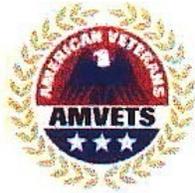


2018 Annual Report



Veterans Assistance Commission of McHenry County
McHenry County Government Center – Admin Bldg • 667 Ware Road, Suite 100 • Woodstock, IL
60098 Phone: (815) 334-4229 Fax: (815) 334-4678
Business Hours • Monday - Friday, 8:00-4:30
Client Home Visit & Educational Outreach Available by Appointment



VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF McHENRY COUNTY

2200 North Seminary Ave., Admin Bldg
Woodstock, IL 60098

Phone (815) 334-4229 Fax (815) 334-4678 e-mail MAIwanic@mchenrycountyil.gov



Michael Iwanicki
CVSO
Superintendent

January 1, 2019

The Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
State Capital Room 207
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

As required by 330 ILCS 45 (The Military Veterans Assistance Act) I am submitting the Veterans Assistance Commission of McHenry County Annual Report for the Fiscal Year ending November 30, 2018.

History of the Veterans Assistance Commission:

The 1895 Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act was established to provide assistance to injured and/or impoverished Union veteran families or their surviving spouse. Amendments to the law eventually allowed the Military Veterans Service Organizations to petition a County Board to create a central benefits office to be known as the Veterans Assistance Commission of XXX County (VAC). The Superintendent is selected by the Veterans Community through the Commission which is composed of representatives from each of the Military Service Organizations within the County. The Commission and its Superintendent develop a written set of guidelines for the administration of Veterans Assistance which is a form of General Assistance. Emergency Assistance which is included within the Military Veterans Assistance Act is interpreted by the VAC of McHenry County to be equivalent in nature to Emergency Assistance in other Illinois State Statutes.

The intent of the Act also allows for the creation of programs to address unmet needs within the veterans community. This makes it so each VAC may provide services specific to the needs of its local community. To fulfill its mission the Superintendent is tasked with hiring and training staff.

The Veterans Assistance Commission of McHenry County Office came into being in 1989 under Superintendent William Walters. The Military Veterans Service Organizations who had been administering assistance under the Act turned over their files to the Commission office. Among the first programs offered was transportation to the VA hospital for local veteran's medical appointments. In 1998, Superintendent James Doran made the office full time and began offering assistance with VA Claims. Superintendent Michael Iwanicki took the helm in 2003 and emphasis was placed on VA Claims prosecution, and direct client outreach for veterans and survivors who due to disability or work schedule could not otherwise meet with a Veterans Service Officer at the office or during normal working hours.

Routine Functions of the VAC of McHenry County

- **Client Review:** Provide a complete review of every case for any additional programs or benefits to which the applicant may be entitled. This includes working closely with other agencies to ensure that clients receive the tools needed to become or remain independent.
- **Veterans Financial Assistance:** Veterans Assistance is available to eligible low income veterans or surviving spouses. Assistance is paid directly to vendors for Rent or Mortgage, Utilities, Food, and Gasoline. Emergency Veterans Assistance is available to eligible veterans who are not eligible for Veterans Assistance and in need of a onetime assistance for arrears housing, heat, or electric.
- **VA Claims Prosecution:** The Veterans Service Officers (VSO's) for the VAC of McHenry County are recognized by the VA General Council to represent veterans and/or eligible dependents all the way

Veterans for Veterans; It's not just what we do, it's who we are

through the VA Board of Appeals. We assist our veterans with Disability, Pension (Aid & Attendance), Special Monthly Compensation, and VA Healthcare claims.

- **VA Hospital Transportation:** Through the operation of four vehicles the Commission provides free transportation services for veterans and their aide to the Capt. James Lovell Federal Health Care Center (Lovell FHCC). Veterans meet the bus at designated stops in Woodstock, McHenry, and Crystal Lake.
- **Other Advocacy Work:** The VAC of McHenry County continues to educate Local, State, and Federal officials and legislators to support resolutions and legislation that positively impacts the veterans' community. Additionally, the VAC works with numerous local agencies in order to match client needs with the appropriate services.

Summary of 2018 Highlights – McHenry County Taxpayers can be proud in the care and respect of how their money is being used. Our top notch staff filled 2460 transportation requests for our Lovell FHCC Bus Service, addressed 287 requests for financial assistance, and began prosecution on 448 new VA claims. Thanks to an exemplary team, for every \$1 provided by our taxpayers, the VAC has assisted our local veterans and surviving spouses receive \$5.85 in new payments from the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Most of this money is statistically spent locally for goods and services provided by McHenry County businesses.

VA Claims prosecuted by the VAC over 2018 resulted in just under \$2.6M in new claims dollars reaching the pockets of our Veterans and survivors. Overall the VA is investing over \$105M in McHenry County with payments to our disabled veteran and survivors exceeding \$43M annually. The \$105M include other benefits such as VA Health Insurance (CHAMP VA) for dependents, Services provided at the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in McHenry, Veteran and/or Dependent Education Benefits, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The McHenry Chamber of Commerce took the lead on a veteran's fair which was held at the McHenry VFW Post. The VAC and numerous other agencies and local business provided an evening of information, resources, and prizes for our veteran guests.

The VAC Inc, Student Veterans of America (SVA), and TLS Veterans working with Mike Splitt of In-Sync Systems organized McHenry County's annual Patriot Run 5K in support of local veterans programs. Some of the monies raised in support of the VAC helped purchase a new Minivan to replace an older vehicle used to transport veterans to the Lovell FHCC.

Our Outreach Education Program proactively reaches veterans and their families through a variety of venues. The goal is to inform McHenry County residents of VA benefits available and how the VAC can help. Over 2018 the VAC also hosted education on specific topics of interest including PTSD and available resources, introducing the community to agencies that assist our local veterans, and specialized programs that look at alternatives to traditional health care. This past year the VAC provided Educational Outreach at numerous locations including;

The Fountains In Crystal Lake	TLS Veterans Food Truck	The McHenry County Fair
The Senior Fair	Valley Hi Rehab Center	The People in Need Forum
Burn Pit Forum	Panel on Local Veteran Concerns	IL Marine Corps League
Association of Realtors	VA Alternative Care Roundtable	K-Love Radio
CBS News	Continuum of Care	

The goal of the Commission and its programs is to be the Central Benefits Office for our local veteran families, and their survivors. Members of the Veterans Assistance Commission of McHenry County are proud to be serving our military veterans and their families. Working with the Federal, State, and local public and private agencies McHenry County Veterans can expect quality service and assistance valuable to maintaining or reaching independence.

Very Respectfully,

Michael A. Iwanicki

Michael A. Iwanicki
Superintendent / CVSO

2018 VA Claims

The VAC of McHenry County is among the top offices in the State with regard to the presentation and prosecution of Claims against the US Department of Veterans Affairs. The three most common claims are Service Connected Disability, Veterans & Survivors Pension, and Dependency and Indemnity. The VAC also represents a claimants Appeal of a Denied Claim, as well as other less frequent types of VA claims.

A claim for Service Connected Disability is the result of the military veteran developing a chronic illness or physical disability which can be traced back to the veterans military service. Veterans Service Officers (VSO's) obtain the veterans Military Service Medical Records and civilian and/or Veterans Health Administration records in order to review the Veterans medical history and identify possible links to "In Service Incidents". Upon identifying possible issues a Disability Benefits Questioner and supporting evidence is provided to the veteran's doctor to get both the degree of the veteran's injuries and a medical opinion as to the possible connection to the veteran's military service. Once all the formal applications and supporting evidence is complete the claim is sent to the US Department of Veterans Affairs – Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) for evaluation of completeness, determination of service connection, and if approved degree of disability. Some claims such as Service Connection for 'ALS' are automatically presumed by the VBA to be related to the veteran's military service. Most claims however require considerable development to prove connection to military service. Veterans Service Officers for the VAC are expected to develop keen investigative skills as well as knowledge of medical, military, and legal terminology in order to successfully represent their veteran's claim.

Veterans, and Survivors Pension is a stipend provided by the US Department of Veterans Affairs – VBA awarded to very low income totally disabled veterans whose military service was during a period of hostility. Unlike Service Connected Disability, Pension evaluates the applicants overall fitness to be employed regardless of the origin of the injury. Individuals aged 65 and older are automatically presumed to be 'Permanently and Totally' disabled. Household income and assets are evaluated by the VA's Pension Center in Milwaukee WI to determine both if the applicant is eligible for the Pension and at what amount. There are three levels of Pension, Regular, Housebound, and Aid & Attendance. On October 18, 2018, the Veterans Benefits Administration issued new regulations for the eligibility of Veterans or Survivors Pension. The new regulations were to address concerns over reorganizing assets to become eligible for the Pension. The new rules allow the VA to look back 3 years and initiate an up to 5 year penalty period for those who transfer assets that otherwise could have been used to support the applicant. VAC Veterans Service Officers must assist the applicant with review of all the household income, countable assets, and reoccurring medical expenses. Additionally, the VSO must gather and review medical information to identify the level of pension the applicant may be eligible. A well-developed pension claim ready to submit to the VA Pension Center is about 60 pages long.

