

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, January 3, 2024 10:00 a.m.
Iowa National Joint Forces Headquarters, Enhanced Classroom
Johnston, Iowa

Commission of Veterans Affairs Members

Present: Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair, The American Legion of Iowa
Darlene McMartin, 1st Vice Chair, Public Member at Large
Gary Wattnem, 2nd Vice Chair, Reserve Organization of America (ROA)
Scott Miller, Member, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), via phone
George Mosby, Member, Iowa National Guard (ING)
Gregory Paulline, Member, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
Joella Perry, Member, Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veterans Service Officers (IACCVSO)
Robert Suesakul, Member, Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
Mary Van Horn, Member, American Veterans (AMVETS)
Todd Jacobus, Commandant, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA)

Absent: Becky DirksHaugsted, Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
No Commissioner, Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Members Present:

Ben Dales, Veterans Benefits Specialist
Kevin House, Clerk Specialist
Karl Lettow, Public Information Officer
Melissa Miller, Trust Fund Administrator
Nathan Wilson, Operations Executive Administrator
Penny Cutler Bermudez, Licensed Nursing Home Administrator
Mike Olson, Legislative Liaison
Polly Roll, Executive Secretary (Recording Secretary)

Guests Present:

Steven Bryant, Assistant Director, Iowa City VA Health Care System
Kristi Catrenich, Public Affairs Officer, Des Moines VA Regional Office
Chad Cook, Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisor Program
Orene Cressler, Executive Director, Pocahontas County Veterans Affairs
Lisa Curnes, Director, Veterans Affairs Central Iowa (VA CIHCS)
John Derner, Department Adjutant, The American Legion of Iowa
Major Josh Dunwoody, Executive Officer to Major General Osborn
Joyce Elliott, The American Legion Auxiliary, #37
Roger Elliott, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 490
Stanley Elliott, Department Commander, The American Legion of Iowa
Dave Grimm, Disabled Veterans of America (DAV)
Kevin Huseboe, Director, Marshall County Veterans Affairs
Jim Johnson, The American Legion of Iowa
Randy Johnson, Legislative Commission Chairman, The American Legion of Iowa
Scott Johnson, Executive Director, Iowa FFA Association
Dennis Jones, USMC League, Commandant of Larry Nehring Detachment Marine Corps League
Dan Kuester, Public Affairs Officer, Veterans Affairs Central Iowa (VA CIHCS)
Rich Lennon, Webster County Veterans Affairs Commission
Wayne Marek, Veteran Outreach Program Specialist, DSM Vet Center
Colonel Kathy McKay, Iowa Army National Guard Personnel Officer
Dr. Ray Meylor, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), IFCS

- ✓ Making sure there are vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- ✓ New Director started in March.
- Holding steady as last year was a big year for VBA. VARO focus is on training.
- The VARO takes great pride in doing the right thing for Iowa Veterans.
- This year, focusing on partnerships.
 - ✓ Meeting quarterly with Congressional staff, Veteran Organization Veteran Service Officers, County Veteran Service Officers, etc.
 - ✓ Quarterly touchbacks with partner Veterans Health Administration Hospitals
 - ✓ Check-ins with Iowa Commission and Department of Veterans Affairs
- Anyone seeking information on Veterans benefits, or the role of the VA Regional Office should contact Kristi Catrenich so that she can direct the question to the correct VARO staff member. The VARO has a wide range of expertise and is willing to provide either in-person or virtual training. (Example – Pension training)
- Please inform the VA Regional Office of events, conferences, or any other venues where Veterans will be assembled in large numbers. The VARO would like to participate!
- Chairwoman Ledvina mentioned that there are for-profit organizations presenting Veterans with opportunities to connect with lawyers that will fill out the Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ); they are advising Veterans that their services will result in no requirement for a medical examination.
- Kristi Catrenich responded by saying that there are some circumstances that would not require a medical examination; for example: prostate cancer. A Veteran may already have the medical evidence for Agent Orange. The VARO staff member in that case would look for the medical evidence. DBQs generally require that the Veteran consult with a medical provider with whom the VA has a contract.
- Chair Ledvina had an example of a Veteran claim. The Veteran was pursuing an increase in VA Disability Compensation, and went to a for-profit organization. The organization charged him \$3,000 up front, had one of their own physicians fill out the DBQ for the Veteran, and submitted the documentation directly to the VA. The Veteran did not consult with a physician contracted by the VARO and the result was that his disability compensation increased from 30% to 70%. That for-profit organization also sent the Veteran an invoice equating to 23% of the Veteran's due backpay.
 - ✓ Kristi is going to check into this as there may have already been medical evidence in this case.
 - ✓ There are companies that want to take advantage and take a portion of a Veterans benefits.
 - ✓ There are VSOs and CVSOs that are trained and ready to fill these forms out for free. Please encourage Veterans to go this route.

VA Medical Center - Iowa City Update

Steven Bryant, Assistant Director of the Iowa City VA Health Care System, gave the following updates:

Secretary of the VA Visit – November 2023

- The Iowa City VA Health Care System hosted VA Secretary Denis McDonough in November. The Secretary was informed on the Tele-Oncology program and the Rural Health Program.

Tele-hospital Medicine program

- The project was started with a small pilot that was funded by Iowa City Office of Rural Health to help bridge the care gap for rural Veterans. Initially, they served five rural hospitals in the Midwest.
- The grant allowed hospital staff at large hospitals, like the Iowa City VA Health Care System, to provide consultations virtually to rural hospitals caring for Veterans. Now, a federal grant, an additional \$1.5 million dollars in funding from the Office of Rural Health, is allowing a program through the Iowa City VA, to even more hospitals, and helping even more patients and providers.

- “We utilize this program that uses telehealth to bridge the gap between the need of inpatient hospital medical expertise and those patients that are admitted to rural facilities,” said Dr. Gutierrez. Getting health care closer to home comes with a lot of upsides, family is often nearby and there’s comfort in recovering in the community where you live. “With our guidance and being able to see all our patients via video, we are able to provide the same quality of care that if they had one of us right there,” said Dr. Gutierrez.
- <https://www.kcrg.com/2023/10/17/iowa-city-va-expands-telehospital-medicine-program-more-rural-areas/>

Construction Updates

Coralville and Waterloo openings

- The Coralville Clinic opened August 17, 2023, and the Waterloo Clinic opened September 21, 2023. These clinics nearly doubled their space and will give them the opportunity to take care of more Veterans in higher populated communities in their catchment area.

9E for Inpatient Med Psych unit:

- The Renovate 9E project will create a secure medicine unit that is designed to meet mental health environment of care requirements. The unit will consist of ten single-patient rooms to serve patients with both medical and psychiatric health care needs. This type of hybrid unit will provide a service currently unavailable in the Iowa City VA Healthcare System, and is also very rare across the VA-wide Healthcare System. Currently, patients with both medical and psychiatric care needs are placed on traditional medicine floors, where there is lack of resources for secure care and the environment is inherently unsafe for this patient type. While very limited medical care can take place on inpatient mental health (IPMH) 9W, the ward is not set up for wider medical support. The new 9E unit will bridge gap that exists with treating this growing patient type in a traditional medical unit or IPMH unit.
- The 9E project is on track to start construction the middle of this month. Approximate construction completion will be in April 2025. The initial plan for the new 9E unit is to use it as a swing space for IPMH patients from 9W (for approximately 9 – 12 months). During this interim period 9W will be closed to complete construction of Update 9W Patient Safety Features project. Once Update 9W construction is complete, IPMH patients will move back to 9W, and the 9E Med-Psych unit will be brought online for intended use around December 2026.

Community Living Center (CLC)

They are in the early stages of adding a Community Living Center with no details to share at this time. This will be a great addition that allows more treatment of their Veterans instead of sending them to the community.

Mr. Bryant along with the team are very proud to announce that the ICVA has a point satisfaction score of 93.2%, which is their highest trust score since they began surveying patients and reporting this data in 2017. The ICVA consistently outperforms the VA national average in trust for both inpatient and outpatient services!

VA Medical Center – Des Moines Update

Lisa Curnes, Director, gave a brief bio on herself and the following updates:

Bio Introduction

- Director Curnes was born and raised in Iowa.
- She is going on her 30th year with VHA with all but the last five years right here in Central Iowa. She began her career with VA as a Registered Nurse and went on to college at the University of Iowa for her Bachelor’s degree in Science and Nursing and then to Des Moines University to obtain her Master’s degree in Health Administration.

- She has held various positions within the health care system to include: RN, NM, Clinical Coordinator in Ext. Care and Rehab, Chief of Prosthetics, Associate Director of Resources and Operations and now as the Medical Center Director in the VA Black Hills HCS and now back in Central Iowa.
- She is happy to be back in Iowa where she has two adult children, two grandchildren, her mother and grandmother residing.

Updates:

CLC 5-star

- VA Central Iowa CLC was recently awarded a 5-Star overall rating by Centers Medicare and Medicaid Services. Scale of 1 to 5, 5 is best.
- This is used to compare facilities around the country.
- There were three criteria for the rating: unannounced survey, staffing and quality.

CMS Care Compare on the Medicare.Gov website

- VA CIHCS Acute Care is rated as 5 Stars on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best as compared to other local health care systems acute care within a 25-mile radius.

PACT ACT Updates

Toxic Exposure Screens (TES)

- Average, 180 screening per week (little lower this week due to holidays).
- Total, almost 23,000 total unique Veterans screened since program began.

Construction update

- ICU, intensive care unit, renovation on the 5th floor of the main hospital is ongoing. They anticipate this summer renovations will be complete. When complete this space will consist of 9 single patient rooms. Currently they have 9 beds, 8 of which share a bathroom with another room. One room has no restroom. Current census is 8 and averages around 4-5.
- Marshalltown CBOC is ongoing. This project is ahead of schedule, and they anticipate the handover for this space will be in July. A ribbon cutting is planned to celebrate this event. No firm date is set.
- Ames CBOC -- Working on a 5 year 'as-built' lease for a space that would need little renovation. This is moving forward and we may occupy a space by the end of 2025.
- Warehouse – building 27, is nearing completion. They are anticipating a handover to them next month, (February). This will be a huge improvement as this new warehouse is physically connected to the main hospital building. This means supplies and materials will no longer be hauled or carted outside from the lower part of campus to the hospital for use.

Presentations

Major General Steve Osborne, The Adjutant General of Iowa

Welcome to the Iowa National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters Building & Camp Dodge. This is the Headquarters for the Iowa National Guard – both Army and Air. Major General Osborn became Adjutant General in March 2023 following the retirement of Major General Ben Corell. Major General Osborn has served 40 years in the Army – in all components. He is originally from Davenport, and a significant contributor to his decision to serve is his father, who served as a Marine in Korea, and his grandfather, who served during World War I, trained at Camp Dodge, and served in France. Thanks to all of those who have served our Nation in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Iowa National Guard is 9,000 strong. There are Air National Guard bases in Des Moines and Sioux City. There are Army installations in 35 communities across the State of Iowa. 2,300 members of the Iowa National Guard serve in a full-time capacity; the others are traditional – one weekend per month and two weeks each year. There are 150 non-uniform wearing Title 5 staff members, and 240 State employees.

There have been recruiting challenges over the last few years across the Department of Defense. The Iowa National Guard is at 99.56% strength with a retention rate of 86%. We can do better and we are working to do better. Many sources influence a young person's propensity to serve. More importantly, many centers of influence encourage young people not to serve. Many young people do not have influential adults in their lives. Our recruiters are engaging young people. Our senior leaders are engaging the media, corporate leaders, educators, administrators, and others who influence.

