

Michael Jackson to retire from 30 years of veteran service

So long!

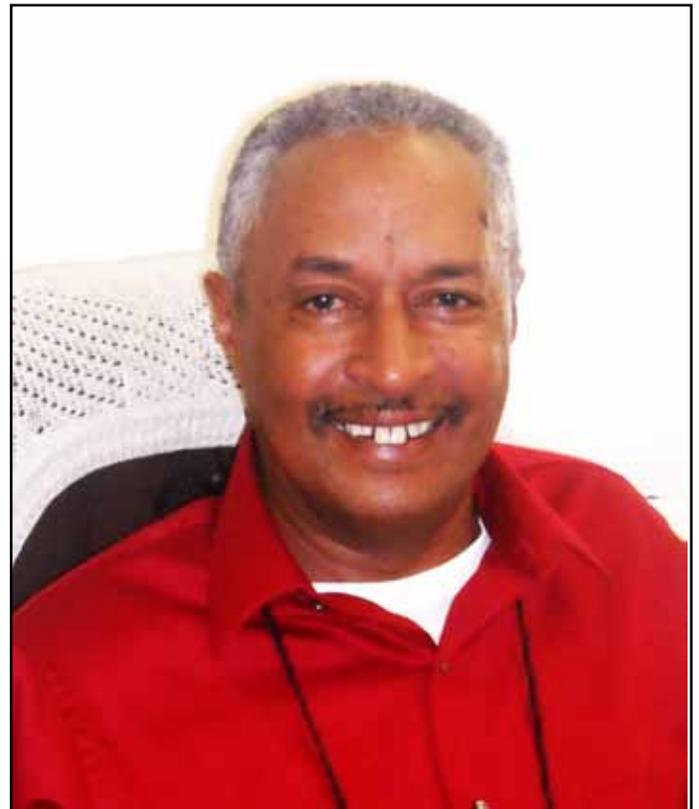
By Michael Jackson, Dane County CVSO

After 22 years and 11 months, I am retiring from the Dane County Veterans Service Office. Although my retirement date is January third, my last day at work will be November 18. This has been the longest I have been in one position and with eight years as an employee of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, it totals over 30 years of service to the veteran community.

It has been quite an experience with highs, lows and occasional miracles. I am eternally grateful to former County Executive Jonathan Barry and his Executive Assistant Eloise Anderson who hired me; Interim County Executive Rod Matthews, following Mr. Barry's resignation; former County Executive Rick Phelps; and, of course, my current boss, Kathleen Falk as well as members of the Dane County Board for allowing me to remain as Dane County Veterans Service Officer.

I'm pleased and proud of the service this office provides to Dane County veterans and their dependants. The stellar record would not exist were it not for the quality staff, work study students, and Veteran Service Commissioners. Their efforts on behalf of the veteran community have made me look good. I am also proud that I am only the fourth Dane County Veterans Service Officer in Dane County's history.

However, I understand that I represent the past, not the future. Dan Connery will be interim CVSO and a search for a permanent successor will begin in early 2011, with hiring to be effective July, 2011. I have encouraged Dan to apply. I am confident I'm leaving the office in good hands! Please continue to support Dan and staff. It will be challenging for them with a full time vacancy for several months.



Thank you all for your kindness and support. I'll close with my favorite poem – author unknown:

*Life is but a minute
Only 60 seconds in it.
Forced upon me.
Didn't seek it.
Didn't choose it.
But it's up to me to use it,
I must suffer if I abuse it
Just a tiny little minute.
But eternity is in it!"*

VETERANS DAY ACTIVITIES Nov. 11, 2010



Veterans Day *Honoring All Who Served – Traditions of Service* Thursday, November 11, 2010

NOVEMBER 11

Madison

Capitol Rotunda – Madison WI

9:30 – Madison Veterans Council Band performs concert at State Capitol, followed by 10:00 ceremony hosted by the Madison Veterans Council.

VFW Post 7591

301 Cottage Grove Road, Madison 53716

11:00 – Madison Veterans Park ceremony

12:00 – Chili lunch – free to all veterans

Stoughton

Stoughton Senior Center, 248 W. Main St.

11:30 – Program at Senior Center

12:00 – Chili Lunch (free for all veterans). Please call 873-8585 by 1 p.m. on 11/9/10 to make a reservation.