Dependency and Indemnity is awarded to the veteran's survivors should it be determined that the cause of the veterans death was the result of an illness or injury related to the veterans military service. For veterans who were Service Connected for a potentially fatal condition and passed from that condition, the application does not need considerable development and the VA itself often initiates the process on behalf of the survivors. In most cases the VSO must assist the survivor with gathering the evidence similar to filing a claim for service connection and making the connection to military service post mortem. When successful the survivor receives a monthly benefit from the VA along with dependents education benefits and health insurance.

2018 VA Claims

Appeals most frequently occur when the VBA denies a claim for service connection and there exists evidence that the denial is based either on incomplete or inadmissible negative evidence which the VA Rating Specialist relied upon for the negative decision. An Appeal for a higher level review or directly to the VA Board of Appeals in Washington DC requires a significantly higher level of experience to advocate. The VAC Superintendent reviews all claims for which an appeal is recommended and fully explains the process as well as what will be necessary for a successful outcome. The Superintendent and VSOII have the experience and specialized training to represent a veteran's claim before the Board of Appeals. Whereas the VBA must follow internal regulations as it pertains to the awarding or denial of claims for benefits, the VA Board of Appeals may also look to their own interpretation of the US Code and the Code of Federal Regulations. Rarely does the Board of Appeals grant service connection outright. Successful outcomes are typically a Remand to the VA Regional Office to address the Board's concern that the VA Rater failed to address specific issues surrounding the claimant's disability, or the rater's reliance on questionable negative evidence. Were a VA Claim for Service Connection can take up to 14 months for a decision, Appeals can take 24 – 60 months from the date the Appeal is filed. The VBA offers RAMP (Rapid Appeals Modernization Program) to veterans in the Appeal process which can offer a decision within the targeted 120 days. RAMP has been in place for about one year and for cases that can clearly demonstrate the Raters error with respect to the VBA's own regulations it has been helpful. Appeals that require an opinion outside the VBA's own regulations still need to go to the VA Board of Appeals. Should the Appeal be denied the claimant can appeal to the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. VAC personnel are not approved to represent claims in Court. The VAC has relationships with pro-bono legal firms that specialize in presenting the claims in Court. Since the VAC started tracking claims in 1999 only two cases went to court and both had favorable outcomes.

There are several other types of less frequently applied for claims which the VAC works with the veteran or survivor to obtain. These include but are not limited to; Application for VA Health Care, 1151 (VA Malpractice), Service Connection for Dental, Appeal for Proposed Reduction in Service Connection, Apportionment, Change in Status of Dependents, Dependents Education, Burial Allowance, Waiver of Indebtedness, appeal VA Denial to pay emergency non-VA Medical Care, and others. Over Fiscal Year 2018, only 14 such claims were filed

Over Fiscal Year 2018 the VAC of McHenry County had filed 452 new claims against the US Department of Veterans Affairs (Benefits Administration) covering 589 individual issues. 250 claims were decided for VAC clients over 2018, the average first year benefit including back payments was \$10,340. 480 claims have yet to be decided which includes 37 claims that are currently being appealed.

The VAC also tracks the reoccurring payments awarded to our veterans and survivors. The VAC assumes that the monthly award is granted for four calendar years and then the VA drops the award to 'zero'. Although this method significantly understates the ongoing awards received by McHenry County veterans and their survivors, the conservative figure is an adjustment for veterans or survivors that are no longer living in the County. A more accurate figure would be at least 50% of the total awards granted by the VA Benefits Administration as the VAC historically accounts for up to 75% of the annual award increase. The following table includes figures from 2017. The VA will publish its 2018 expenditures sometime late Spring 2019. The Average Monthly Increase per the VA is the difference between the total paid to McHenry County Veterans in the stated year

2018 VA Claims

and what was paid the previous year. The VAC Increase includes VA Compensation and Pension Claims successfully prosecuted by the VAC Office. This includes claims the VAC prosecuted for veterans outside McHenry County.

Year	Per VA – Ave. Monthly Increase	Monthly Increase in VA Awards Prosecuted by VAC	VA Total Compensation Paid To McHenry County Vets.	Average Monthly Total Reoccurring Payment Paid by the VA	Ave. Monthly Pmt. of VA Awards Prosecuted by the VAC (4 yr Formula)	Ave. Monthly Pmt. of VA Awards Prosecuted by the VAC (50% Formula)
2015	\$163,129	\$210,191	\$38,269,851	\$3,189,154	\$733,500	\$1,594,577
2016	\$243,606	\$245,681	\$41,193,127	\$3,432,761	\$758,400	\$1,716,380
2017	\$163,516	\$245,439	\$43,155,318	\$3,596,277	\$874,900	\$1,798,138
2018		\$216,198				

Over 2018 VAC Clients received an additional \$2,594,377 in benefits payments from the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Reoccurring monthly benefit payments received by VAC Clients who were initially awarded during fiscal years 2015 – 2018 are receiving a total of \$10,601,738 annually (\$883,478 per month). These monies are likely being used by the veterans and or family members to purchase goods and services locally.

Associated with the VA Disability, the US Department of Veterans Affairs invests a considerable amount for our local veterans and their dependents. This amounted to just over \$105,000,000 over 2017. The following illustrates the VA’s local investments for our veterans by category over 2017.

Compensation & Pension	Education	Insurance & Indemnities	Health Care
\$43,155,318	\$7,801,068	\$1,549,056	\$52,547,096

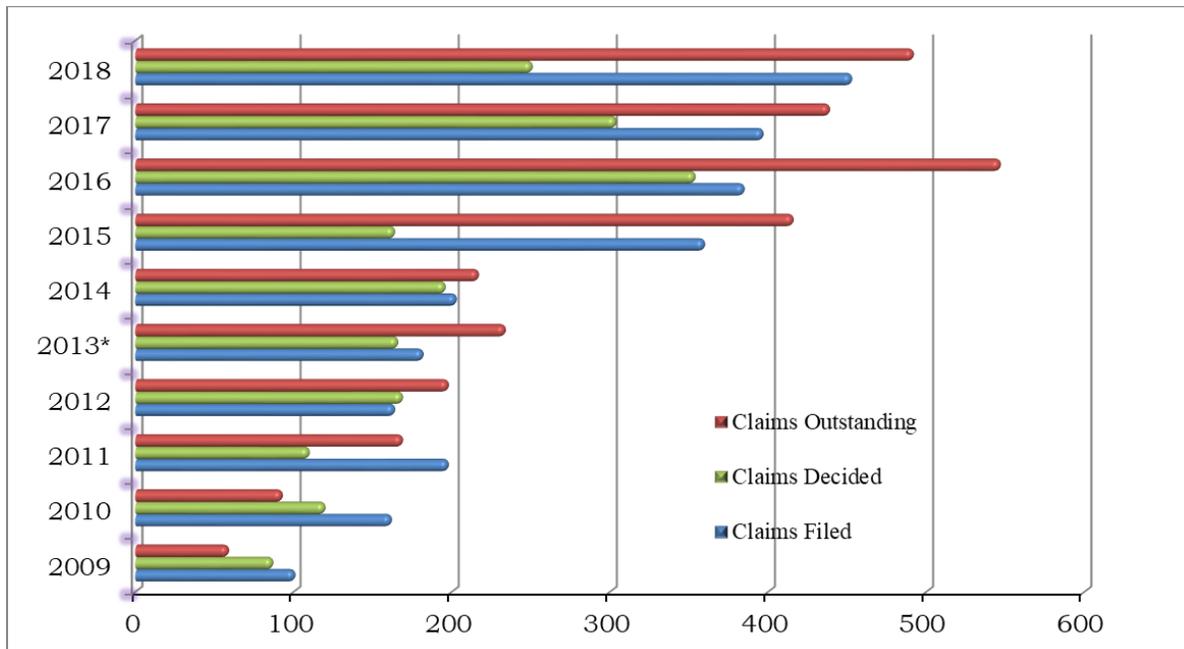
Ongoing changes in the law as well as ongoing changes in Veterans Benefits Administration regulations require VAC Veterans Service Officers to undergo annual training and maintain a high level of attention to detail to spot changes within VA Correspondence to the veteran, VA Fast Letters, and alerts from the State and National Organizations. Often the changes are related to court cases where the Department of Veterans Affairs is instructed to act immediately. In such cases it may take a couple of months for the proper instruction to reach the veterans service officers. A recent example of a regulation change in which the VAC’s were provided plenty of warning impacted the way we assist with the Veterans Pension and Survivors Pension. The change went into effect October 2018, training on the changes was not available until November, and the proper forms were not approved until after the end of our fiscal year.