The next three years will be challenging for the Iowa National Guard; there are many deployments on the horizon, and we need to build a strong formation now in order to be ready for those. Today, we have 350 Soldiers and Airmen deployed around world. We support Pacific Command, Northern Command, Central Command, and European Command. We have 60 Soldiers on the Southwest Border as part of a 500 Soldier Task Force from four states in support of Homeland Security & Customs & Border Protection. 120 Airmen will soon deploy with KC135 airframe to Guam for 120 days. 33 Soldiers assigned to an Aviation Medical Evacuation company and 30 Military Police Soldiers will serve in Kosovo for 9 months. The Iowa National Guard is engaged.

Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral Treatment (SBIRT) Program

Presentation was made by: Colonel Kathy McKay (G1), Lieutenant Colonel Randall Stanford (Deputy G1), and Julie Spicer, UCS Healthcare

What is SBIRT?

The Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Program is an integrated health care service provided free of charge to Iowa National Guard troops. The SBIRT program is unique to the state of Iowa. Services the program provides extends to the Army/Air National Guard, other state NG units (ATs), the reserves, and active-duty units as they reach out. The program is open to Veterans as well.

- SBIRT was the name of the initial grant that got the program started, the grant money goes to UCS healthcare and they, in turn, provide the resource on Camp Dodge.
- The SBIRT grant ended in FY17.
- In FY18, UCS found a grant called PIPBHC that isn't an exact fit, but they have been able to make it work; this grant was set to end 29 SEP 2023 but was extended to 29 SEP 2024 and will not be extended.

UCS Healthcare and History with the Iowa Guard

For the past 10 years, UCS Healthcare has partnered with the Iowa National Guard to provide SBIRT services. UCS Healthcare is an Iowa-based non-profit corporation licensed by the State of Iowa to provide substance use disorder treatment services, including medication assisted treatment, mental health therapy, counseling, and primary health care, including outpatient psychiatric care. UCS Healthcare will continue to hire and select the most qualified applicants to serve as Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors to support the SBIRT program. UCS Healthcare will also continue providing a Peer Recovery Coach to Iowa National Guard Troops and veterans. UCS will continue to apply for additional grants and resources to support the SBIRT program.

UCS Healthcare is part of the IDPH Integrated Provider Network, with services funded by the Iowa Department of Public Health and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

What does SBIRT Provide?

- Screen Individual intervention: Conduct one on one sessions with troops with substance use disorder (SUD), or substance abuse related issues.
- Troops identified SUD-related issues (positive UA, alcohol related CCIRs, unit/ Soldier referrals) for the appropriate level of intervention as requested by IANG.
- Conduct education and outreach to units as requested by IANG.
- Consult with IANG units, behavioral health, case managers, and other organizations on cases that involve substances and be able to articulate best practices for intervening.
- Participate and attend workgroups assigned by the IANG.
- Work on cases with the DTC (Drug Testing Coordinator), WFSB, and G1 on more serious cases, as necessary.
- Attend AMEDD drill weekends for SBIRT screening of troops. Nearly every IARNG Soldier is screened yearly (roughly 7000).
- Group intervention: Facilitate 6-7 Resident Brief Treatment Course for troops in the IANG. This serves roughly 80 SMs yearly (required for SM probation periods)
- Collaborate treatment functions with outside agencies and refer SMs to a higher level of care as needed.
- Soldier security clearance memos.
- Sober coaching as a form of continuing care with our Peer Recovery Coach Ed Wollner.

Iowa National Guard Statistics

Positive Urinalysis tests

2021: 103

2022: 164

2023 (as of 19 SEP): 149

Negative Alcohol Related Events

2020: 33

2021: 56

2022: 80

2023 (as of 21 SEP): 78

SBIRT Usage

- Successfully Completed probation: 60%
- Self/Unit Referrals: Average 20 per year
- Resident Treatment Coordination: Average 6-7 per year
- Clients in Maintenance (Weekly Individual intervention): 10
- Clients Utilizing Peer Recovery Services (Edward): 120
- Service Members Attending Brief Treatment Sessions in 2023: 83

Closing

- The SBIRT program in Iowa is very unique and provides the best possible recovery options to currently serving troops and veterans; the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs wants to honor Iowa's veterans and their families by providing the highest quality services and programs. SBIRT is a perfect program to ensure that UCS Healthcare and the Iowa National Guard continues to take care of all veterans and help those currently serving transition to civilian life when their service is over.
- One-time \$55,000 is required to continue to provide all these resources to our service members and veterans.
- The money is only necessary this year to get us through the end of the grant and creating a new full-time position within the Iowa National Guard.

Motion to Approve

Commissioner Van Horn made a motion to approve the \$55,000 as a one-time request for the SBIRT program. Seconded by Commissioner Paulline. Motion approved unanimously. The license plate fund will support this obligation.

Campaign to Upgrade Vietnam Veteran Bill Albracht to Medal of Honor

Joe Murphy is requesting that the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs support his efforts to have the Silver Star earned by Vietnam Veteran Captain Bill Albracht upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

Joe is Vietnam Veteran and a life member of Vietnam Veterans of America. He is a member of VVA Chapter 776 in Bettendorf.

Joe Murphy enlisted in the Army with his best friend Bill Albracht upon graduation from Alleman Catholic High School in Rock Island, Il in 1966. Together they enlisted for Airborne Infantry with hope of qualifying for Special Forces training and on to Vietnam. Mr. Albracht passed the physical and completed the pursuit. Murphy could not pass the physical due to a hearing defect and was assigned to the Signal Corps.

Joe came home in 1969. Bill had been stationed in Thailand because his brother was in Special Forces in Vietnam. Bill came home and announced that he had extended his military service and volunteered for Vietnam. This was no surprise as Bill has always been a warrior first and foremost.

At 21 years old, Captain William Albracht was the youngest Green Beret captain in Vietnam. In October 1969, Albracht took command of a remote hilltop outpost called Firebase Kate in the Quang Doc Province of South Vietnam, held by 27 American soldiers and 156 Montagnard militiamen. At dawn the next morning, three North Vietnamese Army regiments crossed the Cambodian border and attacked. Albracht's men held off repeated ground assaults by the Communist forces. After five days, Kate's defenders were out of ammunition and water. Albracht led his troops off the hill and on a night march through enemy lines, a feat never duplicated during the Vietnam War. He saved 150 lives during the evacuation of the battle site Firebase Kate.

Along with Captain Marvin J. Wolf, Albracht wrote the book *Abandoned in Hell: The Fight for Vietnam's Firebase Kate*. It recounts Albracht's leadership in Vietnam, specifically his heroic actions on the remote hilltop outpost, Firebase Kate.

There are three attachments at the end of the minutes for review:

Attachment A – A Quest for Recognition: Bill Albracht and the Miraculous Escape from Firebase Kate

Attachment B - Executive Summary of Firebase Kate and CPT Albracht's Valorous Leadership

Attachment C – United States Army Captain John Kerr Support Letter

A YouTube documentary can be viewed - **How a 21-year-old Green Beret saved scores of soldiers in Vietnam**, [How a 21-year-old Green Beret saved scores of soldiers in Vietnam \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJC3u4ZSdec), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJC3u4ZSdec>

Motion to Approve

Commissioner Paulline made a motion to write a letter to the National Defense to support the review of details for the Medal of Honor. Seconded by Commissioner Wattnem. Motion approved unanimously.

Iowa Veterans Partnership Community Gardens

Dr. Ray Meylor and Iowa FFA Executive Director Scott Johnson presented. They are working on partnering students and Veteran Service organizations with Community Gardens and encourage Veteran Service Organizations to spread the word to their members and veterans in the community. They believe that this type of partnership will be beneficial to students and Veterans as the Veteran can be a mentor to the student.

- They want to cultivate a statewide Transgenerational hands-on STEM partnership with the “boots on the ground” assistance from men and women Veteran organizations, as well as Iowa National Guard and Reserve units in Iowa.
- Veterans from VVA Post 410 and Legion Post 232 helped create the Ankeny K-12 STEM program that received Iowa Governors BEST STEM Award. Three teachers received the Teacher of the Year Award, one was an FFA Agriculture Education instructor.
- STEM is not just for Grades 9 – 12. ISU Prof. Emeritus Dr. Cornelia Butler Flora and ISU Extension Cortney Long, PHD, put together a measurable STEM classroom program for middle school and elementary students. ISU followed over 12, 000 elementary students. Every classroom had an increase of 40% in math and science scores. This greatly increases their high school readiness to succeed with STEM.
- Tammy Stott at IDALS will provide up to \$4,000 for each school to establish the campus STEM garden program, farm to school.
- Iowa FFA and Ankeny School District have partnered to take the Ankeny ORBIS STEM program and student work manuals statewide through FFA. They will share all STEM materials, the real-life challenge to tackling community problems, business, challenges and related on farm work learning.
- The STEM project can recruit younger veterans to join local veterans’ posts and bring civilians to meet veterans for mentorships at the veterans post. When students are provided guidance on how to initiate some low-tech mechanism and then create an innovative solution, students will look at emulating that veteran’s call to serve country and community. This program is considered a “problem solving curriculum” and provide benefits to students and their community, while also creating new local opportunities.
- Iowa FFA brings 32,000 students to implement this program. Academic support is also provided by ISU Extension, UNI, Drake University, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, IDALS, Center for Rural Affairs which together direct the Iowa Food System Coalition. Dr. Ray Meylor serves on the IFSC Communication and Education Team. ISU Extension also direct the Community Matters Now publication which will be promoting all STEM and local veteran interactions with farming and trade skills, to be shared statewide with local School Administration, Economic Development and Community Leaders.
- Veterans can lead this effort to building community capacity and along the way, veterans can be introduced to new opportunity by business leaders and farmers. They invite your posts to contact Iowa FFA Association Executive Director Scott Johnson, Iowa Food System Coalition and Ray Meylor to answer questions and provide valuable opportunities to both veterans and students.
 - Dr. Ray Meylor, emails – watershedmitigationsfarm@gmail.com, cherryglenfariowa@gmail.com
 - Executive Director Scott Johnson, Iowa FFA Association, email – scott.johnson@iowaffa.com

Below is an on-line June 12, 2020, Iowa Farmer Today article explaining the beginnings of the Community Garden and solution to watershed mitigation. [Partnership brings new solution to watershed mitigation \(agupdate.com\)](https://agupdate.com/iowafarmertoday/news/state-and-regional/partnership-brings-new-solution-to-watershed-mitigation/article_1dcaba7e-ab56-11ea-9fb1-dfee21fca726.html)
https://agupdate.com/iowafarmertoday/news/state-and-regional/partnership-brings-new-solution-to-watershed-mitigation/article_1dcaba7e-ab56-11ea-9fb1-dfee21fca726.html, Also attached below.

Attachment D – *Iowa Farmer Today* article

Attachment E – *Grassroots* article

Attachment F – Winter Iowa Food System Coalition Meeting Notes, 12-6-23

Attachment G – FFA

Marshall County Veterans Affairs Memorial Project Funding Request

Marshall County Veteran Affairs Executive Director Kevin Huseboe spoke on the Marshall County Veterans Memorial Project. A Veterans License Fee Fund Application was submitted for \$120,000 for the cost of granite.

Director Huseboe is passionate about getting a Veterans Memorial in Marshalltown to show honor and respect to our Veterans from the past, present and future Veterans. This only makes sense with the Marshall County Veteran Affairs and Iowa Veterans Home being located in Marshalltown. This will also be used as an education program for students. They would like this completed by Veterans Day 2024; Kevin acknowledges that this is an ambitious goal.