Verona

11:00 – Flag ceremony at Hometown Junction

11:45 – Lunch at the Verona Senior Center, 108 Paoli St. Please call 845-7471 in advance for reservations

Waunakee

10:30 – Program at Waunakee Middle School Gym, 1001 South Street

Oregon

Sponsored by VFW Post 10272

11:00 – Memorial service/short program at WW I Monument in Triangle Park

12:00 – Free lunch and musical

entertainment for veterans at

Oregon Senior Center, 219 Park St.

NOVEMBER 13

Madison

8:00-11:00

Elks Club Breakfast

711 Jenifer Street, Madison

Free to all veterans and active duty personnel – must prove veteran status

12:15 – Program

County Veterans Service Offices provide free assistance to veterans

Adapted from WDVA press release of 9/24/10

(MADISON) – A recent letter to a local Wisconsin newspaper talked about the “new” Aid and Attendance benefit for veterans and their spouses. The letter described strict income eligibility requirements and complex paperwork. It also cited a \$650 non-refundable “fee” to apply for the benefit.

Unfortunately, it sounds like the individual writing the letter may have fallen victim to an unscrupulous business looking to collect fees. Some businesses get involved in promoting “new” veterans benefits so they can charge fees to help applicants manipulate the family’s financial assets in order to meet eligibility requirements for veterans benefits. These benefits, like the Pension with Aid and Attendance benefit, cited in the letter, are not new at all.

Veterans and their family members need to know filing for veterans benefits is a free process and the local County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) are ready to help.

Navigating the paperwork and understanding the complex eligibility requirements can take time and require patience. While individuals are free to decide

for themselves whether to hire a consultant, people should understand that application fees, or money paid up front, is never required to access a veterans benefit. They should also be aware that the individual representing veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must meet federal legal requirements.

The best advice is:

Remember filing is a free process. You can apply through your CVSO, or other free advocates, such as those provided by veterans service organizations.

Do your homework and ask questions. When a consultant is more interested in your personal finances or asking for a fee, you should be concerned. Ask how and when the individual was accredited for filing claims.

Be patient and understand that the application process can be complex and time consuming. Your CVSO is ready to answer your questions and serve as your guide throughout the process.

The Dane County Veterans Service office in Madison can be reached by calling 608-266-4158.

VA claims process advice 101

Submitted by Thomas Hay, Assistant CVSO

The process of getting a disability compensation claim processed by the VA is a time consuming and frequently frustrating endeavor. However, understanding the specifics of this process, and knowing the deadlines you must meet in order to appeal your claim, can help avoid unnecessary and stressful confusion.

Prior to filing any compensation claim, it is important to pinpoint those physical and mental health disabilities that may be related to your time in service. A well grounded claim for benefits involves a disability which either began in service or is the result of service and that is currently diagnosed or being treated. To begin the process, you should file a claim at your local County Veterans Service Office

http://www.wicvso.org/your_cvso.htm. If you have never filed a claim before, the VA will contact the

National Personnel Records Center to obtain service medical and personnel records and contact any information sources, with the veteran’s consent, of post-service medical treatment identified by the veteran.

The regional office then may or may not require the veteran to attend a Compensation and Pension (C&P) examination to determine the severity of the claimed disability and whether it is related to service. The regional office will then issue a rating decision concerning the claimed conditions. There is not a set time frame for how long it will take for the regional office to issue this decision after a veteran files a claim; however, it is not unusual for it to take six months or more. Remember, it is never too late to file a claim, but sooner is better than later.

VA medical care and health care reform

Dan Connery, Assistant CVSO

Adapted from VA Health Care Fact Sheet 16-14, April 2010

Many Veterans have questions about the new health care reform law. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) offers the following information about the law and its impact on veterans. This document addresses only the most pressing questions that have been raised. VHA will provide additional information about the new law as it is developed.

Nothing in the new law changes anything about VA health care

The law contains many complex provisions, including many reforms to the practices of the health insurance industry.

Nothing in the new law changes anything about the veterans' health care program.

Enrolled veterans may still rely on VHA for their health care in the same manner as before the law.

Beginning in 2014, everyone will be required to have health care coverage

The law requires that every individual must have some form of health care coverage.

The coverage must meet a minimum standard so that everyone will be able to have a minimum level of care.

Congress wrote into the law a provision that says the veterans' health care program, administered by VHA, meets the standard for health care coverage.

Enrolled Veterans do not have to purchase additional coverage

Because the veterans' health care program meets the standard under the law, veterans enrolled in the VA health care program do not need to obtain additional health care coverage.