Related to disability payments is an Illinois State Law that went into effect in 2015. Veteran homeowners who have been rated by the VA 30% or greater are eligible for a property homestead exemption ranging from \$2,500 off the equalized assessed value to totally exempt from property taxes for veterans rated at least 70%. This benefit has saved McHenry County veterans and

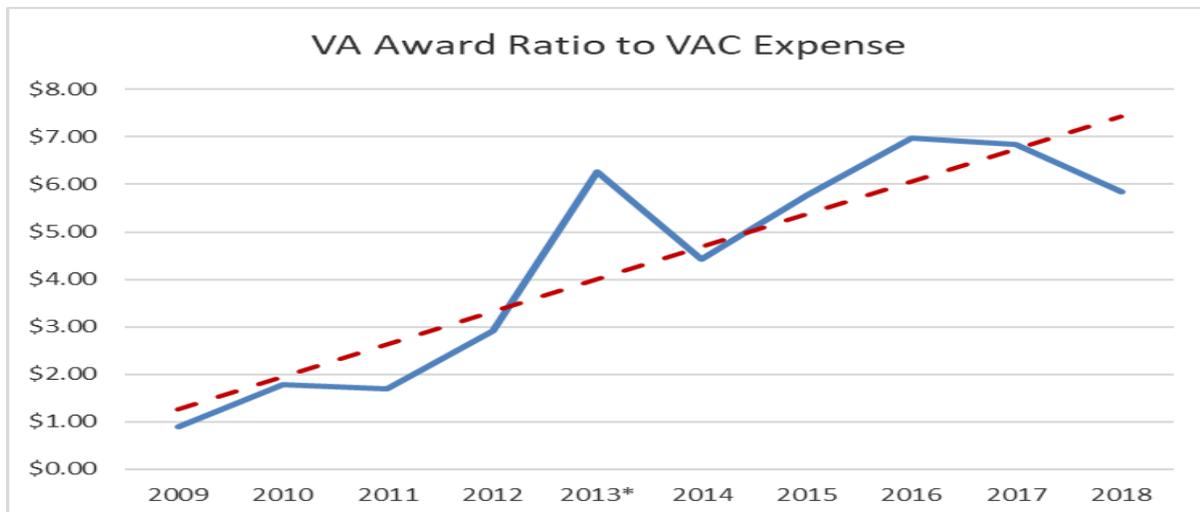
2018 VA Claims

surviving spouses a combined total of between \$5 & \$6 million. The savings has not only kept veterans in McHenry County but in many cases had allowed the veteran to pay for needed upgrades and repairs to their homes. Like the VA Cash benefits awarded, monies saved the veteran from the Disabled Veterans Homestead Exemption are very likely being reinvested in the community through the purchase of goods and services.

The following illustrates the Claims filed, awarded, and awaiting a decision.



The following illustrates the new VA Benefit Awarded to VAC Clients over 2018 compared to each McHenry County Taxpayer dollar spent by the VAC.



2018 VA Claims

The Following is a summary of 2017 VA Claims expenditures (Source of original data: US Department Veterans Affairs, includes VAC Counties only)