The Marshall County Board of Supervisors has granted permission for the memorial to be placed on the southwest lawn of the courthouse grounds, near the intersection of Center and Church streets in Marshalltown. Mechdyne provided an artistic rendition. Local contractors will be utilized for construction, from site work to electrical. There will be a surveillance camera on it at all times. The insurance has already been reviewed. They will fall under the “umbrella” policy with the Courthouse and will be covered once completed.

The design team toured some Veteran memorial displays for ideas, and has come up with a one-of-a-kind design, with a focal point being an eight-foot-tall granite post with a 36” eagle on top. The military branches will wrap around the center post in a barber pole wrap, beginning with Flanders Field WWI, and using memorials from D.C.

Open areas will be decorated with poppies. There will be three flag poles on the north side. The granite post will be located on a 20’ round slab, with park benches. All granite is coming from US soil. The \$120,000 price for the granite is locked in for one year. This includes installation.

The project is estimated to cost \$150,000. They have three donation levels, Silver Level – up to \$5,000, Gold Level – \$5,000 - \$10,000, Platinum is \$10,000 and above. Donations received to date, \$13,000. Businesses are planning to donate. Grants will also be applied for. Gary Wattnem spoke on the Veteran Memorial in Mason City; this community effort took 18 months to fundraise but they were able to raise all of the funds.



Motion to Approve

Commissioner Van Horn made a motion to approve up to \$40,000, if needed, for the Veterans Memorial, after fundraising and grants. Seconded by Commissioner McMartin. Motion approved unanimously.

IDVA Finance & Budget

Nathan Wilson, IDVA Operations Executive Administrator spoke on IDVA finance and budget.

Iowa Veterans Home

The Department of Management assigns two budgets to the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs – one for the Benefits and Cemetery Bureau and one for the Iowa Veterans Home.

- IVH – At the end of November, revenues were at \$28.2 million with expenditures of about \$29,900,000. There has been more money spent than what has been received due to a lower census number at this time. We have been using carry forward and COVID funds that we have been using but that will soon be depleted. We have requested additional funds in our annual appropriation.
- FY24 end of November, revenues were \$28,266,426. Expenditures were about \$29,900,000.
- These sources come from:
 - ✓ VA Per Diem Nursing - \$7,205,035
 - ✓ VA Per Diem – Domiciliary - \$350,989
 - ✓ VA Drug Reimbursement - \$13,991
 - ✓ VA CBOC - \$4,379
 - ✓ Appropriation - \$7,115,335
 - ✓ Medicaid (per diem, fees & medications) - \$8,896,073
 - ✓ 3rd Party Insurance Companies - \$824,830
 - ✓ Resident Support - \$3,628,248
 - ✓ Fees & Licenses/Interest/Salvage/DOT/Routine Maintenance - \$155,811
 - ✓ Meal Tickets - \$71,735
- Total expenses - \$29,983,031. Below are some of the expenses:
 - ✓ Personnel - \$21,757,889
 - ✓ Utilities - \$531,531
 - Alliant Energy plan to increase rates by 20%, 10% a year for the next two years. This would be about \$200,000 increase per year for electricity.
 - ✓ Food - \$528,765
 - Food prices have increased by 34% in the last three years. In the last year, it increased 12 to 14%.
 - ✓ Medication and medical supplies have increased.
 - Instituted cost saving mechanisms. Hired Impact Medical. They go through our electronic records, EMR, to find Medicaid/Medicare eligible products and they bill Medicare for them and send the product at no charge to us. Saves IVH the cost of a staff member billing and reduces the risk of Medicare billing errors. Billing errors can cost a citation so it takes the burden off of IVH.
 - Licensed Nursing Home Administrator Penny Cutler Bermudez will be attending the National Association of State Veterans Home Conference in Washington D.C., to build consensus among State Veterans Home around the proposal of getting the Federal government to reimburse for the rising cost of medication costs. We are also ensuring State leaders support our appropriation request so that we can maintain the high standard of care.
- In 2020, we had 22 Veterans who were receiving service connected disability ratings above 70%. In 2023, there were 67 service connected (70% or above) residents. These residents live at IVH at no cost to them.
- Depending on resident payment method, IVH receives:
 - ✓ Medicaid reimbursement - \$495/day or
 - ✓ VA reimbursement - \$472/day

- The last fiscal year audit reports that the average resident cost is \$188,000/year which is \$516/day.
- Every non-nursing position is being examined. We want to continue the highest level of care that the residents deserve. Looking at:
 - ✓ Unnecessary overtime
 - ✓ Positions revamped/cut
- IVH is still a 5-Star facility; no deficiencies have been identified by either the Department of Inspections Appeals and Licensing OR the VA Central Office since before 2021. Penny Cutler Bermudez, LNHA, is doing a fantastic job making sure regulations are being followed and that superior care is being delivered.
- The IVH applied for a VA grant to attract nursing staff. There are several openings as you can see on the graph attached.
 - ✓ Offering sign on bonuses and retention bonuses to attract licensed nursing staff. The VA has a grant that will match up to 50% of these bonuses. This equates to \$233,000 if all positions are filled.
- We continue to hire CNAs and non-certified aids. IVH has a program to train and teach noncertified aids so they can become certified as soon as possible. This has been working well. We have about 40 CNA vacancies.

Donation Funds - We are extremely grateful for all monetary donations given.

As of October 30, 2023:

- Restricted Funds: \$180,857.86. These are donations that are tagged by the donor to be spent on specific items. Example – exercise equipment, popcorn, t-shirts
- Unrestricted Funds: \$110,099.46 – These donations can be spent for the benefit of the residents at IVHs discretion which is discussed and voted on in Leadership meetings.

There is a list of needs/wants on the IDVA website. This is updated on a regular basis. [Donate Or Volunteer | Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs](https://dva.iowa.gov/iowa-veterans-home/donate-or-volunteer), <https://dva.iowa.gov/iowa-veterans-home/donate-or-volunteer>

- It was recommended that IVH adds all needs to the website (larger type purchases), such as beds, certain exercise equipment, etc.

Benefit and Cemetery Bureau

- Appropriation is \$1,033,289.00. Realized with merger and analyzing the budget was that 90% of cemetery salaries came out of the Perpetual Care fund. This Legislative session it has been requested for this to be right sized so that all salaries come out of the appropriation amount.
- Cemetery
 - ✓ Working toward NCA standards
 - A lot of work needs to be done
- Perpetual Care Fund
 - ✓ \$209,096.41 has been taken out
 - Internments – receive a little over \$800 per internment
- Trust Fund
 - ✓ Balance - \$42,079,527.11
 - ✓ Spendable balance - \$1,488,357
 - ✓ Interest average for September – November is \$154,000/month. The monthly interest has helped boost the Trust Fund.
 - ✓ There are 47 applications (\$196,063.47) that have been approved and waiting payment.
 - Waiting on invoices for processing.

- License Plate Fund
 - ✓ Balance - \$400,972.07
 - ✓ FY23 DOT transfers – brought in about \$91,000.
 - ✓ Interest accrued FY to date - \$5,948.13
 - ✓ Claims processed FY to date - \$45,356.53

Attachment H – Finance and Staffing Data

Iowa Veterans Home Accora Empresa Nursing Beds Request

Penny Cutler Bermudez, Licensed Nursing Home Administrator, presented. She said how honored she was to come before the Commission and make a request that was previously forwarded in writing for \$46,753.00 for Accora beds. This request allows IVH to purchase ten beds for residents who have bariatric needs. Special equipment is needed to meet their needs without injuries to staff or residents.

- These extension beds are beneficial as they offer wider and longer dimensions when adding on the adapters. They can also be a standard bed.
- Life expectancy is 18 years.
- Max user weight is 525 lbs.
- They distribute weight evenly and reduce pressure on sensitive areas of the body, which will prevent pressure sores and other related issues.
- Beds address the needs of caregivers to provide optimal assistance to residents. It enhances the ability to move and handle residents. Some of these tasks include transferring the resident in and out of a bed or chair, moving or turning the resident to prevent bed sores, providing support to the resident’s limbs while repositioning the resident and assisting the resident in everyday movements, such as bathing or using the bathroom.
- IVH was able to do a 30-day trial with a bariatric need resident. The resident reported that it was a comfortable bed and had no issues with it.

Motion to Approve

- **Commissioner Mosby made a motion to approve the purchase of ten beds in the amount of \$46,753.** Seconded by Commissioner Paulline. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Commandant Jacobus asked Penny to answer a question that is asked many times. Are we at full capacity at IVH?

- We are not at full capacity. We have 14 nursing level beds that are vacant right now.
- Memory Care unit – six beds vacant.
- We try to have a 97% fill rate as we know there are terminally ill residents.
- It has been difficult to keep beds filled at all times.
- Right now, 57 out of 60 residential care beds are filled because three of the residents that live at IVH live with their spouses in the nursing unit and we are committed to keeping them together. So, the three in Residential Care have to be kept vacant.
- Memory Care – There are 110 beds. There are two levels of care.
 - ✓ Locked units
 - ✓ Wanderguard units
- There will be several needs residents moving to IVH within the next two weeks.
- Couples bedrooms that are not being utilized will be used for some of the bariatric residents.
- Planning to reopen Malloy 2N in the next few months, 27 beds.
 - ✓ Temporarily closed due to low admissions and staffing issues.

IDVA Legislative Liaison Mike Olson

Mike Olson, IDVA Legislative Liaison, thanked the Commission for allowing him to speak. He expressed that he is honored to serve.

As the Legislative Liaison for the Department, he advocates for bills that come from the Governor's office or originate from our Department.

Mike will stay in conversations with the Commission involving Veterans. There are a lot of important Organizations represented at the Commission meetings, each with local and federal priorities of a wide variety. We need to be hearing all of the ideas so we are aware of them and if possible, we will help you achieve those goals.

Mike will provide information to the Legislative Service Agencies. They "craft" the bill that is being advocated for and it is our job to provide unbiased accurate information to them so they can provide analysis to the Legislators and to the policy makers on recommendation of action they should take. We will strive to be a resource for them and a resource for everyone that is here who is trying to get things done for Veterans.

Mike also responds to Legislative inquiries. If a constituent has an issue that contacts a state legislator and in turn contacts Mike, with the team in the department it can be researched.

In just over a month, the Iowa Veterans Home has been visited by four staffers from three different Congressional offices (two of them twice), 12 Iowa legislators and ranking staff, and one presidential candidate. These visitors represent both parties and we are fortunate to have them come to IVH to speak and answer questions. They were all impressed with the Iowa Veterans Home facility. It is important for IVH to be able to educate these policymakers on our mission and show them our beautiful facility so that they can tell the IVH story far and wide.

Commandant Jacobus, Karl Lettow and Mike have met with House and Senate Veterans Staff. They also have a scheduled meeting with Speaker Grassley and Majority Leader Windschitl and another one with Senate President Sinclair and Majority Leader Whitver.

Veterans Day on the Hill is Wednesday, January 17, 2024, from 9 – noon, at the Capitol with a program from 10 – 10:30 a.m. The House is going to suspend their schedule from 10 – 11:00 a.m., so they will have the opportunity to attend. At 1:00 p.m., that day, the Commandant will be delivering his address to the House Veterans Committee.

