphasize that the D-Day operation was not a battle that happened "over there," but one that touched nearly every corner of our great state. A floor map in the window is marked with blue flags, each notes a Wisconsinite in the museum's collection who took part in the D-Day invasion. Many who did survive shared their stories with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. You can read or listen to their accounts on the [museum website](#) or by following the QR code to the right.





In another set of windows, on June 12, staff from the WDVA public affairs office with assistance from museums staff installed a window to celebrate Women Veterans Day on June 12. The display called, "In Her Boots" is the culmination of a year-long project by Jodi Barnett, Women Veterans Coordinator for WDVA, where women veterans represented their service by embellishing combat boots with everything from glitter and paint to the written word. The powerful sight of dozens of decorated boots evokes the highs and lows of military service for our women veterans and reminds us that women, too, serve.

Both installations resulted in significant media attention from across the state resulting in an estimated market reach of more than 5.3 million people.





VORP AT VOLK FIELD

VORP Region 3 outreach coordinator David Hartl represented WDVA at the SRP, or Soldier Readiness Processing event, held on Saturday, May 4th, at Volk Field in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin. 132 service members attended the event, which provided materials, guidance, and care to ensure deployments were carried out to the U.S. Army standards. Additional guidance also included information about financial needs, family member updates, medical and dental needs, and helpful resources for service members and their families during and after deployments.

David, who is also an Army veteran, says, "I think it is important for VORP to be available for these events because service members returning from deployment may have experienced a traumatic event. I want them to know we are here to help them and have their families connect with us if needed."

CEMETERY BENEFITS PRESENTATION AT HOSPICE SYMPOSIUM

Central Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery Director Andrew Whitman presented information on the benefits of Wisconsin's veterans' memorial cemeteries to participants at a hospice symposium. The symposium was held at the Wisconsin Veterans Home in King on Thursday, April 18, 2024. Andrew presented information on the types of burials, services offered, and costs at our State Veterans Cemeteries.





DUNN COUNTY VETERAN RESOURCE FAIR

WDVA Secretary James Bond attended the Dunn County Veteran Resource Fair on April 27th in Menomonie, WI. He is pictured above left with VORP Region 6 outreach coordinator Paul Huber (right) and Dan Zabrowski (left), the statewide SOAR coordinator, who hosted an informational table for veteran support services and benefits, and above right with Kristy Hartl from Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery, answering questions about veteran burial benefits. The resource fair included county, state, and government veterans services, local businesses, and non-profits, helping to support our veterans and their families.



TRIBAL PARTNERS FISHING TRIP

On Thursday, June 6th, WDVA Secretary James Bond took part in the Tribal Partners Fishing trip in Lac du Flambeau on the Lake of the Torches. He was joined by Tribal Veteran Liaison, Melissa Doud, to create better bonds and communication with Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations and their veterans. The fishing trip was a success for Secretary Bond as he caught a 5-lbs, 21-inch largemouth bass.





A SPRINGTIME WALK

NWVMC administrative staff took an afternoon walk around our cemetery grounds on Wednesday, May 8, to enjoy the sunny weather and captured pictures of our blooming flowers, some painted turtles taking in the sun, and a mother goose and her chicks by our pond. Warmer weather in Spooner is finally here, and hopefully, you get a glimpse of some of our wildlife on your next visit! *Pictures provided by Joel Clapero, Director, NWVMC.*

DARBY'S JOKES

by Jeff Darby



What's the best way to get a dozen people to say bye 300 times? *A conference call.*
Whoever stole my copy of Microsoft Office, I will find you! *You have my Word!*
What is the only thing better than a Friday night? *A Monday holiday.*
What is faster than the Flash? *Friday nights.*



WHERE IN WISCONSIN IS
OUTREACH?

OUTREACH EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE IN MAY AND JUNE

1. GREEN BAY
VFW STATE CONVENTION
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
STATE CONFERENCE

2. MILWAUKEE
VETERAN MEET & GREET
MUSIC IN THE GARDEN
MILITARY AND VETERANS DAY AT MKE ZOO

3. MADISON
IN HER BOOTS
4. LAC DU FLAMBEAU
TRIBAL PARTNERS FISHING EVENT

5. EAU CLAIRE
WOMEN VETERANS RETREAT

6. KING
WOMEN VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

HUMAN RESOURCES

WELCOME!

We are excited to welcome many new employees to the department. Ryan Swantz (Financial Management Supervisor), Nathan Gear (Human Services Program Coordinator), and Christopher Leslie (IS Technical Services) joined the central Madison office. Ian Kutner (Veterans Claims Officer) joined the Milwaukee office. Percy Hill (Operations Program Associate) joined the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Kevin DeMenter and Donovan Ratz (Cemetery Caretakers) joined the cemeteries.

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove welcomed Karen Williams (Veterans Home Assistant Administrator); James Holmblad (Building and Grounds Supervisor); Byron Gillaspie and Jeffery Steiner (Facilities Maintenance Specialists); Jeff Heacox (Custodian); Sara Clay, Annette Leivick, and Angeline Olson (Nurse Clinicians); Tania Clark, Vanessa Jackson, Ayesha Khan, Sierra Leigh, Kianee Lee, Dominique Mcgee, Priscellia Price, Sharina Walker, and Yessenia Weinfurter (Nursing Assistants); Owen Anders and Pamela Bauer (Food Service Assistants); and Maximilian Heberling (Office Operations Associate).