VA EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2016 Expenditures in \$000							VA EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2017 Expenditures in \$000							2016-2017			
COUNTY	vp#	Veteran Population	\$#	Comp & Pension	Ave C&P Per Vet	Ave#	COUNTY	vp#	Veteran Population	\$#	Comp & Pension	Ave C&P Per Vet	Ave#	Total C&P %/#	%Change	Ave Per Vet %/#	%Change
BOONE	31	3,632	44	\$ 7,317	\$ 2,014.40	97	BOONE	37	2,848	43	\$ 7,295	\$ 2,561.82	87	51	-0.30%	8	27.18%
CARROLL	63	1,391	77	\$ 3,186	\$ 2,290.31	80	CARROLL	61	1,372	76	\$ 3,307	\$ 2,411.18	94	19	3.82%	76	5.28%
CHAMPAIGN	15	10,279	14	\$ 27,101	\$ 2,636.55	53	CHAMPAIGN	14	9,748	14	\$ 27,280	\$ 2,798.57	65	46	0.66%	71	6.15%
COOK	1	185,272	1	\$ 480,926	\$ 2,595.79	56	COOK	1	175,023	1	\$ 475,171	\$ 2,714.91	74	61	-1.20%	82	4.59%
DEKALB	20	6,923	24	\$ 14,293	\$ 2,064.56	96	DEKALB	21	5,478	24	\$ 14,077	\$ 2,569.83	86	66	-1.52%	14	24.47%
DOUGLAS	70	1,336	72	\$ 3,465	\$ 2,594.55	57	DOUGLAS	66	1,221	71	\$ 3,618	\$ 2,962.87	56	15	4.40%	37	14.20%
DU PAGE	3	37,514	5	\$ 80,298	\$ 2,140.49	93	DU PAGE	3	33,571	5	\$ 77,703	\$ 2,314.60	97	82	-3.23%	63	8.13%
EFFINGHAM	49	2,400	50	\$ 6,083	\$ 2,534.57	62	EFFINGHAM	48	2,223	48	\$ 6,202	\$ 2,790.43	66	38	1.95%	56	10.09%
FULTON	39	3,050	43	\$ 7,483	\$ 2,453.71	71	FULTON	38	2,809	39	\$ 8,414	\$ 2,995.11	52	1	12.44%	20	22.06%
GREENE	74	1,239	78	\$ 3,072	\$ 2,479.58	69	GREENE	80	981	82	\$ 3,050	\$ 3,108.95	46	57	-0.73%	13	25.38%
GRUNDY	33	3,545	38	\$ 8,558	\$ 2,413.79	73	GRUNDY	32	3,169	37	\$ 8,754	\$ 2,762.64	69	36	2.29%	34	14.45%
HANCOCK	61	1,449	58	\$ 4,914	\$ 3,390.30	23	HANCOCK	57	1,472	56	\$ 5,142	\$ 3,493.30	29	13	4.65%	86	3.04%
HENDERSON	88	748	94	\$ 1,606	\$ 2,147.72	92	HENDERSON	90	562	93	\$ 1,674	\$ 2,979.48	54	17	4.27%	3	38.73%
HENRY	29	4,076	33	\$ 10,319	\$ 2,531.75	63	HENRY	29	3,611	33	\$ 10,556	\$ 2,922.89	57	35	2.30%	33	15.45%
IROQUOIS	53	2,086	52	\$ 5,561	\$ 2,665.24	52	IROQUOIS	52	1,932	53	\$ 5,528	\$ 2,861.08	61	53	-0.59%	65	7.35%
JERSEY	51	2,163	57	\$ 4,948	\$ 2,287.83	81	JERSEY	51	1,961	58	\$ 4,879	\$ 2,487.72	92	65	-1.39%	61	8.74%
KANE	7	24,084	8	\$ 43,301	\$ 1,797.93	99	KANE	7	20,114	7	\$ 45,871	\$ 2,280.53	98	7	5.94%	9	26.84%
KANKAKEE	18	7,824	20	\$ 21,646	\$ 2,766.69	47	KANKAKEE	18	7,412	19	\$ 22,359	\$ 3,016.63	51	21	3.29%	60	9.03%
KENDALL	19	7,659	27	\$ 12,913	\$ 1,686.06	102	KENDALL	22	5,094	25	\$ 13,426	\$ 2,635.62	82	18	3.98%	1	56.32%
KNOX	27	4,228	29	\$ 11,349	\$ 2,684.18	51	KNOX	25	4,097	32	\$ 10,853	\$ 2,648.96	78	91	-4.36%	94	-1.31%
LA SALLE	17	8,653	19	\$ 22,694	\$ 2,622.52	55	LA SALLE	15	9,372	20	\$ 21,719	\$ 2,317.39	96	90	-4.30%	102	-11.64%
LAKE	4	34,150	3	\$ 102,810	\$ 3,010.52	36	LAKE	2	34,957	3	\$ 105,624	\$ 3,021.55	50	28	2.74%	88	0.37%
LEE	44	2,694	45	\$ 6,803	\$ 2,524.67	65	LEE	42	2,506	46	\$ 6,543	\$ 2,611.00	85	86	-3.81%	85	3.42%
LIVINGSTON	45	2,690	48	\$ 6,324	\$ 2,351.13	76	LIVINGSTON	43	2,471	45	\$ 6,544	\$ 2,647.76	79	20	3.48%	42	12.62%
MACON	16	8,770	15	\$ 25,208	\$ 2,874.35	45	MACON	17	7,868	15	\$ 25,388	\$ 3,226.82	38	45	0.71%	47	12.26%
MACOUPIN	25	4,350	25	\$ 13,561	\$ 3,117.51	31	MACOUPIN	28	3,779	26	\$ 13,252	\$ 3,506.49	27	72	-2.28%	44	12.48%
MADISON	6	24,340	6	\$ 66,933	\$ 2,749.90	48	MADISON	6	22,227	6	\$ 67,204	\$ 3,023.48	49	49	0.41%	57	9.95%
MASON	68	1,346	67	\$ 3,968	\$ 2,949.04	43	MASON	71	1,160	68	\$ 3,852	\$ 3,320.14	35	76	-2.93%	43	12.58%
MCDONOUGH	48	2,434	42	\$ 7,523	\$ 3,090.20	32	MCDONOUGH	49	2,041	44	\$ 6,986	\$ 3,423.68	31	96	-7.13%	53	10.79%
MCHENRY	9	18,594	9	\$ 41,193	\$ 2,215.45	88	MCHENRY	9	15,194	9	\$ 43,155	\$ 2,840.34	62	11	4.76%	6	28.21%
MCLEAN	14	10,425	16	\$ 24,558	\$ 2,355.53	75	MCLEAN	16	8,401	16	\$ 25,000	\$ 2,975.72	55	40	1.80%	10	26.33%
MERCER	67	1,361	64	\$ 4,162	\$ 3,057.91	33	MERCER	65	1,253	63	\$ 4,039	\$ 3,224.16	39	77	-2.95%	75	5.44%
MONTGOMERY	47	2,473	46	\$ 6,508	\$ 2,631.94	54	MONTGOMERY	47	2,302	47	\$ 6,393	\$ 2,777.09	68	69	-1.77%	74	5.51%
OGLE	26	4,295	35	\$ 8,872	\$ 2,065.48	95	OGLE	26	3,979	36	\$ 8,816	\$ 2,215.47	100	54	-0.63%	67	7.26%
PEORIA	11	13,213	11	\$ 30,168	\$ 2,283.22	82	PEORIA	11	11,750	11	\$ 31,559	\$ 2,685.92	77	14	4.61%	26	17.64%
PIATT	65	1,375	81	\$ 3,014	\$ 2,192.74	91	PIATT	69	1,185	80	\$ 3,101	\$ 2,616.49	84	27	2.87%	23	19.33%
ROCK ISLAND	13	11,535	12	\$ 29,134	\$ 2,525.65	64	ROCK ISLAND	12	10,729	12	\$ 28,845	\$ 2,688.44	75	60	-0.99%	69	6.45%
SAINT CLAIR	5	29,597	2	\$ 131,019	\$ 4,426.70	8	SAINT CLAIR	5	28,451	2	\$ 131,711	\$ 4,629.35	9	48	0.53%	83	4.58%
SANGAMON	10	15,905	10	\$ 41,068	\$ 2,582.15	58	SANGAMON	10	14,532	10	\$ 42,101	\$ 2,897.06	58	29	2.51%	48	12.20%
SCHUYLER	92	578	90	\$ 2,524	\$ 4,366.94	9	SCHUYLER	89	588	90	\$ 2,506	\$ 4,258.27	14	56	-0.72%	95	-2.49%
STEPHENSON	32	3,610	34	\$ 9,179	\$ 2,542.83	61	STEPHENSON	30	3,218	35	\$ 8,961	\$ 2,784.54	67	73	-2.38%	58	9.51%
TAZEWELL	12	11,779	13	\$ 27,239	\$ 2,312.50	79	TAZEWELL	13	10,020	13	\$ 27,384	\$ 2,732.76	72	47	0.53%	25	18.17%
WARREN	71	1,296	75	\$ 3,248	\$ 2,505.52	67	WARREN	67	1,218	81	\$ 3,063	\$ 2,514.18	88	93	-5.69%	89	0.35%
WASHINGTON	72	1,294	85	\$ 2,857	\$ 2,207.63	89	WASHINGTON	72	1,147	84	\$ 2,863	\$ 2,496.96	91	50	0.20%	40	13.11%
WHITESIDE	24	4,751	32	\$ 10,682	\$ 2,248.23	85	WHITESIDE	24	4,291	29	\$ 11,346	\$ 2,643.75	81	6	6.22%	27	17.59%
WILL	2	38,528	4	\$ 86,049	\$ 2,233.40	86	WILL	4	31,257	4	\$ 88,000	\$ 2,815.40	64	37	2.27%	11	26.06%
WINNEBAGO	8	20,186	7	\$ 47,001	\$ 2,328.35	78	WINNEBAGO	8	18,190	8	\$ 45,605	\$ 2,507.22	90	78	-2.97%	64	7.68%
WOODFORD	38	3,076	53	\$ 5,553	\$ 1,805.08	98	WOODFORD	41	2,607	51	\$ 5,796	\$ 2,223.25	99	16	4.38%	17	23.17%

* = Indicates a VAC

Bold = Indicates C&P > State Average

Bold % Change = Indicates % Change > State Average

Blue % Change = Indicates % Change > National Average

Highlight = Mean or Center

= Indicates Ranking

Veterans Financial Assistance Programs

Per 330 ILCS 45, the Military Veterans Assistance Act, (hereafter referred to as “The Act”) the Veterans Assistance Commission of McHenry County provides financial assistance to low income veterans and their eligible survivors. The Act refers to both Veterans Assistance and Emergency Assistance which the Commission believes indicates that the VAC is to offer both. With the establishment of a VAC the Commission provides a written set of guidelines for the administration of Veterans Assistance. Emergency Assistance is defined in other State statutes but as with Townships and other administrators of General Assistance, Emergency Assistance requires a budget and a set of written guidelines. In addition to Veterans General Assistance and Emergency Assistance, the VAC of McHenry County also provides Veterans Disaster Assistance which has very specific guidelines.

Because of the legal relationship between General Assistance and Veterans Assistance the VAC communicates with each Township within the County monthly by mail to ensure that recipients of Veterans Assistance are not also receiving Township General Assistance. Per Section 3.07 of the General Assistance Handbook an applicant who seeks assistance from a Township will be presumed ineligible if the applicant may be eligible for Veterans Assistance from a County VAC. In cases where an applicant is referred by the Administrator of General Assistance from a Township the County VAC shall make a determination of eligibility for Veterans Assistance.

The written guidelines for the administration of Veterans Assistance can be found on our website and are reviewed at least each odd numbered year or if there is a significant legal change. The guidelines had been reviewed by an attorney and was provided to the Illinois Attorney General’s Veterans Rights Bureau.



Veterans General Assistance is provided as a Flat Grant. Once eligibility is determined the recipient may direct funds to pay necessary expenses such as Mortgage, Rent, Independent Living, Telephone (max \$40.00), Heat, Electric, Water & Sewer, Garbage, Transportation, or Food. In the case of Mortgage or Rent the VAC will only send payment in full. Commitments from other agencies or funds from the applicant must be included to assure full payment is sent. This is done because most mortgage companies will not accept a partial payment and the landlord is not obligated to keep a tenant that only makes partial or late payments. Independent Living is services provided to assist an applicant to stay in their home, or services that assist an applicant with transitioning from

homelessness, drug or alcohol abuse, etc... Services provided by TLS Veterans would fall into this category as would adult day care provided by Family Alliance. Food is provided as a voucher to Aldi and is provided at a max of 2 \$25.00 vouchers for a single applicant and up to 1 additional voucher from each eligible person in the household.