Department Priorities for Legislation this year – There are two we are working with the Governor's office on:

- Definition of a Veteran
- PIFF Card – require certification and level of training for County Administrators and Executives

No matter who you are or where you are from, we are all representing each other at the State House. We need to provide a unified front. When Legislators/policy makers are looking at "us", they are looking at a Veteran or a Veteran supporter. A friendly attitude becomes a trusting resource with reliable information. This is what the Legislators are looking for. We need to provide accurate information to the Legislators so they can make an informed decision.

Legislative Priorities – Chairperson Ledvina read and discussed the following Top Priorities:

TOP PRIORITIES

1. Align 'Veteran' Definition: We fully support changes to the Iowa Code definition of a "Veteran" to match the Federal Code definition, and updates Iowa Code section 35.
2. Property Tax Relief: We fully support modifications to the Disabled Veterans Homestead Credit to reduce property taxes proportionate to veterans VA federal disability rating.
3. Veterans Treatment Courts: We support legislation to establish and expand Veterans Treatment Courts.
4. Ensure Training Support for County Veterans Affairs Offices: We fully support a change to Iowa Code, specifying \$3,000 of the annual \$10,000 allocation of county funding for Veterans Affairs Offices be for the exclusive use of mandatory certified state and federally-provided professional VSO credential training.
5. Support Veteran Service Organizations: We fully support proposals for partial grants to help maintain Veteran Service Organization officers and services currently co-located in downtown Des Moines.

AWARENESS ISSUES:

- A) We support any legislation that will improve Mental Health support and Suicide Prevention for our veterans, their families, and all Iowans.
- B) We support legislation that supports the needs of homeless and under-served veterans.
- C) We support legislation to align Iowa Code with Federal Code regarding the timing and manner of display of the National League of POW/MIA families' flag on all State of Iowa properties.

Dan Gannon and Dave Thornburg recommended that Number 2, Property Tax Relief, be amended to say:

Property Tax Relief: We fully support Disabled Veterans rated 10% through 90% having their property taxes offset by the percentage of their United States Department of Veteran Affairs Disability Compensation rating.

Motion to Approve

2nd Vice Chair McMartin made a motion that the Commission's Number 2 priority - Property Tax Relief - be amended to state: "Property Tax Relief: We fully support Disabled Veterans rated 10% through 90% having their property taxes offset by the percentage of their United States Department of Veteran Affairs Disability Compensation rating."
Seconded by Commissioner Mosby. Motion approved unanimously.

IDVA Update

Comments from Todd Jacobus, Commandant of Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

1. **Inform – Today's Meeting Space.** The January 2024 meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs is taking place at the Iowa National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters Enhanced Classroom because it provides an overall better meeting environment than the other locations on Camp Dodge where we've met. We appreciate the Iowa National Guard sharing this outstanding meeting space with us.
2. **Inform – Iowa Veteran Demographics.** According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics Iowa has **193,861** Veterans, which is **6.04%** of Iowa's population. (Iowa Population: 3,207,004) [<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/IA/PST045222>]
 - a. 146,555 (76%) are Wartime Veterans;
 - b. 46,305 (24%) are Peacetime Veterans;
 - c. 178,117 (92%) are Male Veterans;

- d. 15,744 (8%) are Female Veterans
- e. 3,716 (2%); served during WWII;
- f. 16,246 (8%) served during the Korean War;
- g. 64,900 (33%) served during the Vietnam War;
- h. 65,926 (34%) served during Gulf War;
- i. 46,305 (24%) served between conflicts.

https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp (See Iowa)

3. **Inform – IVH Census.** The Iowa Veterans Home census includes **397** residents as of January 2, 2024. We have **344** residents in nursing level care (**231** residents in Malloy & Dack Buildings, **113** residents with dementia level care in Ulery Building) and **53** in residential / domiciliary level care. We have **11** residents who are more than 95 years old; we have **2** residents who are **99** years old. The youngest resident is 52 years old. We have four Veterans who are ages 50-54. We have **80** female residents, including **20** female Veterans. We have one resident who has called the IVH their home for almost 43 years. We have **4** residents who have lived at IVH for 30+ years. The Iowa Veterans Home has served **19,426** Veterans since opening on December 1, 1887.

- a. 3 (.8%) – Served during WWII
- b. 33 (8%) – Served during the Korean War
- c. 204 (51%) – Served during the Vietnam War
- d. 83 (21%) – Served between conflicts (peacetime)
- e. 60 (15%) – Non-Veteran Residents
- f. 15 (4%) – Served during Gulf War I & Iraq | Afghanistan
- g. 140 (35%) – Served in U.S. Army
- h. 106 (27%) – Served in U.S. Navy
- i. 50 (13%) – Served in U.S. Air Force
- j. 39 (10%) – Served in U.S. Marine Corps
- k. 3 (.8%) – Served in Women’s Auxiliary Corps

4. **Action – Veterans Day on the Hill.** On January 17, 2024, at 9:15 am, Governor Reynolds will meet with the elected leader of the following Veteran Service Organizations in her formal office. Todd Jacobus will send details to each participant.

- a. Iowa Dept of Veterans Affairs Commissioner & Commandant Todd Jacobus
- b. The American Legion of Iowa – Commissioner Elizabeth Ledvina | Commander Stanley Elliott
- c. AMVETS – Commissioner Mary Van Horn | Commander Dale Purdy
- d. At-Large – Commissioner Darlene McMartin
- e. Disabled American Veterans – No Commissioner | Commandant Amy Bahl
- f. IACCVSO – Commissioner Joella Perry | President Patricia Hamann
- g. Iowa National Guard Commissioner Lt. Col. George Mosby | Major General Steve Osborn
- h. Marine Corps League – No Commissioner | Commandant Patrick “PJ” Pins
- i. Military Order of the Purple Heart – Commissioner Robert Suesakul | Commander Jack Hanson
- j. Paralyzed Veterans of America – Commissioner & Chapter President Scott Miller
- k. Reserve Organization of America–Commissioner Gary Wattnem | Commander Reginald Richardson
- l. Veterans of Foreign Wars – Commissioner Becky DirksHaugsted | Commander Denny Snow
- m. Vietnam Veterans of America–Commissioner & President Greg Paulline | Vice-President Larry Paul

5. **Inform – Summary of Fall 2023 School.** The IDVA & IACCVSO Fall 2023 School for Commissioners & CVSOs took place on Monday thru Thursday, October 9-12, 2023 at the Za-Ga-Zig Shrine Temple in Altoona. Outlined below are participation statistics:
- a. **1-Day Commissioner Training Attendance.** 69 (70%) of 99 counties had at least one commissioner at this 1-day annual training program. Outlined below are the 30 counties (IACCVSO district number follows the county name) who did not have a Commissioner present: Audubon (7), Benton (2), Butler (3), Carroll (6), Cerro Gordo (3), Chickasaw (3), Delaware (2), Des Moines (1), Emmet (5), Floyd (3), Grundy (3), Hardin (3), Harrison (7), Humboldt (5), Iowa (1), Keokuk (1), Lyon (6), Mahaska (4), Monona (6), Mitchell (3), O’Brien (6), Osceola (6), Palo Alto (5), Pocahontas (5), Polk (4), Poweshiek (4), Ringgold (7), Sac (6), Wright (5), Worth (3). We are aiming for 90%+ (A-Grade) during the Fall 2024 Commissioner School.
 - b. **3-Day CVSO Training Attendance.** 81 (82%) of 99 counties were represented at the 3-day annual CVSO training. Outlined below are the 18 counties (IACCVSO number follows the county name) who did not have a CVSO present: Allamakee (2), Appanoose (4), Boone (5), Cerro Gordo (3), Cherokee (5), Dickinson (5), Emmet (5), Jones (2), Keokuk (1), Lucas (4), Monona (5), Page (7), Pottawattamie (7), Poweshiek (4), Ringgold (7), Shelby (7), Woodbury (5), Worth (3).
6. **Action – Spring CVSO School.** The Spring School for County Veteran Service Officers will take place on Tuesday through Thursday, **April 16-18, 2024**, at the Stoney Creek Hotel, 5291 Stoney Creek Court, Johnston, Iowa 50131. It is important that our CVSOs participate in this training. Our CVSOs are THE point of contact for Iowa Veterans attempting to connect with opportunities, programs, and resources that will impact their quality of life, and compensation they have earned as a result of service in the U.S. Armed Forces. We need CVSOs to be present and actively engaged with the collective team so that each of us returns to our workplace with a better understanding of developments, programs, plans, points of contact, and best practices. Iron sharpens iron, and I can’t think of anyone more prepared to make each of us better than those who have been in the trenches doing the work. Please put these dates on your calendar and plan to attend the Spring School.
7. **Inform – Legislative Liaison Introduction.** Since our last Commission meeting, we selected Mike Olson to serve as the Legislative Liaison for the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. There were 32 applicants for this position, and we interviewed 14 of them – including every Veteran who applied. Mike is an Iowa Veteran committed to representing his brothers and sisters in service. He is a Waterloo native and University of Northern Iowa Alumnus, who currently lives in Pella, and served as the Veterans Fellow for Senator Charles Grassley before joining the IDVA team. In his military career, Mike retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 29 years of service in the Iowa Army National Guard, where he served in various assignments of increasing responsibility in the 734th Maintenance Battalion and Iowa Joint Forces Headquarters, uniquely qualifying him for his new position. His service culminated in his assignment as Deputy Director of Services and Strategic Plans at the National Guard Professional Education Center, and as Selective Service Officer for the State of Iowa. In his civilian life, Mike served in the banking industry throughout his professional career, including time as a Market President, Commercial Lender, and Head of Government Relations. He has extensive advocacy and government relations experience at the Iowa Statehouse and in Washington DC, working with the Iowa Bankers Association and the American Bankers Association to achieve their legislative and policy objectives. Mike held numerous committee and board positions at the local, state, and national levels, including a Congressional nomination and Treasury Department appointment to the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee at the United States Mint. In that capacity he initiated and successfully lobbied for the 2019 Apollo 11 Commemorative Coin Act, which was signed into law in 2016 and resulted in \$8.5 million in surcharges being distributed to three worthy space related

organizations, including the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. Mike can be reached at mobile: (641) 750-6185 | michael.olson@ivh.state.ia.us.