Veterans may continue to purchase additional coverage if they wish, but the law does not require them to do so.

For assistance with enrolling into the VA Health Care System, please contact the Dane County Veterans Service Office at 608-266-4158.

VA simplifies access to health care and benefits for veterans with PTSD

From <http://www.va.gov/opa/presrel>

WASHINGTON (July 12, 2010) – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced a critical step forward in providing an easier process for veterans seeking health care and disability compensation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with the publication of a final regulation in the *Federal Register*. PTSD is a medically recognized anxiety disorder that can develop from seeing or experiencing an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to which a person responds with intense fear, helplessness or horror, and is not uncommon among war veterans.

By publishing a final regulation the VA reduces the evidence needed if the trauma claimed by a veteran is related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity and is consistent with the places, types, and circumstances of the veteran's service. Under the new rule, the VA would not require corroboration of a stressor related to fear of hostile military or terrorist activity if a VA doctor confirms that the stressful experience recalled by a veteran adequately supports a diagnosis of PTSD and the veteran's symptoms are related to the claimed stressor. This final rule simplifies the development that is required for these cases. VA expects this rulemaking to decrease the time it takes VA to decide access to care and claims falling under the revised criteria and more accurate decisions that also expedite access to medical care and other benefits for veterans.

Disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to a veteran for disabilities that are a result of -- or made worse by -- injuries or diseases associated with active service. For additional information, contact your County Veterans Service Office

VA publishes final regulation to aid veterans exposed to Agent Orange

From VA Press release

WASHINGTON (August 30, 2010) – Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam and other areas will have an easier path to access quality health care and qualify for disability compensation under a final regulation that will be published on August 31, 2010 in the Federal Register by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The new rule expands the list of health problems the VA will presume to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposures to add two new conditions and expand one existing category of conditions: **Parkinson's disease** and **ischemic heart disease** are added and expanding chronic lymphocytic leukemia to include all chronic **B cell leukemias**, such as hairy cell leukemia.

In practical terms, veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a "presumed" illness don't have to prove an association between their medical problems and their military service. By helping veterans overcome evidentiary requirements that might otherwise present significant challenges, this "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process and ensure that veterans receive the

benefits they deserve.

This historic regulation is subject to provisions of the Congressional Review Act that require a 60-day Congressional review period before implementation. After the review period, VA can begin paying benefits for new claims and may award benefits retroactively for earlier periods. For new claims, VA may pay benefits retroactive to the effective date of the regulation or to one year before the date VA receives the application, whichever is later. For pending claims and claims that were previously denied, VA may pay benefits retroactive to the date it received the claim.

Additional information about Agent Orange and VAs services for veterans exposed to the chemical is available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange. The regulation is available on the Office of the Federal Register website at <http://www.ofr.gov/>.

For assistance with filing a claim with the VA, please contact the Dane County Veterans Service Office at 608-266-4158.

Job opportunities for certain disabled veterans

Courtesy of Michael Beck, local veteran employment representative

Wisconsin state government non-competitive veteran hiring policy provisions:

Civil Service law provides for non-competitive appointment of certain disabled veterans (§230.275, WI Stats.). This provision makes it easier for state agencies to hire veterans with a VA service-connected disability of at least 30%. Agencies are allowed to make appointments of 30% disabled veterans to classified civil service vacancies (FTE/LTE/Project positions) without following standard OSER civil service procedures (e.g., recruitment through the Current Employment Opportunities Bulletin). This provision applies only to professional positions included in the Entry Professional Program (EPP) and to non-professional positions. Use of this process is not required, but is available to agencies at their discretion.

Non-competitive appointment for 30% (or greater)

disabled veterans:

A veteran may request to the hiring agency a direct non-competitive appointment to a state nonprofessional position or in an entry professional position provided he/she meets minimum qualifying criteria (WI Statutes 230.275). A state job listing of entry level positions considered under the Veterans Non-competitive Appointment can be found at: http://oser.state.wi.us/bulletins/bulletin_get.asp?bid=303

How does a veteran apply for one of the classifications listed by a state agency?

Contact a veterans representative at one of the Wisconsin Job Centers for more information. In Dane County, veterans should call 608-266-4910. For other locations, a list of veterans representatives can be found at:

<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/veterans/vetreprs.htm>

Service-connected disability claims

CVSO INSIGHTS, May 2010

Veteran Affairs (VA) service-connected disabilities are those disabilities (mental or physical) that were incurred or aggravated during active military service, to include National Guard and Reserve service. Veterans who have health problems today that started during their military service or immediately after, may be entitled to benefits ranging from actual monthly monetary compensation to guaranteed VA health care, vocational rehabilitation and, in some cases, health insurance and education benefit for their dependents.