Veterans Financial Assistance Programs

Veterans Emergency Assistance is provided in accordance to State Statutes. Were it is voluntary for a Township to provide Emergency, it appears that it is expected that VAC provide Emergency Assistance. Per the Guide of Services Provided Rules and Eligibility Standard (Revised 2017), Veterans Emergency Assistance can be provided to applicants who are not eligible for Veterans General Assistance and fall below 250% of the poverty level. The granting of Emergency Assistance must resolve the financial issue which if not for the problem the applicant could otherwise manage. Recipients receiving Veterans Emergency Assistance can only use the funds for Rent, Mortgage, or Utilities in arrears. In the case of rent or mortgage, the assistance along with other social service agency commitments and the applicant's resources must bring the recipient current. Utilities need only be sufficient to avoid disconnection. Each recipient of Emergency Assistance is required to attend budgeting class at Consumer Credit Counseling. Additionally, should the applicant become eligible for Veterans General Assistance within 24 months of receiving Emergency Assistance, the Emergency Assistance is prorated monthly and the resulting amount is subtracted from the Veterans General Assistance each month until 24 months had passed since receipt of Emergency Assistance.

The Veterans Assistance Commission also provides Veterans Disaster Assistance in cases where the applicant lost their housing due to a disaster not of their own causing. For example, if their apartment building burned down. This is granted once in a lifetime and is coordinated with other recognized agencies such as the McHenry County Housing Authority to assist a family with temporary housing. The client's income is not a consideration for Veterans Disaster Assistance.

December 2017 a special category of Veterans Assistance was created at the request of the US Department of Veterans Affairs that would provide up to 3 weeks of transitional housing assistance for homeless veterans who have been approved for the Housing and Urban Development - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH). This allows the VAC Office to put a veteran and family in a motel while appropriate residence is identified by the VA and Housing Authority. The VA must provide the request in writing and the veteran must claim their residency within McHenry County.

Since the 2005 commitment by the Veterans Assistance Commission to focus resources on the presentation and prosecution of claims against the US Department of Veterans Affairs there has been a considerable reduction in the local contribution to financially assist local veterans and their eligible family members. The following charts

Over 2018 the VAC provided \$56,640.69 in financial assistance to an average of 7 families per month. All financial assistance grants are paid directly to the vendor. The following illustrates how the funds were distributed.

Veterans Financial Assistance Programs

	Food		Housing		Utility Totals		Independent Living		Transportation		Denials	Grand Totals	
	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$		Requests	Total \$
December	10	\$250.00	6	\$2,908.32	5	\$532.12	1	\$360.00	0	\$0.00	2	24	\$4,050.44
January	15	\$375.00	7	\$3,540.35	8	\$1,572.69	3	\$970.00	0	\$0.00	4	37	\$6,458.04
February	8	\$200.00	8	\$3,414.21	19	\$2,169.90	3	\$963.29	3	\$27.30	1	42	\$6,774.70
March	9	\$225.00	5	\$2,828.92	14	\$1,544.08	1	\$360.00	0	\$0.00	1	30	\$4,958.00
April	9	\$225.00	5	\$1,975.55	8	\$1,663.81	3	\$770.00	0	\$0.00	0	25	\$4,634.36
May	8	\$200.00	7	\$3,888.92	7	\$458.60	0	\$0.00	40	\$118.38	1	63	\$4,665.90
June	6	\$150.00	6	\$2,871.55	7	\$442.03	3	\$970.00	3	\$27.84	0	25	\$4,461.42
July	4	\$100.00	5	\$2,017.60	4	\$148.59	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	1	14	\$2,266.19
August	4	\$100.00	8	\$4,830.53	5	\$555.23	1	\$250.00	0	\$0.00	0	18	\$5,735.76
September	4	\$100.00	4	\$1,959.00	7	\$988.85	0	\$0.00	30	\$67.29	0	45	\$3,115.14
October	4	\$100.00	6	\$3,249.00	5	\$191.02	1	\$360.00	30	\$87.42	1	47	\$3,987.44
November	2	\$50.00	6	\$3,032.00	12	\$1,073.10	1	\$360.00	37	\$220.20	2	60	\$4,735.30
Total	83	\$2,075.00	73	\$36,515.95	101	\$11,340.02	17	\$5,363.29	143	\$548.43	13	430	\$55,842.69
% of Total	19.30%	3.72%	16.98%	65.39%	23.49%	20.31%	3.95%	9.60%	33.26%	0.98%	3.02%		
	Utilities												
	Gas		Electric		Phone		Water		Garbage		Total #	Total \$	
Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$	Number	Total \$				
December	1	\$68.22	2	\$409.90	1	\$40.00	1	\$14.00	0	\$0.00	5	\$532.12	
January	2	\$326.48	4	\$1,108.69	0	\$0.00	2	\$137.52	0	\$0.00	8	\$1,572.69	
February	5	\$753.95	6	\$956.43	3	\$120.00	1	\$58.25	4	\$281.27	19	\$2,169.90	
March	3	\$370.45	4	\$367.82	5	\$193.62	1	\$555.67	1	\$56.52	14	\$1,544.08	
April	2	\$155.96	3	\$1,383.78	2	\$80.00	1	\$44.07	0	\$0.00	8	\$1,663.81	
May	2	\$124.48	2	\$230.59	2	\$80.00	1	\$23.53	0	\$0.00	7	\$458.60	
June	2	\$61.67	2	\$242.11	2	\$80.00	1	\$58.25	0	\$0.00	7	\$442.03	
July	1	\$30.00	2	\$88.57	1	\$30.02	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	4	\$148.59	
August	2	\$128.14	2	\$387.09	1	\$40.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	5	\$555.23	
September	3	\$621.85	1	\$78.00	1	\$20.00	2	\$269.00	0	\$0.00	7	\$988.85	
October	2	\$65.63	2	\$85.39	1	\$40.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	5	\$191.02	
November	4	\$127.39	3	\$419.74	1	\$40.00	3	\$407.14	1	\$78.83	12	\$1,073.10	
Total	29	\$2,834.22	33	\$5,758.11	20	\$763.64	13	\$1,567.43	6	\$416.62	101	\$11,340.02	
% of Total	28.71%	24.99%	32.67%	50.78%	19.80%	6.73%	12.87%	13.82%	5.94%	3.67%			
		5.08%		10.31%		1.37%		2.81%		0.75%			

2018 VAC Transportation Service to the Lovell FHCC

The VAC has been providing some form of transportation service to the VA hospital in North Chicago since we opened the doors in December 1989. Initially the drivers were volunteers who used their own vehicles and were provided a stipend for mileage. Under Superintendent William Walters the VAC and the local Military Service Organizations raised enough funds to purchase a van. Since that time the VAC had hired drivers and provided regular service to North Chicago (Lovell FHCC). The Lovell FHCC is approximately 35 miles from Woodstock IL, with traffic getting heavier as a driver gets closer to North Chicago. Allowing the VAC to continue providing the transportation service helps protect the veteran who may otherwise be distracted by illness or disability. This lines up with the purpose of the program, to assist our ill and disabled veterans get to their medical appointments at the VA safely.

The VAC fleet includes two leased 13 passenger Champion mini-busses and two five passenger mini-vans. The 2017 minivan was purchased thanks to public donations to the VAC Bus Fund. The 2018 minivan was purchased using a combination of donated funds and a Senior Services Grant. Both vehicles were purchase to replace older vehicles that were no longer fit for service. The VAC also determined that we no longer required the leased five passenger lift van and returned that to Pace Suburban Bus. In addition to transportation to Lovell, the mini-van will be used (when available) by a Veterans Service officer to visit a veteran or survivor in their home in order to provide VAC services. Such cases are for clients whose disability or schedule make it unreasonable to travel to the VAC office.



The VAC picks up clients from designated Bus Stops within McHenry County. Thanks to assistance from Senior Care Volunteer Network, and Senior Service Associates those veterans who are unable to drive receive free transportation to and from the VAC Bus Stops. The typical veteran using the service requires service to the Lovell FHCC approximately three times annually. A number of our disabled veteran clients require services one or more times a week.

Over 2018 the VAC took 2,605 appointment requests and of those 2,408 were filled. The most common reason for not transporting a veteran to his or her appointment is the veteran canceling the appointment due to illness or injury. A couple of times transportation was canceled due to unsafe driving conditions caused by snow or ice. Over 2018 an average of 32 clients were provided a total of 217 transportation appointments per month.