8. **Inform – Secretary McDonough Visit to Iowa.** United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough visited the VA Iowa City Medical Center and the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Dubuque on November 2, 2023. I was able to attend the event in Iowa City, and Robert Stavnes attended the event in Dubuque. I was impressed with Secretary McDonough. His focus was on “delivery of medical care to our rural Veterans”. One of comments that he made was, “I want to help our system in a way that allows for our Veterans in remote areas of our Country receive the same level of care that we provide in our larger metropolitan areas.” He asked many questions about the delivery of chemotherapy, radiation, and counseling for Veterans suffering from cancer and other diseases. I was equally as impressed with the staff in Iowa City who answered his questions. The experience impressed on me that we are part of a robust system – Federal, State, Local, Non-Profit, and Veteran Service Organization – all oriented around taking the very best care for those who served our Nation. At the end of his comments, Secretary McDonough looked out over the small audience and told all of us to not hesitate reaching out to him by email if we have issues that we don’t feel are being addressed.
9. **Inform – 2023 Veterans Day Activities.** Thanks to those who were involved in making the Veterans Day programs on Friday, November 10, 2023, at both the Iowa Veterans Cemetery and the Iowa Veterans Home such a success. Many from the Veterans community made extra efforts to ensure the success of these programs. Special thanks to our keynote speakers – Major Sean Quinlan (USMC Retired) at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, and Marine Corps Veteran Rick Fredericksen at the Iowa Veterans Home.
10. **Inform – Wreaths Across America (WAA).** Pat Palmersheim provided IDVA with a report on the 16th Annual Wreaths Across America ceremony, which took place on Saturday, December 16, 2023, and asked me to share this with the Commission.
 - a. In 2023 Patrick Palmersheim ordered 4,583 wreaths, which were delivered on December 12, 2023. On December 13 a group of 50-60 volunteers unloaded the 382 boxes on 32 pallets, counted and loaded the wreaths onto trailers, and designated trailers for each area of the cemetery.
 - b. Procurement of wreaths is a 12-month project, which includes raising the necessary funding so that each headstone and each vertical row of the columbarium walls is decorated with a wreath.
 - c. In 2023, Pat Palmersheim spearheaded a campaign involving grant applications, individual donations, and solicitations from many businesses and corporations that raised \$72,000; 100% of the donations went towards the purchase of wreaths. Each wreath cost \$17.
 - d. More than 500 vehicles entered the gates the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, and between 1,500-1,800 Iowans were present during 2023 WAA ceremony. What an incredible event – and opportunity to involve Iowans in honoring and remembering our Veterans.
 - e. Wreaths Across America is about REMEMBERING, HONORING, and TEACHING. We remember our Veterans that served and are serving in the United States Armed Forces, we honor fallen Veterans, and we teach our youth about the service and sacrifice of our Veterans, their families, loved ones, and survivors.
 - f. WAA’s Motto is: "We are not here to decorate graves; we’re here to remember not their deaths but their lives."
 - g. WAA ceremonies were held at over 4,000 cemeteries and more than 2,000,000 wreaths were placed in cemeteries across the United States, and at our American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries overseas, as well.

- h. Patrick Palmersheim began coordinating Wreaths Across America at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery in 2008, which is the year after the program was began nationally in 2007. Patrick is the longest serving Wreaths Across America Coordinator in the U.S.
- i. In 2022, there were 5,542 organizations across the Nation raising funds for Wreaths Across America ceremonies in National, State and private cemeteries. Out of those 5,542 we were ranked 37th in the Nation for our fund-raising efforts of which Patrick is rightfully proud, and very grateful for the generosity of individuals, organizations, and other stakeholders that made this possible.
- j. In 2008, Patrick coordinated for seven ceremonial wreaths to be delivered to his office at Camp Dodge by Federal Express. Four individuals placed those wreaths during the first event on November 15, 2008.
- k. Patrick's wife is Co-Coordinator for WAA, and they attend a webinar 10 months a year for training. The Palmersheims signed a contract with WAA – committing that the program at IVC would abide by their WAA's policies and procedures. If it were not for the support that we have formed over the years we could not accomplish what we do.
- l. On the day of the ceremony, more than 50 volunteers from the Knights of Columbus (KoC) directed traffic, parked cars, transported individuals around on golf carts, distributed wreaths, and were present for any other support requirements.
- m. The Iowa State Patrol, Polk County Sheriff's Office, Dallas County Sheriff's Office and Van Meter Police Department assisted with traffic, but traffic was still backed up on Interstate 80 for a time.
- n. Pat Palmersheim thanks all the individuals who donated funds to purchase the wreaths and to all the individuals who donated their time to help with the wreath's delivery process, the day of the ceremony to place the wreaths, as well as the retirement ceremony when the wreaths are retrieved. Thank You!

11. **Action – ICVA Committees.** During the October 4, 2023, meeting of the ICVA we discussed the Committees that have been part of the commission's work over the last decade. Listed below are the Committees that have functioned over the last 15 years – some years more active than others. My recommendation is that the Commission maintains the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Committee and Legislative Committee, and establishes the Education & Compliance Committee, Veterans Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Committee, and Homeless Veterans Committee.

- a. **Iowa Veterans Trust Fund Committee** – Imperative to continue
- b. **Education & Compliance Committee** – ICVA should be involved in training
- c. **Veterans Mental Health Suicide Prevention Committee** – Area of significant importance
- d. **Homeless Veterans Committee** – Area of significant importance
- e. **Legislative Committee** – Imperative to continue
- f. Iowa Veterans Home Committee
- g. Iowa Veterans Cemetery Committee
- h. Legislative Committee
- i. License Plate Fund Committee
- j. Injured Veterans Grant Program Committee
- k. Administrative Rules Committee

12. **Inform** – There have been no surveys / inspections by either the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing (DIAL) or the VA Central Office since the DIAL survey on September 20-21, 2023.

13. **Inform** – Since the last ICVA meeting, the Iowa Veterans Home Resident Council met with the leadership team on November 6, 2023. The Resident Council Officers:
- want information about why staff are terminated from employment;
 - the Commandant to approve purchases for the Resident Council;
 - to solicit donations from area businesses to support a raffle;
 - to increase the funds that they have available so they can sponsor quarterly BINGO, and purchase trees, benches, and other items for IVH.
14. **Inform – Elected Officials Visit Iowa Veterans Home Resident Meeting** – On December 13, 2023, State Representative Sue Cahill, Mr. John Hollinrake (Representing Senator Joni Ernst), and Ms. Emily Schwickerath (Representing Representative Randy Feenstra), visited the Iowa Veterans Home and answered questions from residents. Outlined below are the issues IVH residents brought to our elected officials:
- What are we doing about hostages in Gaza?
 - What can Congress do to get more money for Veterans living at IVH? We only get \$140.
 - Considering the committees that our officials serve on - what can you do to support Veterans?
 - Suggest that we legalize marijuana and tax it significantly.
 - What are our elected officials doing to impact the situation in Ukraine? We have concerns about what happens if we don't support Ukraine; this would be a gift to Russia.
 - Has either Senator Ernst or Representative Feenstra supported one of the Presidential Candidates?
 - We'd like to see residents able to earn more money through their Incentive Therapy (IT) jobs.
 - Will we be able to participate in the caucuses?
 - What do you think about gun laws?
15. **Inform – Elected Officials Tour Iowa Veterans Home & Visit Residents.** On December 12, 2023, several State legislators visited the IVH and spoke with residents. This was a wonderful day – and the first visit by most of them to our campus in Marshalltown. Thanks to the following officials for taking the time to be with us: Senator Sandy Salmon, Senator Eric Giddens, Rep Sue Cahill, Rep Chad Ingels, Rep Susan Koenig, Rep Elinor Levin, Rep Ray “Bubba” Sorensen, Rep David Young, and staff members Gannon Hendrick and Natalie Ginty. Senator Sarah Trone Garriott visited us on December 19, 2023. We welcome visits from our elected officials!
16. **Inform – Iowa Veterans Home Staff Superior Performers.** The Clinical Support Bureau provides oversight of a Staff Recognition Program, which has been in effect since August 2023. The purpose of this program is to recognize superior performance of staff members. This program allows us to recognize our sustained superior performers, and I want to share the names of those who have been recognized since our last Commission meeting.
- The **Poppy Award** recognizes a front-line worker (one award in Nursing, one award in Food Service) who showcases excellent service to peers and residents by going above and beyond the call of duty. All individuals are nominated by their peers for their outstanding work within their department.
 - December 2023 Poppy Award for Nursing – **Jeri Nelson**, LPN with Malloy 2 South
 - December 2023 Poppy Award for Food Service – **Lynnette Bishop**
 - November 2023 Poppy Award in Nursing – **April Muschick**, Restorative Aide in Ulery
 - November 2023 Poppy Award in Food Service – **Andrew Porter**
 - The **Champion Award** is a facility-wide award for all staff (ABM and IVH), and is intended to showcase one individual's superior skills dedicated to building staff morale, providing excellent customer service and exuding leadership among peers to support the mission of the Iowa Veterans Home.
 - December 2023 Champion Award recipient – **Bobbi Hernandez** with Finance Office
 - November 2023 Champion Award – **Billie Jo Rickett** with Laundry Team

17. **Info – Receiving Input from Staff.** The senior leadership team has invested a great deal of time in getting input from staff - concerns, criticisms, complaints, and even compliments. Over the last 12 months, the senior leadership and I have addressed 154 complaint cards covering a wide range of topics in 8 videos which were distributed to each staff member. These issues were also sent to each ICVA Commissioner. We’ve published 12 “Leadership Extra” end of month updates from Bureau Chiefs to our staff, facilitated 4 (ea) quarterly rounding sessions throughout the facility, conducted 4 (ea) quarterly staff forums, and participated in 10 resident council meetings - - - all intended to listen, understand, and ensure that all of us are working together so that we deliver the very best in terms of services to our residents.
18. **Info – Standards of Conduct** – One of the expectations of professionals is that we enforce standards (proficiency standards, ethical standards, standards of conduct). I am aware of several examples – even over the last month – of staff doing exactly that. We have outstanding professionals on-board, and I am grateful for those who fulfill responsibilities as professionals by ensuring that peers, subordinates, and superiors are meeting “the standard”, and calling us out when we are not doing so. All of us can do better in this area; we depend on each other fulfilling this responsibility, as it impacts on the culture of our organization and workplace.
19. **Info – Feedback from Staff Regarding Leadership.** The senior leadership team has received formal feedback through surveys, participated in discussions during quarterly rounding sessions, and discussed anonymous input from C4 cards submitted to our leadership team. Our leadership team wants to get better, to lead better, to be more responsive, and to ultimately lead our staff in the way they deserve to be led. We have a solid leadership TEAM now; but we can do more, we can communicate more clearly, we can provide better guidance and direction, we can follow up with more precision, and we can set a better example. That pertains to every one of us – myself included. I’ve asked our staff to communicate to their leader where we or they are not meeting expectations. I’ve suggested that if they are not comfortable talking with their supervisor, then to please outline their issues or concerns to their supervisor’s supervisor, and so on. Finally, I’ve told our staff that if their message does not seem to get traction then to please reach out to me directly. Our staff has my contact information, and I share it with anyone who has input or suggestions for me - - - todd.jacobus@ivh.state.ia.us, cell: (641) 750-9399.
20. **Info – Leadership Development Program.** Over the next few months the Iowa Veterans Home leadership will be participating in a Leadership Development Program that is intended to enhance the skills of our leadership team throughout the facility. Outlined below is the schedule for this program, which will take place from 11:00 am- 12:00 pm on each of these dates:
- a. January 16 – LDP Employee Engagement
 - b. January 24 – LDP Negativity in the Workplace
 - c. January 30 – LDP Employee Accountability
 - d. February 13 – LDP Conflict Resolution
 - e. February 27 – LDP Hire Smart
 - f. March 12 – LDP Service Excellence
 - g. March 26 – LDP Emotional & Rational Intelligence
 - h. March 27 – LDP Communication of IVH Vision & Mission
 - i. April 9 – LDP Personal Effectiveness & Replenishment
 - j. May 22 – LDP Favoritism & Reward for Years of Service
21. **Info – Conference Attendance.** Todd Jacobus will attend two conferences during the month of February 2024:
- a. February 5-8, 2024 – Winter Conference of National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH), Arlington, Virginia
 - b. February 18-21, 2024 – Mid-Winter Conference of National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), Arlington, Virginia

22. Inform – Annual Donation in Memory of Sister. On Thursday, December 21, 2023 a gentleman from Cedar Rapids came to the Iowa Veterans Home to make a donation. Polly Roll, Executive Assistant, inquired about the donation and learned that for the last nine years this gentleman has been donating each year around Christmas to the Iowa Veterans Home in memory of his sister, who worked at IVH for over 20 years – up until she passed away due to a terminal illness in 2015. The brother mentioned that his sister was so grateful to serve here at IVH that each year he feels good about commemorating her by making this donation. What an excellent reminder of the incredible mission that we have at the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and Iowa Veterans Home.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the Commission Quarterly meeting minutes of October 4, 2023, were previously approved on November 14, 2023.