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at King welcomed Shannon Hardel (Veterans Home Assistant Administrator); Abigail Walla (Operations Associate); Nathaniel Plath (Building and Grounds Superintendent); Barry Degler (Laborer); Jessica Ruppel (Dietitian–Clinical); Samantha Sivertsen (Therapist); Mary Bakken and Jill Jonely (Medical Program Assistant); Jessica Russell (Licensed Practical Nurse); Annette Fritz, Tammy Hering, Matthew Knollenberg, Kimberly Krauss, Michelle Leary, Kathleen Quinn, Sara Robbins, Jamie Wandrey, and Elevenda Wiese (Nurse Clinicians); Danylle Bastar, Hannah Hoffman, Julianna Johnson, Lorilyn Molina, Annabella Mondello, and Kathi Steffens (Nursing Assistants); and Audrianna Cooper, Miranda Janec, Brenda Long, Austin Mumbroe, Sawyer Schuelke, David Skerik, Talan Tankersley, Kassondra Tauges, and Peggy Wetzell (Food Service Assistants).

ELECTRONIC FORMS ARE “LIVE”: OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT/ VOLUNTEERING/HONORARIA AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Human Resources is working towards modernizing forms and form approval. We are excited to announce that the Outside Employment/Activity Request and Leave of Absence Request forms are complete and ready to use. Please delete any other versions of these forms that you may have saved in your personal folders.

The [Outside Employment/Activity Request](#) form must be completed prior to performing any work (paid or unpaid) outside of your employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Employees will complete the form on the Region 4 intranet site and the form will automatically route for the required approvals. Please refer to Wis. Adm. Code ER-MRS 24, the Code of Ethics, and agency policy for guidelines related to Outside Employment and Activities.

The [Leave of Absence Request/Authorization](#) form must be completed by an employee who is requesting an extended leave (paid or unpaid) or any period of absence that is not covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Employees are required to make the request and receive authorization prior to taking an extended leave. Supervisors will use the job aid, [Reviewing LOA Request Job Aid.docx](#), to complete a review of any requests they may receive.

Individuals who have submitted a previous Outside Employment Request or Leave of Absence Request and received a response, do not have to complete the form again. Moving forward, please use this automated process for any new Outside Employment/Activity Requests or Leave of Absence Requests.

REMINDER: PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SEASON IS HERE

WDVA is closely approaching the end of the current annual evaluation cycle. Please ensure that evaluations for staff are completed by June 30, 2024 to coincide with the current annual evaluation cycle of November 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. Completion of required evaluations is mandatory in order for a supervisor to be eligible for the anticipated General Wage Adjustment (GWA) and is required by the [Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook](#).

As a reminder, probationary employees will continue to follow their current quarterly evaluation model until the employee has completed their probationary employment.

All employee training and reference materials related to completed an employee performance evaluation, can be found on the [Region 4 HR Intranet](#) site by selecting Employee Resources > Training > ePerformance > DVA. All [supervisory training](#) and reference materials can be found on the Region 4 HR Intranet site by selecting Supervisor Resources > Performance Management (on the right side of page) > Department of Veterans Affairs. Select resources have also been attached to this email. Supervisors and employees shall refer to these materials prior to contacting their local HR office for assistance with the system. The job aid is easy to follow and very informative. If used appropriately, there should be very few, if any, questions about the use of the system.



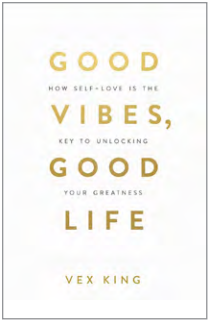
TEAM UPDATES!

After over 35 years of incredible service supporting Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, Carla Bongard retired at the end of May. We were so happy to see so many current and past WDVA employees there to celebrate Carla!

QUARTER 3 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Bureau of Training and Development (BTD) is excited to announce our instructor-led trainings for July, August, and September 2024. BTD offers virtual webinar sessions, in-person instructor-led sessions, on-demand online learning, and eLearning designed to empower, educate, prepare, and inspire state workers to grow to their full potential so they may best serve the public.

The quarter 3 flyer of Enterprise training opportunities is now available. [Visit BTD's website](#) for the flyer listing classes, dates, times, and instructions on how to sign up and attend. In addition to these instructor-led classes, more than 2,000 on-demand online classes are available in the learning management system. You are our primary method of distributing this flyer to state employees, so please share this information throughout your agency.



HR BOOK NOOK

[Good Vibes, Good Life: How self-love is the key to unlocking greatness by Vex King](#)

How can you learn to truly love yourself? How can you transform negative emotions into positive ones? Is it possible to find lasting happiness?

In this book, Instagram guru Vex King answers all of these questions and more. Vex overcame adversity to become a source of hope for thousands of young people, and now draws from his personal experience and his intuitive wisdom to inspire you to:

- Practice self-care, overcome toxic energy and prioritize your wellbeing
- Cultivate positive lifestyle habits, including mindfulness and meditation
- Change your beliefs to invite great opportunities into your life
- Manifest your goals using tried-and-tested techniques
- Overcome fear and flow with the Universe
- Find your higher purpose and become a shining light for others

In this book, Vex will show you that when you change the way you think, feel, speak and act, you begin to change the world.