	2018 Total	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Unique Count	498	38	22	30	39	35	34	34	31	32	37	28	26
Total Trips	2605	218	179	178	232	256	288	206	242	234	218	188	166
Average Trips per Client	5.23	5.74	8.14	5.93	5.95	7.31	8.47	6.06	7.81	7.31	5.89	6.71	6.38

2018 VAC Transportation Service to the Lovell FHCC

The VAC reports its transportation information to Pace Suburban Bus and the McHenry County Department of Transportation. A transportation appointment is defined as the transportation of a



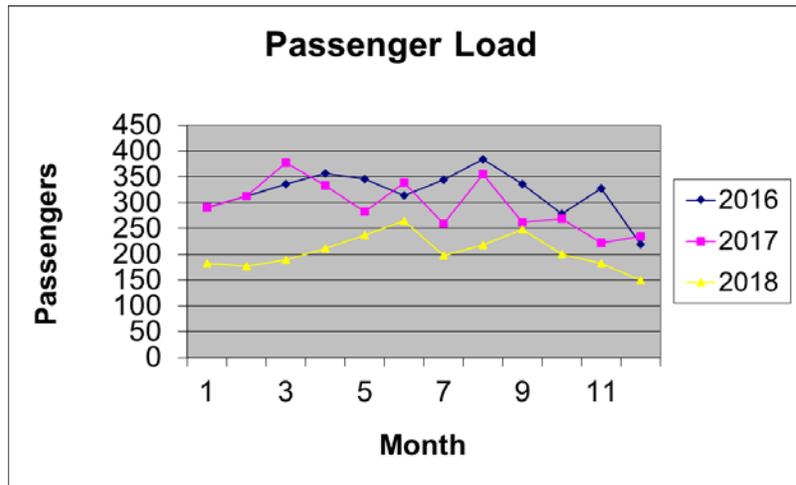
passenger from pick up to destination so a round trip to Lovell FHCC and back would be two appointments. All VAC drivers and safety sensitive staff are required to meet US Department of Transportation physical standards and be subject to random drug and alcohol testing.

Also over 2018, one of our loyal drivers announced his retirement Ron Nickles had been serving the veterans in that capacity since

2008. The position Ron filled has been held open pending feedback from the Veterans community regarding the VAC transportation to VA Contract Health Providers. A survey was sent out to the veterans' community at the end of the fiscal year to get a better picture of where service may be needed. It is the opinion of the Superintendent that whatever the amended transportation program, the VAC will not likely need two busses. Replacing one of the busses with a minivan would be more practical should the Commission approve transportation to facilities outside the Lovell FHCC.

In addition to transportation of veterans to the Lovell FHCC, the VAC assists its local Military Veterans Service Organizations with transporting groups to the FHCC for special events for inpatients and parades. Such events included patient Christmas Parties, and Pizza Parties as well as parades on Veterans and Patriotic holidays. Also included is an annual Rotary event in Milwaukee which provided patients of the FHCC, Milwaukee VAMC, and the Madison VAMC tickets to a tailgate party and Cubs v Brewers game.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Administration in an effort to speed up the Service Connected Claims process has contracted with an outside coordinator. In the event the VA Health Administration is unable to provide a Compensation and Pension Examination in a timely manner the outside coordinator sets up the appointment with a contracted provider within 50 miles of the veteran. Some of our clients have requested assistance with transportation to VA contracted providers. The Commission is completing its examination of the transportation services it provides our veterans.



The chart illustrates the change in transportation appointments over three years.

Other Accomplishments, Events, and Staff Bio's

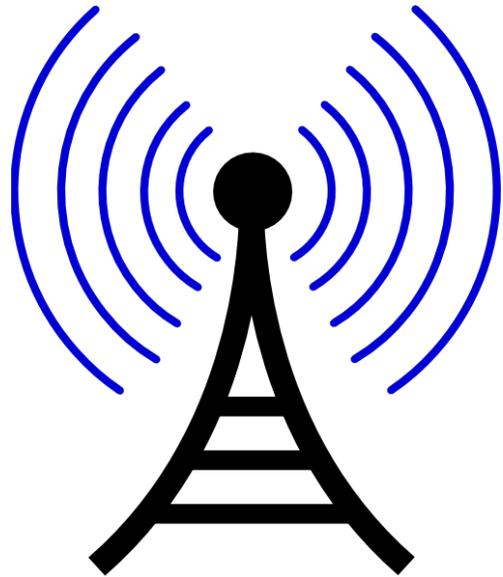
By the end of 2018 the corporate arm of the McHenry County VAC Inc. (VAC Inc.) established guidelines for special assistance which may be available to veterans with an emergency need and are not eligible for Veterans Assistance under the Act. Decisions to grant or deny are strictly at the discretion of the VAC Inc. and its Assistance Committee

In the Fall of 2018 the Superintendent was invited to participate in a National Veterans Affairs Committee under the National Association of Counties. Although an honor to be approached, the Superintendent is not likely to accept in order to focus on issues faced by the Commission, and local veterans'.

Working with the IDVA, The County Assessor, the States Attorney's Office, and the VA, the VAC was able to protect a severely disabled veteran who was having his specially adapted home sold for taxes. The story caught the attention of CBS News who interviewed the veteran and the Commission's VSOII. The collaborative effort resolved all the issues that led to the tax sale.

The Superintendent and VSOII were interviewed by K-Love Radio as a feature story about the service the VAC provides its local veterans. K-Love has a national audience. This came about thanks to clients who expressed that the VAC was an important organization for the public to know.

The VAC was part of a local panel to address issues important to our local veteran. The panel was put together by former Congressman Randy Hultgren. On a statewide level, the VAC also participated in a panel discussion for the Illinois Department of the Marine Corps League. In both the goal was to provide an expert response to veterans concerns and present the VAC as a resource.



A professional care givers association had invited the VAC to discuss the VA's changes to the pension program commonly referred to as Aid & Attendance. In addition to addressing pension related concerns, the VAC addressed issues regarding VA Disability, and DIC.

The VAC with the assistance of Congressman Randy Hultgren put together a "Burn Pit Forum" where veterans could express their concerns regarding the various exposures they had associated with burn pits. The goal was to provide Congressional staff information that could be taken back to the Department of Veterans Affairs for action. A Burn Pit registry is now in place and federal legislation is being proposed to address health issues which may have been caused by burn pits.



The Superintendent was asked to address the local Realtors Association to discuss VA Disability and the IL Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemptions. Concerns addressed included clarification of a law passed that allows the Assessor to prorate eligible tax exemptions for the year, and ensuring veterans understand their responsibility to pay taxes credited to them by the seller at closing.

The Veterans Health Administration reinstated its dental insurance program which offers insurance to patients of the VA Health Care System at a reduced cost. The Commission began discussions as to the

Other Accomplishments, Events, and Staff Bio's

feasibility of assisting low income veterans by paying the premium for the dental policies. Eligible veteran would be qualified for Veterans Assistance.

Both of the Veteran Service Officer Trainee's had successfully completed the second phase of their training. They are expected to complete their training sometime in the spring of 2019.

The Vet Center began meeting individual clients at the VAC Office as well as a group session each week. This provides the Vet Center clients with neutral territory where they can be comfortable discussing their experiences. HUD-VASH (VA Supportive Housing) has also used our space to bring their clients together.

VAC Staff

VAC Chairman Joseph Kersten – Joe was inducted into the US Army on 20 January 1969. After training he served in the 213th Engineer Detachment in Vietnam from June 1969 thru August 1970 before being Honorably discharged. Mr. Kersten served as the Commission's first Chairman which he served for 10 years. Joe reengaged with the Commission in 2008 and has served as the Chairman since 2010.

Superintendent Michael Iwanicki – Michael joined the US Navy in September 1980 and became an Electricians Mate. Mike served aboard the USS Elliot DD-967 where he earned the rate of EM1(SW), and was later Honorably discharged from the Navy in 1986. Mr. Iwanicki was hired by the Commission in 1998 as a Veterans Service Officer and was selected as the Superintendent in 2003. Michael also served as the President of the Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions from 2011 through 2017, and was elected to the Executive Board of the Illinois Association of County Officials.

Veterans Service Officer II Jane Dorfner – Jane is the spouse of a US Navy veteran. She joined the VAC in 2008 and served as the Administrative Specialist before becoming a Veterans Service Officer in 2010. Jane was promoted to the Lead Service Officer in 2015 and manages the claims flow, training of new VSO's, assists the Superintendent with Outreach Education, and coordinates with various agencies during the holidays to provide food and gifts to local veteran families in need. Mrs. Dorfner represents the VAC as a member of the Continuum of Care, the Lovell FHCC Patient Advisory Council, and the Task Force on Aging.

Office Clerk / Dispatcher James Koch – James Koch served honorably in the US Navy Veteran, from 1965 to 1968 at US Naval Air Station Twin Cities in Minneapolis, MN. Jim worked thirty four years at Sprint/Centel in various positions in the telephone industry and retired from Sprint in 2002. Jim came to the VAC in 2008 as a Transportation Specialist transporting Veterans to and from the James A. Lovell FHCC in North Chicago. Mr. Koch started in the office as the VAC's Clerk / Dispatcher in 2010.