1st Vice Chair McMartin made a motion to approve Trust Fund conference call meeting minutes of October 5, 2023. Seconded by 2nd Vice Chair Wattnem. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Commissioner Paulline made a motion to approve Trust Fund conference call meeting minutes of November 2, 2023. Seconded by 2nd Vice Chair Wattnem. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Commissioner Van Horn made a motion to approve Trust Fund conference call meeting minutes of December 7, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Paulline. Motion carried. Approved unanimously.

Old Business

Commissioner Van Horn commented on the Marine Corp League. Both Dennis Jones and PJ Pins of the Marine Corp League were in attendance. They would like to get a seat on the Commission. Mary turned the comments over to Dennis Jones.

Dennis Jones is a life member of the Larry Nehring Detachment of the Marine Corps League. The Marine Corps League is structured with the National Organization. They fall under the Midwest Division. The State of Iowa is called the Department of Iowa. In the Department, they have ten Detachments. The Larry Nehring covers Polk and surrounding counties. The Marine Corps League was founded in 1923 by World War I Veteran of Belleau Wood, Commandant of the Marine Corps, then Major General John A. Lejeune. On August 4, 1937, the U.S. Congress Congressionally Chartered the organization as a Veteran Service Organization. It maintains a 501c4 non-profit status. Statewide membership is 550. The Auxiliary membership is 50. There is also a Marine Corps Reserve Unit which is on the Northern boundary of Camp Dodge. They have around 150 members. They have about a dozen Active Duty staff and the rest are Reserve. There used to be a Marine Corps Reserve Unit in Waterloo which was deactivated after their service in Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Marine Corps birthday is November 10, 1775, and is celebrated with a passion. They celebrated in the Sherwood Event Center in Des Moines this past year with 210 attendees. The Marine Corps League has an incredible network. For every marine veteran that resides in the State of Iowa, you are not required to report to the Marine Corps League that you are a resident of Iowa.

The Veteran license plate was designed by a Marine, who is also a member of the Marine Corps League, who was also one of Dennis's Fire Team Leaders in Desert Storm.

Speaking on behalf of the Department of Iowa, they would like to have a seat at the table with the Veterans Commission.

Chairperson Ledvina explained that there would have to be a change of the Iowa Code to add a seat with the Commission. An application would then need to be submitted to the Governor's office with the approval with the Association that you represent and then the Governor would appoint someone from your organization to be on the Commission. Commissioner Van Horn commented that two years ago, they had tried to get representation passed but it was attached to a bill that did not pass. It was recommended to add it to Iowa Code, Section 35, as an Amendment to the Veterans Definition.

Commandant Jacobus spoke on different Veteran organizations that have expressed interest on having a seat on the Commission. We should consider what interests are being represented by the requesting organization that are not already represented by other organizations on the Commission.

Motion to Approve

1st Chair McMartin made a motion to propose that the Marine Corps League be added to the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs. Seconded by Commissioner Van Horn. Motion approved unanimously.

Commissioner Mosby brought up that the Committees need to be revisited. There needs to be action on this. Chair Ledvina will email out the lists again with the recommendations by Commandant Jacobus, which are the **Veterans Mental Health Suicide Prevention Committee**, and **Homeless Veterans Committee**. The committee member lists need to be sent to Commandant Jacobus so he knows who to contact with concerns.

Public Comments

Commissioner Van Horn stated that there will be a celebration of life for a Vietnam Veteran on January 12, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the AMVETS Post 2, 2818 5th Ave, Des Moines. The Veteran has one sister from Colorado that will be attending. She will be escorted by a caregiver accompanying her Thursday night and will fly back out Saturday morning. The Veteran served two tours in Vietnam and was 100% service connected. The Auxiliary is hosting a luncheon immediately following. The Marine Corps League will be there to render military rites. The Army will be there to fold the flag.

Next Commission Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 3, 2024, 10:00 a.m., at the Iowa Veterans Home, Whitehill Auditorium, 1301 Summit Street, Marshalltown, Iowa. The July Commission meeting will be moved from July 3, 2024, to July 10, 2024.

Adjournment

Commissioner Wattnem motioned to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Mosby. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

See below for attachments:

Attachment A – C, Joe Murphy Presentation

Attachment D – G, Ray Meylor and Scott Johnson Presentation

Attachment H, Nathan Wilson Presentation

Attachment A – Joe Murphy Presentation

A Quest for Recognition:

Bill Albracht and the Miraculous Escape from Firebase Kate

BY ARTHUR G. SHARP – The VVA Veteran Online

As U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers Capt. William Albracht and Sgt. Daniel Pierelli walked the perimeter of Firebase Kate on October 28, 1969, they realized just how precarious their situation was. Albracht and Pierelli, who were responsible for the safety of about 150 personnel on the poorly defended hill, knew they had three choices: die, be captured, or escape. They chose the last, but not until November 1, when they determined they could no longer defend the firebase.

By late October about five thousand NVA troops had surrounded the firebase located in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam near the Cambodian border. Their mission was to eliminate Kate, which had been established in September 1969 to interdict NVA movements along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and restrict the enemy's ability to attack Special Forces camps in the area. After accomplishing that, the NVA's plan was to capture the city of Ban Me Thuot, effectively cutting South Vietnam in half.

This was a momentous period in Albracht's life: The 21-year-old was the youngest captain in Special Forces, and this was his first time in combat. Kate was his first command. It would be a memorable one.

Kate's location was problem No.1 for Albracht. It was set on a hilltop, but the NVA had control of the nearby road and could fire with impunity from the nearby "neutral" country of Cambodia. The only way to move supplies and personnel on and off the base was by helicopter. A variety of aircraft such as fighter-bombers, observation planes, and heavily armed Spooky gunships and Shadows complemented the choppers and protected the troops on Kate. Despite all that support, Albracht knew it was not enough.

Pierelli, a weapons specialist and Special Forces advisor to the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) Company at Trang Phuoc-Ban Don, arrived on Kate first, on October 27. What he saw caught him by surprise. The NVA had not yet attacked Kate, so the troops were more interested in playing volleyball and relaxing than in setting up defensive positions. That was the first thing he and Albracht addressed the next day when the captain arrived.

Albracht and Pierelli immediately developed a plan to increase patrols around Kate, allowing them to gain badly needed intelligence on the NVA in the area. This would also allow them to strengthen their defenses. They were just in time.

The NVA began its siege of Kate in earnest on the night of October 28 when a CIDG patrol ran into the forward elements of an NVA regiment. NVA troops, who outnumbered Kate's defenders by about forty to one, launched their first assault at about 11:30 the next morning. The number of assaults increased as the days went by. NVA troops attacked with small arms fire, mortars, artillery, and B-40 rockets. Chaos reigned as mortar rounds, rocket, and artillery shells rained down on the base day and night. They attacked with small-arms fire from all directions, but Kate's defenders drove them off. Albracht and Pierelli assessed their situation quickly. They had at their disposal two Vietnamese Special Forces members, one Camp Strike Force company of about one hundred men, sixteen members from a relieved company who had stayed behind, a forty-man Camp Strike Force platoon from Detachment A-236 at Bu Prang, and the twenty-seven or so artillerymen from 1/92nd and 5/27th Artillery under operational control of 5/22nd Artillery. The artillerymen had only one 105mm and two 155mm howitzers in their arsenal.

Most of the troops were Montagnards from Camps A-233 and A-236 who provided security for the artillerymen.

The attacks were not as bad at night, as American Spooky gunships forced NVA troops to keep their heads down. But the enemy was wearing down Kate's defenders with its ferocious attacks at dawn and dusk when the gunships arrived and departed.

Albracht's troops suffered a growing number of deaths and injuries. Morale plummeted as food, water, ammo, and medical supplies dwindled drastically. Albracht had taken shrapnel in his arm on October 29 as he directed a medevac helicopter attempting to land at the firebase. He was given the opportunity to leave with the other wounded, but refused—choosing to stay at Kate to lead the remaining besieged troops.

As the situation on the ground became more desperate, Air Force Capt. Al Dykes, the navigator on a Spooky gunship, call sign Spooky 41, told Albracht that Kate was receiving more enemy fire than any other American outpost in South Vietnam. That was not exactly what Albracht wanted to hear. He realized that Kate no longer could defend itself. To make matters worse, the ARVN commander refused Albracht's request for aid. So Albracht radioed Special Forces Operations and requested permission to escape. Albracht was told by Special Forces commanders to get his men out of Kate any way he could.

Daring helicopter pilots delivered supplies and evacuated wounded troops. But as the NVA's relentless attacks continued, it became more dangerous for them to fly near the base. By November 1 the NVA artillery had the base zeroed in and began pounding it with an ever-increasing number of rounds, turning Kate into what Albracht described as "an impact area, and no longer a functioning firebase." As a result, helicopter support ended. That made the troops even more aware of their vulnerability and their mortality. On the morning of November 1 Albracht decided it was time to evacuate.

He and Pierelli drew up an escape-and-evasion plan, arranged for gunships to protect them as they left Kate, and explained carefully to the troops how they would link up with a Special Forces Mike Force detachment waiting for them in a concealed position about three miles away. Then they spiked their gun tubes and destroyed the artillery ammunition, records, code books, and anything else the NVA might find useful.

No American soldiers were left at Kate. Albracht left the fate of the Montagnard dead to the tribal elders, who, realizing how dangerous the situation was, decided to leave them at Kate.

Albracht was extremely apprehensive about the escape. He and Pierelli would be leading about 150 men who had little or no infantry training into pitch-black jungle at night. In his mind they were dead men walking. He knew that the NVA would be looking for them and would not be taking any prisoners.

Although suffering from sleep deprivation from the five-day siege and also suffering from his wound, at about 10:00 p.m. Albracht commanded the troops to move out. Immediately, the NVA lit the area with illumination flares as the men fled down the North Slope, through a small gap in the wood line, and up the side of Ambush Hill.

The NVA apparently knew which way Albracht's troops were going and set up an ambush to intercept them. But luck was with them. CIDG forces knew about the ambush, so they deviated from the escape route, which saved many lives. About half of the Montagnards and one artilleryman went in the other direction and made their way safely to the Special Forces camp at Bu Prang. Only one soldier, West Virginian Michael Norton, was lost in the dense jungle and killed by the NVA. His body was never recovered.

NVA troops were everywhere. For all Albracht knew, he was walking into one of their encampments. He repeated his question several times as he approached the wood line nearly a hundred yards from where the men of Kate lay hidden in the jungle. Finally, SFC Lowell Stevens, the Mike Force ground commander, grabbed Albracht's arm and told him to get the rest of his troops, as they had to evacuate immediately.

Miraculously, Albracht wound up crossing the open field three times, on each occasion exposing himself to the enemy, to make sure his men were safe. It was 3:00 a.m. on November 2—five hours after the withdrawal had begun—when the men of Kate linked up with the Special Forces Mike Force. In what seemed like an eternity, Albracht and his troops had traveled only two-and-a-half miles. It took them eight more hours to reach safety at the Special Forces camp at Bu Prang. Many of the men would later say that they owed their lives to Capt. William Albracht and Sgt. Daniel Pierelli. They were no longer dead men walking.