Claims for service-connected disability must satisfy three requirements: (a) documentation that a disability was incurred while on active duty, or that a pre-existing disability worsened due to active duty service; (b) medical proof of a current disability, and (c) a medical opinion or “nexus” that the current condition is related to the in-service occurrence.

Disability levels and their corresponding compensations are referred to in terms of percentages, ranging from 0% all the way up to 100% disabled. Compensation is a tax-free benefit. Additional allowances are payable to those veterans rated 30% or higher who have dependents.

Many veterans often fail to file claims for disability either because they are not aware that they can, or because they don't think their disability would apply. Disabilities need not be combat or even work related; they can be the result of playing ball, falling out of bed, or car accidents on leave. Any veteran with a current health problem that they believe started on or as a result of their active duty should consider filing a claim with VA.

For those veterans already receiving VA disability for service-connected conditions, be aware that disabilities seldom improve over time; they normally



Don't let a little disability slow you down

worsen. If a veteran who is service connected for a disability feels that their disability has gotten worse, they should talk to their county veterans service officer for a reevaluation of their disability level.

Veterans who think they might have a disability caused by their service, or who feel that their already service-connected disability has worsened, are strongly encouraged to contact the Dane County Veterans Service Officer to inquire about this important benefit. Your CVSO will explain the claims process and will complete all the necessary paperwork for submission to Veteran Affairs.

Non-service connected disability pension/ death pension

From CVSO INSIGHTS, August 2010

Non-service connected (NSC) pensions are available to certain veterans who are no longer able to work due to disability or age. These pensions are intended to keep qualified veterans from living below the poverty level, and as such are “needs-based” and not entitlements.

To qualify for an NSC pension, veterans must have been on active duty during a recognized wartime period no matter where they actually served (i.e. overseas or stateside), but they must have served at least one (1) day during a wartime period. Veterans with service prior to 9/8/1980 are required to have served at least 90 days of honorable active duty; veterans who served after that date may have longer active duty requirements.

This benefit is only available to wartime veterans who are low income and no longer able to work due to a permanent and total disability, or to those who are over age 65. As a needs-based benefit, the pension availability is based on family income and net worth,

as adjusted by unreimbursed medical expenses. If net worth and income are below a specified level, the veteran may be eligible for a monthly tax-free stipend. If income or net worth is above that level, the veteran is not eligible for the benefit. Benefit levels also depend and vary according to family size and level of medical care required by the veteran.

While this benefit is for wartime veterans, it also extends to the widows and widowers of those veterans. Any low-income eligible survivor of a wartime veteran should consider applying for this benefit, including (and especially) those in assisted living facilities or nursing homes.

Wartime veterans and surviving spouses of wartime veterans are encouraged to contact the Dane County Veterans Service Office to inquire about this important benefit. We will be able to more fully explain the claim process and will complete the necessary paperwork for submission to Veteran Affairs.

Etc.

Service officers Tom Hay and Dan Connery supervise as the Wisconsin Badgers show Ohio State how to play football.



**Dane County Veterans Service Office
1919 Alliant Energy Center Way
Madison, WI 53713
(608) 266-4158**

Dane County Veterans Service Office to move downtown in January



The Dane County Veterans Service Office will be moving the week of Jan. 3. After eight years in our current location near the Dane County Veterans Memorial Coliseum (Alliant Energy Center grounds), we will move to the City-County Building at 210 Martin Luther King Junior Blvd. We will be located near the front entrance in Room 108.

Veteran Service was located in that building prior to 1992 when it was temporarily relocated because of space considerations.

After reviewing input from CVSO staff and unanimous approval from our Veterans Service Commission, Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk approved our move.

Aside from lack of space at our current location,

our move to the City-County Building is so we can be centrally located to allow more veterans and families better access to our services. Plus, we will be near several bus lines, down the hall from the Register of Deeds and closer to two of our veterans community partners - the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the Madison Vet Center.

According to Dan Connery, assistant veterans service officer, "While the setting may be new, we are looking forward to providing the same quality services at our new location."

Due to the transition, we expect to be closed for business Jan. 3 through Jan. 7. We will open for at the new location effective Jan. 10. All telephone numbers will remain the same..