Transportation Specialist Dave Ayers – Dave is a veteran of the US Marine Corps serving from 1956 – 1958 as a small arms specialist. After the military Dave worked as a Commercial Truck Driver until his retirement. He joined the VAC in 2004 as a Transportation Specialist.

Transportation Specialist Roy Allsup – Roy is an honorably discharged veteran of the US Marine Corps (1968-1970) where he served in artillery and was in country Vietnam from 1968- 1969. After the military Roy was self-employed in the flooring industry until his retirement. Mr. Allsup joined the VAC as a Transportation Specialist in 2009.

Other Accomplishments, Events, and Staff Bio's

Transportation Specialist Frank Guignon – Frank served honorably in the US Army from 1967 – 1971 as a radio and tape player repairman. He also served in country Vietnam from 1967 – 1968. After the military Frank worked as a Telecommunications Sales Engineer until his retirement. Mr. Guignon joined the commission as a Transportation Specialist in 2016.

Veterans Service Officer I Cecelia Gaines – Cecelia served honorably in the US Navy from 1993 – 1997 as a Dispensing Clerk. She has a background in the medical field which is useful when speaking to veterans about potential service connected injuries.

Veterans Service Officer I Victor Somoza – Victor served honorably in the US Army from 2008 – 2015. Victor is a combat veteran having served in Iraq. He was helping veterans with their education benefits at Lake County College when he was referred to the VAC by the VAC of Lake County.



2018 Upcoming Challenges

The Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption:

Beginning in the summer of 2018 the County Board entertained hostile comments regarding the Disabled Veterans Property Tax exemption and a single disabled veteran who was eligible for the total exemption and happened to be successful in spite of his disabilities. The law granting the exemption allows a total exemption for disabled veterans rated 70% and above for properties valued less than \$750,000. Some of the comments made; implied that the veteran was not disabled at all, since the disabilities were not visible it must be mental health, and that the veteran didn't deserve the exemption. Such comments would not be made publically about veterans with missing limbs or clearly disfiguring injuries, or any non-veteran disabled person who became successful in spite of their disability. As a service to the individuals and group making the statements a letter was sent attempting to explain VA disability ratings and illustrate individuals who overcame there limitations and were successful. The goal was to avoid creating an air of resentment against veterans as was seen during the Vietnam.

Changes to the VAC Transportation Service:

The Commission took a 2 year look at the effectiveness of the transportation service in its current form. Thanks to more comprehensive primary care services provided at the Community Based Outpatient Clinic in McHenry and improved coordination of appointments at the Lovell FHCC the VAC has seen a decline in overall ridership. At the end of the fiscal year approximately 4000 surveys went out to local veterans to get an idea of the service needs in the veterans' community. Transportation was included in the focus. Past comments made by passengers suggested a need to provide transportation to; VA Contract Providers, Milwaukee VA Medical Center, and transportation to VA Benefits Administration hearings, and appointments made by the VA Regional Office for Compensation and Pension Examinations. Should the survey illustrate a demand to add additional destinations to the transportation service, consideration would have to be made to replace one of the busses with a minivan. The survey results should be compiled and released to the Commission by Spring or Summer 2019.

Also related to transportation is the age of the Pace busses used. Both vehicles are 2009's and are starting to have increased maintenance costs due to age. Due to specialized equipment on the busses the VAC is limited to vendors that are capable of working on large vehicles for repairs other than routine maintenance. Multiple problems have arisen with one of the busses resulting in it being off the road much longer than desired. Efforts by Pace and the VAC to find a vendor that can identify and correct the safety issue has so far been evasive. Should the problem continue unresolved the vehicle would likely be turned in and replaced.

VAC Budget Concerns

The VAC ended FY2018 with a budget shortfall of approximately \$118,000. The funds were made up by drawing from the Commissions dwindling reserve fund. Although the Commissions budget is approximately \$600,000, the VAC expenses have been below \$500,000. As illustrated in past reports, the VAC's success at prosecuting VA Claims has resulted in less demand for Veterans Financial Assistance. We have gradually been reducing the budgeted amount for Veterans Financial Assistance, but remain cautious as an unexpected economic turn could result in an immediate increase in Veterans Financial Assistance requests. A healthy reserve fund protected the VAC and its clients during the economic downturn which began in 2008.

2018 Upcoming Challenges

VAC Office Space Concerns:

Over fiscal year 2017 the Commission learned of the County Board's intention to consolidate departments in an effort to better utilize valuable floor space. In an attempt to be proactive, the Commission approved a plan which would place the Regional Superintendent of Schools (ROE) office in proximity to the VAC Office. The ROE was chosen due to very similar security of information requirements.

The issue remains concerning to the Commission as the County Board collected about \$200,000 from the VAC for the remodeling of our current space and that of two other departments back in 2013. It appears that at least two of those office suites are to be remodeled again and it remains unclear as to the future of the VAC office space.

VAC Employee Compensation:

After losing 2 well qualified employees at the end of fiscal year 2017, the Commission instructed the Superintendent to perform a wage study using Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) figures for all positions. The County planned on its own study however, past experience suggested that the VAC positions would either not be included in the study or considered too specialized to get a usable figure. Additionally, past consultants would not consider wages paid by the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) who represented the largest employer of Veterans Service Officer's in the State. IDVA Field Veterans Service Officers have similar duties to our VAC VSO's. The findings illustrated a considerable disparity between what the compensation should be and what was actually being paid, especially those accredited by the VA. The highest paid position (Superintendent) was compensated somewhat more than a very experienced IDVA Field Veterans Service Officer (VSO), while experienced VAC VSO's were compensated considerably less than an entry level IDVA VSO assigned to a populous area such as McHenry County. The Commission presented the findings for action to the County HR Committee which proposed starting over and using the Archer Study system provided by the consultant. After meeting the Counties requirements it confirmed what was learned under the BLS Study that the accredited staff was undercompensated. A proposal to correct the long term disparity with wages for VAC employees compared to County employees was walked through the County Committees and presented to the County Board in October 2018 where it was tabled without discussion. The Commission continues to seek a remedy for the VAC Office personnel.

VAC Retention Issues

As the overall employment picture continues to improve, the pool of qualified veterans willing to have a career with the VAC will likely decrease. Less than competitive compensation offered young veteran families worked somewhat during a depressed economy but as better opportunities open up qualified employees may continue to take their skills elsewhere. As the VAC already experienced, the training and experience opportunity offered by the VAC of McHenry County may be the only lure to well qualified candidates who are focused on more lucrative positions elsewhere such as the US Department of Veterans Affairs. This also considerably impacts succession planning significantly reducing the possibility of promoting a well-qualified and dedicated employee to a higher position.

2018 Upcoming Challenges

VAC Rules and Guidelines:

During odd years the Guidelines are reviewed line by line to ensure it remains current with State laws. Over 2017 the Illinois Townships Association completed its updated version of the General Assistance Handbook. Because of the very close relationship between Veterans Assistance and General Assistance all changes in the GA Handbook are likely to have an impact on the VAC Guidelines. VAC Advocates will need to attend General Assistance Training sometime over 2019.

VA Claims Workshops:

The Veterans Benefits Administration had expressed interest in providing a Claims Workshop in McHenry County. This would bring together experienced VA Rating Specialists with disabled veterans with an existing claim at the VA Regional Office to identify elements of the veterans claim that are needed to make a decision, and in some cases, actually make a decision. The VAC would be charged with coordinating its staff and the veterans the VA Regional Office wishes to meet. This will potentially be of considerable benefit to many local veterans who need additional guidance on their claims. Additionally, the IDVA and the VAC will be available to assist veterans who are representing themselves before the VA.

Increased need for Direct Client Outreach:

The increasing age of Vietnam Era veterans and the severity of disabilities of some of the younger veterans have created an increasing demand for Direct Client Outreach. Even with the technological improvements that allow the VAC to provide service as if in the office, travel and setup add a considerable amount of time to a claim. Typically an in office consult for Veterans Assistance which leads to a decision to grant or deny takes approximately 1 hour including administrative documentation. A claim for VA Disability Compensation or Pension takes 2+ hours per office visit (a straight forward claim typically requires about 6 hours with the client between consult, gathering and evaluating evidence, submission, and review of decision).

The Ever-changing VA

The VA continues to move programs forward that potentially reduce the amount of time it takes to file and process claims, the time it takes to see a medical provider, and update programs such as VA Pension. The current method of submitting a claim requires that the VSO print out all the completed documentation and fax the claim packet to the Evidence Intake Center to be digitized. Updated veterans management programs are coming on line that will allow the VSO to electronically send the information directing to the VA rather than "Print & Fax".