AFTER THE WAR

After Albracht returned to the United States, he completed a quarter-century career with the U.S. Secret Service. During that time he guarded five American presidents and many other high-ranking officials. He has been an active life member of VVA since the mid-1990s. After returning to his hometown of Rock Island, Illinois, in 2005, he served on the board of directors of Quad Cities Chapter 299 for five years and was its president for two terms. In addition, he was the chapter's secretary for two years and acted as chair, co-chair, and member of many committees.

Bill Albracht moved back to Washington, D.C., but he retained his membership in Chapter 299. Being involved with VVA activities made it impossible for him to forget Firebase Kate entirely. That was also true for many of the men who had served with him there. Many chafed that Albracht had never received any special recognition for his role in leading the escape that saved their lives. Ironically, he had received a Silver Star, but for actions during an NVA assault on the camp at Bu Prang on November 2, the same day that he and his men from Kate arrived there.

Joe Murphy, a Vietnam veteran and a friend of Bill Albracht, told the story of Firebase Kate to Ken Moffett, a Vietnam veteran and Chapter 299 member who was working on veterans' issues for U.S. Rep. Bobby Schilling of Illinois. After consulting with several other congressional offices and conducting a thorough investigation of what happened at Kate, Shilling's office submitted a recommendation to the U.S. Army Human Resources Command at Fort Knox on July 20, 2011, that Albracht be awarded the Medal of Honor.

The 165 pages of documents that Moffett put together contained eyewitness statements from the men who survived the siege at Kate, after-action reports, maps, photos of Kate before and after the siege, and tapes of the radio traffic between Albracht and Al Dykes (the Spooky gunship navigator) recorded during the siege and evacuation of Kate. "What Albracht did at Kate is the kind of stuff guys get recommended for the Medal of Honor," a congressional aide who had worked on other MOH recommendations told Moffett.

Three paragraphs in the document are particularly telling:

"Every U.S. soldier who survived the siege of Kate received an award for valor except Captain Albracht. The commanding general of the II Corps Tactical Zone in Ban Me Thuot had arranged a ceremony to present an Impact Award to Captain Albracht, and had dispatched a helicopter to the Special Forces camp at Bu Prang to transport him to the ceremony despite the high winds that had grounded all other helicopters.

“As this helicopter landed at Bu Prang and the captain was preparing to board it, he learned that four U.S. soldiers of a Mobile Strike Force had been gravely wounded in recent firefights around Bu Prang but could not be airlifted by medevacs because of the high winds.

“Without hesitation, Captain Albracht asked his pilots to take the wounded with him and transport them before taking him to Ban Me Thuot. By the time the helicopter had delivered the wounded to a distant field hospital and brought the captain to Ban Me Thuot for the ceremony, the commanding general had already departed. The captain missed the award ceremony, which was never rescheduled.”

Forty-three years later Albracht received long-awaited recognition for his valor and leadership at Kate. But it was not the Medal of Honor his troops had sought. The requested award was downgraded to a Silver Star. William Albracht accepted the Silver Star—his third—at a ceremony at the Rock Island Arsenal, Ill., on December 15, 2012 (see photo above).

His supporters, however, are not satisfied. They have vowed to ask for a review of the request for the Medal of Honor. If they demonstrate the same tenacity Bill Albracht displayed at Firebase Kate, they may get their wish. Albracht may yet add the Medal of Honor to his collection of awards that also includes three Silver Stars, three Purple Hearts, five Bronze Stars (three for valor), two Air Medals (one for valor), and an Army Commendation Medal (for valor).

Editor’s Note: Reginald Brockwell, an artillery officer in Vietnam who was in charge of setting up firebases, including Kate, and Ken Moffett contributed to this article.

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Attachment B – Joe Murphy Presentation

Executive Summary of Firebase Kate and CPT Albracht's Valorous Leadership

Few American soldiers have fought under such trying conditions while displaying such constant and consistent valor as did Special Forces Captain William L. Albracht, then 21 and the youngest US Army captain in Vietnam.

From 28 October through 2 November 1969, he served on a remote outpost known as Firebase Kate. Hereafter, simply referred to as Kate. There and in nearby jungles, Albracht distinguished himself again and again with acts of selfless courage extending far above and beyond the call of duty.

Kate was established in September 1969. The base was nine kilometers east-southeast of Special Forces Camp A236 at Bu Prang, in South Vietnam's Central Highlands, three kilometers (less than 2 miles) from Cambodia.

Captain Albracht arrived on the afternoon of 28 October 1969 to serve as de facto commander of a Civilian Irregular Defense Group force of 132 Montagnards, (natives indigenous to the Central Highlands of South Vietnam).

US personnel consisted of CPT Albracht, one Special Forces sergeant and 27 US artillerymen with two 155mm and one 105mm howitzers.

Several other hilltops at elevations greater than Kate's were within range from enemy rockets, mortars and small arms.

Consequently, all movement between bunkers, gun revetments and fighting positions were exposed to enemy observation and fire.

After inspecting Kate's defenses with Special Forces Sergeant Daniel Pierelli, who had himself arrived only a day earlier, Albracht was appalled. Albracht ordered an immediate effort to shore-up Kate's defenses.

On 28 October, the North Vietnamese Army's 28th and 66th infantry Regiments, supported by the 40th Artillery Regiment and the K394 Artillery [Anti-Aircraft] Battalion—some 5- 6,000 troops in all—began moving across the Cambodian border to take up positions around Kate.

Mel Gibson film, *We Were soldiers once and Young*. This was the same unit that COL Moore fought in the Ia Drang Valley. They were the elite NVA regiment known as Ho Chi Mine's own.

This was the initial phase of a North Vietnamese strategic plan to capture the Bu Prang Special Forces camp.

Their plan was to seize the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot, and take possession and control of Dak Lak province, effectively cutting South Vietnam in half; Kate was the next to the last obstacle in this strategy.

At about 2330 hours, an element of North Vietnamese infantry attacked a listening post on a forested knob dubbed Ambush Hill about 100 meters north of Kate's perimeter.

After returning fire, the six Montagnards defenders made an orderly withdrawal under covering artillery fire to the comparative safety within Kate's perimeter.

On 29 October a recoilless rifle and mortar barrage damaged two of the howitzers and disabled the third.

One artillery officer and several US and Montagnard troops were wounded in this attack.

After assessing damage, and not knowing the size or disposition of his enemy, Captain Albracht led a recon patrol of some 20 Montagnard troops to locate the enemy force and assess its size and capabilities.

After finding blood trails and a NVA helmet near the former listing post, they descended the steep slope through waist-high grass. Almost immediately, the enemy concealed in the jungle below opened fire with machine guns and rifles.

Under heavy fire, Albracht ordered his patrol to low-crawl back to the cover of a low berm some 30 meters uphill, where he learned that three of his men were wounded.

Albracht pulled his men into staggered ranks and assaulted the ambushers. Upon reaching the tree line, however, the pilot of a nearby unarmed US Army helicopter warned that he had observed a massive enemy force moving to flank the patrol. Albracht immediately pulled everyone back to the berm and radioed for air support.

Told that one of his men was missing, Albracht returned to the ambush site to search for the missing trooper, whom he found wounded and unconscious in the tall grass.

Disregarding his own safety while under intense fire from enemy assault rifles, machine guns, and rocket propelled grenades; Albracht hoisted the trooper across his shoulders and carried him to cover.

The pilot of a US Army observation aircraft then advised Albracht that a much larger enemy force was maneuvering to block his return to Kate.

Learning that air support would not be available for at least twenty minutes, Albracht led his patrol, carrying their wounded, on a forced march back to Kate, arriving less than two minutes before the enemy.

Within hours, the enemy had sealed off all approaches to Kate, and unleashed a barrage of small arms, mortars, recoilless rifles and rockets.

Albracht requested helicopters to evacuate his wounded. As the Dust Off Medevac Chopper approached, Kate was blanketed with air-burst flying explosives. To direct the approaching helicopter, Albracht took up a position in plain view of the enemy.

Moments later, he observed the launch of an enemy rocket from a nearby hillside and instantly realized that it and the helicopter would arrive simultaneously.

Completely disregarding his own safety, he stood his ground while frantically waving off the approaching aircraft.

At the last possible moment, the helicopter veered away to safety. The rocket exploded near Albracht, sending shrapnel through his left arm.

Albracht ran to the Fire Direction Center bunker, where his wound was bandaged. Refusing evacuation to safety, he immediately resumed his duties.

When the barrage ended, the enemy launched a ground attack. Albracht suspected that this was only a prelude to a much larger attack, and requested reinforcements.

A second company of Montagnards was dispatched on helicopters, but fierce enemy ground fire, augmented by 37mm anti-aircraft guns, drove them away.

After three attempts over several hours, one platoon of reinforcements landed on Kate. Subsequent attempts to land reinforcements were foiled by fierce ground fire.

Albracht's long-delayed air support arrived shortly afterward. Directed by a USAF Forward Air Controller (FAC), two flights of attack aircraft delivered bombs, napalm and rockets on the nearby heights.

Despite spectacular explosions, this ordnance was of little value in stopping or slowing the enemy, because thick jungle foliage prevented the FAC from locating significant targets.

Albracht left cover and moved to a location from which he could observe the enemy. Ignoring intense enemy fire, he fired tracer rounds at targets to guide the FAC, who then fired a smoke rocket as an aiming point for attack aircraft.

Each time he left cover to direct the FAC, Albracht exposed himself to exponentially greater small arms and rocket fire. Despite the increasing hazard, Albracht repeated this tactic again and again over the next four days, each time at great personal risk, but usually to good effect against the enemy.

Artillerymen on Kate were not trained in infantry tactics. During five days of fighting on Kate, all but a handful of artillerymen remained in their bunkers.

Consequently, when Albracht tried to draw fire away from incoming resupply and Medevac helicopters, he could find only four American artillerymen to help.

With these few men, Albracht took up a partially exposed position and engaged the enemy with rifle fire while resupply and Medevac helicopters made their final approaches.

The enemy responded with recoilless rifle fire that repeatedly struck the sandbags behind which he crouched, Albracht remained in this dangerously exposed position firing his weapon at enemy machine guns until the resupply was completed.

By the afternoon of October 31, the enemy began firing heavy artillery from Camp Le Rolland, a Cambodian Army base.

A US airstrike temporarily halted this barrage, but not before several of Kate's Montagnard defenders were wounded or killed.

As a Medevac helicopter approached and enemy ground fire increased, Albracht noted that the partial collapse of a nearby bunker left the wounded exposed to enemy fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, Albracht shielded these wounded men with his own body until they were safely evacuated.

Later that day, a massive assault by some 500 enemy infantrymen breached Kate's wire on its southern end. Leaving cover, Albracht rushed to the breach, where he led a counterattack, engaging the enemy at close quarters and driving them from Kate's trenches.

By this time, several resupply and gunship helicopters had been damaged by ground fire, one had been destroyed with the loss of all aboard.

Resupply by helicopter was then restricted to the hours of darkness; a day later it was all but ended except for emergencies.

One such emergency was declared after Kate's garrison had been without water for over 24 hours.

When water was finally delivered by chopper, the thirst crazed men mobbed the water buffalo. Albracht seeing the confusion, organized an orderly resupply, one man from a squad at a time to refill canteens.

At first light on the next day, 31 October, Kate was rocked by the heaviest artillery barrage it had thus far experienced, followed by a battalion-sized infantry assault. His ammunition all but exhausted and convinced that Kate was in imminent danger of being overrun, Captain Albracht requested a danger close B-52 strike.

At 1011 that morning, 90 tons of high explosive bombs fell just outside Kate's perimeter, so close that one Montagnard defender was killed by shrapnel, and two were injured.