October 2018 the VA made final changes to the Veterans Pension, Survivors Pension, and Parents Pension program. Commonly referred to as Aid & Attendance, the basic rules of the program had not been changed for decades. With the increasing numbers of companies who specialized in helping veterans and survivors shelter assets and qualify for what amounts to a "VA welfare program", the Veterans Benefits Administration was forced to amend the rules. Although the changes went into effect October 18, training for VSO's, and updated forms were not available.

Additionally, the VBA will be changing the Claim Appeals Process effective early 2019. It appears that the new appeals system will have more choices regarding how the appeal process would progress. What impact this will have on current appeals is also of concern.

VAC 2018 Unaudited Budget and Expenditures

The following information is available on the McHenry County Website

Fund 10 Veterans Assistance Commission Fund – Created to provide and coordinate services and assistance to help eligible veterans and/or their families overcome obstacles and become independent

Fund 11 Veterans Assist. Commission Bus Fund – Created to accept donations towards the purchase of new vehicles for the VAC.

SPECIAL REVENUE FUND	Appropriation	Non-Levy Revenues	Tax Levy Revenues	Surplus or (Use of Cash):
Veterans Asst. Commission Fund	\$ 670,477	\$ 15,000	\$ 400,000	\$ (255,477)
Veterans Bus Fund	\$ 0	\$ 560	\$	\$ 560

VETERANS ASSISTANCE FUND

Revenues	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Budgeted	FY 2017 10 Mo. Act	FY 2018 Approved
Tax Revenue (Tax Levy)	399,159	399,064	400,000	389,845	400,000
Utilization of Reserve Fund	0	0	279,571	0	255,477
Intergovernmental	0	0	0	0	15,000
Interest Income	4	0	0	0	0
Total Department/Fund	\$399,163	\$399,064	\$679,571	\$389,845	\$670,477
Expenditures Personnel Services	333,744	358,205	397,421	298,288	401,527
Contractual Services	86,875	75,818	258,000	72,294	221,200
Commodities	15,316	15,272	24,150	9,293	23,150
Capital Outlay	0	0	0	8,000	24,600
Total Department/Fund	\$435,935	\$449,295	\$679,571	\$387,875	\$670,477

Table 1- Abatement by Levy (temporary reduction in property taxes)

FY 2017 Tax Levy Fund	Amount Levied	Amount To Be Abated	Amount To be Levied
General Fund	\$44,831,303	\$5,030,995	\$39,800,308
<i>Veterans Asst. Commission Fund</i>	<i>\$400,000</i>	<i>\$74,965</i>	<i>\$325,035</i>
IL Municipal Retirement Fund	\$7,800,000	\$150,000	\$7,650,000
Social Security Fund	\$4,000,000	\$317,478	\$3,682,522
Highway Fund	\$6,455,268	\$743,653	\$5,711,615
Matching Fund	\$1,807,507	\$107,507	\$1,700,000
County Bridge Fund	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
Mental Health (708) Fund	\$10,900,000	\$500,000	\$10,400,000
TB Care & Treatment Fund	\$250,000	\$74,941	\$175,059
Senior Services Fund	\$1,645,000	\$0	\$1,645,000
Liability Insurance Fund	\$1,250,000	\$999,929	\$250,071
Valley Hi Enterprise Fund	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
Totals	\$79,849,078	\$8,009,468	\$71,839,610

County Reserve Fund Goal is 5 Months

Veterans Assistance Commission Reserve Account	2017	2018	2019(Estimate)
Reserve Account	\$481,723	\$428,053	\$333,362
Months Reserve (Goal 12)*	13.43	12.24	8.86

The Veterans Assistance Commission has long held to maintaining a 12 month reserve as a hedge against economic change to allow the Commission to continue providing service without having to request additional tax funds.

VAC 2018 Unaudited Budget and Expenditures

Tax Levy by Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Veterans' Assistance	0.006	0.005	0.003	0.004	0.004	0.005	0.006	0.006	??	0.005

Rates are per \$100 of assessed value

Taken from VAC Records 2018 Budget and Expenses

Personnel					100.00%	
Line No.	Line Item	Budgeted	Expended	Remaining	% Exp.	% Rem.
3010	Salaries	\$ 211,283.00	\$ 197,984.53	\$ 13,298.47	93.7%	6.3%
3020	Part Time	\$ -	\$ 7,801.78	\$ (7,801.78)	0.0%	0.0%
3025	Holiday Pay	\$ 11,120.00	\$ 5,927.37	\$ 5,192.63	53.3%	46.7%
3030	Per Diem	\$ 55,003.00	\$ 34,534.95	\$ 20,468.05	62.8%	37.2%
3040	Over Time Salaries	\$ 500.00	\$ 906.03	\$ (406.03)	181.2%	-81.2%
3050	Merit Pool	\$ 6,242.00	\$ -	\$ 6,242.00	0.0%	100.0%
3100	Uniform All.	\$ 350.00	\$ 153.00	\$ 197.00	43.7%	56.3%
3105	SS/Co. Share	\$ 21,737.00	\$ 17,110.32	\$ 4,626.68	78.7%	21.3%
3110	IMRF	\$ 22,829.00	\$ 17,641.28	\$ 5,187.72	77.3%	22.7%
3146	Hlth. Ins.	\$ 72,463.00	\$ 34,236.91	\$ 38,226.09	47.2%	52.8%
Personnel		\$ 401,527.00	\$ 316,296.17	\$ 85,230.83	78.77%	21.23%
Contractural & Assistance		Budgeted	Expended	Remaining	% Exp.	% Rem.
4001	Contract Service	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 3,100.00	\$ 900.00	77.5%	22.5%
4005	Dues/Mbrshps	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 868.00	\$ 132.00	86.8%	13.2%
4006	Training	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,365.00	\$ 435.00	75.8%	24.2%
4008	Subscriptions	\$ 250.00	\$ 174.20	\$ 75.80	69.7%	30.3%
4034	Specific Insurance	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 8,920.20	\$ 2,079.80	81.1%	18.9%
4045	Directors Insurance	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 4,280.00	\$ 1,220.00	77.8%	22.2%
4055	Contract Printing	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 3,133.49	\$ (633.49)	125.3%	-25.3%
4060	Legal Note/Adv.	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,145.75	\$ 354.25	85.8%	14.2%
4096	Telecomm.	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1,121.47	\$ 478.53	70.1%	29.9%
4200	Vets Assist	\$ 180,000.00	\$ 56,640.69	\$ 123,359.31	31.5%	68.5%
4246	Medical Service	\$ 750.00	\$ 580.00	\$ 170.00	77.3%	22.7%
4251	PreEmp Physical	\$ -	\$ 165.00	\$ (165.00)	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
4306	Vehicle Maint. *	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 5,416.10	\$ 2,083.90	72.2%	27.8%
4321	Software Maint.	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,745.00	\$ 55.00	96.9%	3.1%
4370	Legal Services	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 131.25	\$ 868.75	13.1%	86.9%
Contractural		\$ 221,200.00	\$ 89,654.90	\$ 130,545.10	40.53%	59.02%
Supplies & Equipment		Budgeted	Expended	Remaining	% Exp.	% Rem.
5010	Off. Supplies	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 3,087.17	\$ (1,787.17)	237.5%	-137.5%
5020	Off. Equip.	\$ 750.00	\$ 305.00	\$ 445.00	40.7%	59.3%
5040	Mileage	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,593.61	\$ 406.39	79.7%	20.3%
5050	Mtg. Exp.	\$ 9,500.00	\$ 4,758.90	\$ 4,741.10	50.1%	49.9%
5071	Promo Items	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	0.0%	100.0%
5115	Comp. Hardware	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
5125	Comp. Software	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	0.0%	100.0%
5160	POL *	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 3,605.01	\$ 2,894.99	55.5%	44.5%
5210	Publications	\$ 100.00	\$ -	\$ 100.00	0.0%	100.0%
5251	Promo Events	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 425.00	\$ 1,075.00	28%	72%
Equipment		\$ 23,150.00	\$ 13,774.69	\$ 9,375.31	59.50%	40.50%
Other		Budgeted	Expended	Remaining	% Exp.	% Rem.
6020	Vehicle	\$ 24,600.00	\$ 23,768.00	\$ 832.00	96.6%	3.4%
6810	Fund Bal. Enh.	\$ 560.00	\$ -	\$ 560.00	0.0%	100.0%
Totals		\$ 671,037.00	\$ 443,493.76	\$ 226,543.24	66.09%	33.76%