This bombing had little effect on the enemy, within ten minutes of the strike, enemy mortar and rocket fire resumed with renewed vigor.

On 1 November 1969, a USAF aircraft intercepted an encrypted order from the North Vietnamese Army's B3 Front to the commanders of the 66th and 28th Regiments: They were to overcome all resistance and take Firebase Kate immediately. They were to take no prisoners!

By noon that day, NVA assaults on Kate had grown in both frequency and magnitude; pilots of US Army gunships reported seeing "hundreds" of enemy troops pouring from the jungle to assault the firebase.

Almost out of ammunition, with little water remaining, and with no functioning artillery, Albracht repeatedly requested reinforcements. While the US Fourth Infantry Division and the ARVN 23rd Infantry Division were within striking distance of Kate, for reasons never disclosed to Captain Albracht, neither command responded with a relief force.

To this day, the reason to abandon CPT Albracht and his men on Kate remains a mystery.

In late afternoon, Albracht received an encrypted message that a reinforced battalion from Detachment B20 of the II Corps Mobile Strike Force, also known as the Mike Force, would make an air assault landing near Kate, and then fight its way into the firebase perimeter.

Ferocious enemy fire prevented this air assault. Instead, two of the five Mike Force companies landed several kilometers from Kate and were immediately engaged by a numerically superior enemy force that caused them to break contact and withdraw even farther from Kate.

Albracht was informed that the Mike Force would dispatch a platoon-sized element to position itself near Kate shortly after full darkness. After repeated requests to abandon Kate were denied, Albracht was finally allowed to abandon the firebase and lead his men to rendezvous with the Mike Force, which would guide the garrison to the remainder of the rescue force.

A USAF Spooky or Shadow gunship would be on station to support this evacuation.

After destroying classified documents, heavy equipment and radios, and spiking the inoperable guns, at 2000 hours, Albracht assembled his men on the north end of the base.

He then learned that the USAF gunship had aborted its mission due to mechanical issues. Its replacement aircraft was also aborted for mechanical reasons.

There would be no air support to cover a withdrawal from Kate. CPT Albracht and his men were on their own.

Albracht ran to Kate's south end to confirm that no one had been left behind. There he heard the enemy snipping wire and climbing the steep slope.

Before he could return to his men, the enemy walked mortars the length of the firebase, followed by illumination rounds.

Albracht dashed back to the north end and put his men into a single file to facilitate entering the perimeter of the Mike Force element that he expected to find in the jungle below.

At 2030 hrs. he ordered the column forward. After a few steps, the point man froze, fearing to enter a narrow gap in the jungle that was a natural ambush site. Without hesitation, Albracht took the point and moved forward into the darkness. His men followed.

As the column entered the jungle, an NVA machinegun opened fire, scattering the column. Below the tree line, the jungle was pitted with bomb and shell craters and littered with scattered trees, the men became disoriented.

Albracht and Special Forces Sgt. Dan Pierelli rushed to locate his scattered troops and reform the column at the edge of the jungle. Then they followed him into the pitch blackness of the jungle where Albracht expected to make contact with the rescue force element.

Only then did Albracht learn that no Mike Force element had been sent forward; He would have to find his own way to them through the dense, enemy-infested jungle. With only an approximation of the rescue force's location, a map and a compass, Albracht would have to evade the enemy while navigating the dark jungle by dead reckoning.

Despite his wound and exhaustion, Albracht led his column deeper into the jungle. After several minutes, he halted them to listen; and almost immediately heard approaching footfalls of the enemy.

Signaling his men to go prone, they waited several minutes in the darkness as a large enemy force rushed by on a hidden path only a few meters away. When it was safe, Albracht got his men up and moving.

For three hours, Albracht led the column through the jungle. Albracht halted the column and ventured alone into the open, looking for a moonlit-terrain feature that could help confirm his dead reckoning.

Failing to find anything useful, he returned to his men and they continued for another two hours.

Reaching a large clearing about the size of a football field, surrounded by jungle and filled with waist high grass; Albracht believed that the rescue force was nearby. Then he heard the faint, but unmistakable sound of metal on metal coming from the opposite tree line.

Albracht radioed the Mike Force for confirmation of their position. Fearing that he might have been captured and compromised, the task force commander insisted that Albracht send a man across the clearing, which offered neither cover nor concealment—a perfect killing zone.

If the enemy was there, moving through this space was an invitation to swift and certain death. Albracht ordered his men to remain concealed while he alone went forward.

In an incredible act of courage, he advanced alone across the hundred-meter clearing, calling again and again in a calm voice, "I am an American. Are you the Mike Force?" There was no response, however, and he did not know what awaited him until he had crossed the clearing and encountered a Mike Force soldier.

Exposing himself to possible death a second time, Captain Albracht returned across the clearing to brief his troops, then lead them into the Mike Force perimeter, his third crossing.

Five hours later, the combined force reached the relative safety of a Special Forces camp at Bu Prang.

Confirmed by US Army sources, this concluded the Vietnam War's first and only intact unit escape through enemy-held territory by an encircled US or Allied force.

Captain Albracht's unwavering valor, professionalism, leadership and willingness to sacrifice his life for the sake of his men were in keeping with the highest traditions of the US Army, and will forever reflect great credit upon both him and his country.

From the beginning of the Escape and Evasion at 2030 hrs to finally reaching the relative safety of the Special Forces camp at Bu Prang at 1130 hrs the next day, CPT Albracht led his men on a 15 ½ hour perilous journey through 12 circuitous miles of triple canopy jungle, stalked by a tenacious enemy who were not talking prisoners.

Attachment C – Joe Murphy Presentation



Captain John Kerr Support Letter.pdf

To Whom It May Concern:

11 December 2014

SUBJECT: Support for the upgrade from the Silver Star Medal to Medal of Honor, with respect to actions of Special Forces Captain William L. Albracht, during the siege of Fire Base Kate, Republic of Vietnam, 28 October to 2 November, 1969.

After being interviewed for the soon to be released book on the siege of Firebase Kate: *Abandoned in Hell: The Fight for Vietnam's Firebase Kate*, and the documentary film on the siege which is being produced, my recollections have become clearer and more focused with respect to the events of that time. Therefore, I would respectfully like to resubmit this statement in support of the upgrade from the Silver Star Medal to Medal of Honor, for Special Forces Captain William L. Albracht.

I, John Kerr, was one of two Artillery Lieutenants at Fire Base Kate, which was located near the Cambodian border in the central highlands of Southern II Corps in South Vietnam. Capt. Albracht led a security force of about 120 indigenous soldiers, protecting 28 American Artillerymen and their three howitzers. Fire Base Kate was on a small tree-less, grass-covered hilltop, surrounded by dense jungle, with no roads in or out of the area, reachable only by foot or helicopter.

By 28 October 1969, two regiments of the North Vietnamese Army had moved into the area. Capt. Albracht's security forces made contact with the enemy that night, unaware of how large the NVA forces were. Later we were to ascertain that the force numbered between 5,000 and 6,000 men. Clearly we were vastly outnumbered and outgunned.

In the pre-dawn hours of 29 October, a massive and relentless rocket and mortar attack inundated the firebase wounding several soldiers and eventually disabling all three howitzers, which meant that Firebase Kate was now just an open target for the NVA gunners. Capt. Albracht responded to this bombardment by immediately preparing his security forces for an expected ground attack when the barrage stopped. While leading his forces in repelling numerous subsequent ground attacks, and without regard to his own safety or welfare, Capt. Albracht frequently exposed himself to enemy fire in order to get a better view of the enemy's firing positions.

By standing in the open, on the steep eastern slope of the hilltop firebase, and without the benefit of cover or concealment, Capt. Albracht directed the fighter jets by hand-held radio to drop their bombs on the high ridge to the east, and in the ravine directly below the firebase. At times, the bombs fell less than 100 yards from our position. I recall the ground shook so hard it was difficult to stand, but it was the only way to keep the NVA from over-running the firebase. I'm still amazed to this day, at Capt. Albracht's ability to avoid being hit by rifle or rocket fire while being so exposed. But his actions were all that kept us from being overrun.

The other Artillery Lieutenant had been wounded and evacuated earlier, leaving me and Capt. Albracht as the only officers at Kate. I was not Infantry trained, so there was little I could do to help, leaving Capt. Albracht as our only hope. Being outnumbered 40 to 1, we were on open, exposed ground, trying to defend against an enemy hiding in the jungle and pouring down every conceivable type of ordnance at their disposal.

Since we were surrounded, the relentless ground attacks often came from different directions. As a result, Capt. Albracht had to constantly be on the move, which once again meant exposing himself to enemy fire, so he could accurately shift manpower to fill holes in the perimeter to shore up the defenses of the firebase. Capt. Albracht continued to lead the fight in this manner for the rest of the siege of Kate.

At night Capt. Albracht used strobe lights to direct high-flying Spooky gunships to suppress the enemy ground attacks. But at daybreak, the rocket, mortar, and following ground attacks resumed, continuing throughout the day.

During one of the pre-dawn mortar attacks, a replacement Artillery Lieutenant who arrived the day before was killed. It was extremely dangerous for helicopters to land, a few tried, but after so many were shot down, the order was given to cease any additional flights into the firebase.

I was wounded on 30 Oct. 1969. Capt. Albracht requested immediate, emergency medevac for me and other wounded. He and his security team secured and guarded a small area at the north end of the firebase the next morning so a helicopter could get me and the other wounded out. It was during the landing of this medevac helicopter that Capt. Albracht was wounded by rocket fire after exposing himself in order to wave off the helicopter which was in danger of being hit by an inbound rocket.

However, he refused to be medevaced, and since he was the only Infantry officer at the firebase, everyone felt a sense of relief knowing that he was still in charge of a most desperate situation. It was also at this time that Capt. Albracht shielded some of the wounded who were lying on the ground with his own body to prevent any additional wounds to them.

Thanks to Capt. Albracht, the effort was successful and the wounded, including me, were able to escape without any further injuries. Capt. Albracht truly saved the lives of not only the wounded, but the crew of the helicopter by waving them off from a nearly direct rocket hit.

I was not at the firebase for the remainder of my statement. However, I was told this account by several of the men, including an officer who survived the NVA onslaught, and the escape to the Special Forces camp at Bu Prang: On 31 October 1969, the situation continued to deteriorate to an untenable level.

With enemy artillery shelling the firebase from Cambodia with impunity and the nonstop ground attacks, the sandbag covered foxholes offered little protection. Although wounded, Capt. Albracht, after a 5 day siege, deprived of sleep, with little food, almost no water or ammunition, continued to lead the defense of the firebase. By doing so, he increased the morale of the men and bolstered their spirits, giving them the will to fight against the incredible odds of their survival.

By 1 Nov. the situation was truly desperate, and Firebase Kate was now indefensible. The battle had raged for five days and it was clear that it was only a matter of time until the firebase would be overrun by the much larger enemy force; every U.S. soldier, as well as all the indigenous personnel would be killed. There would be no prisoners!

Although physically and mentally exhausted, Capt. Albracht boldly planned and executed a rare and dangerous, night escape and evasion of the 150 U.S. and Allied personnel, through enemy lines. After hours of evading the NVA forces in the pitch dark and dense jungle, Capt. Albracht eventually met up with a Mobile Strike Force several miles away.

Some, but not all, of the above is in the Silver Star award documentation, but the five day duration, the overwhelming odds, and the desperation of the situation warrant nothing less than the Medal of Honor for Capt. Albracht's actions.

Words like "gallantry in action", "disregard for personal safety", "selfless heroic actions", "and exceptional leadership", etc. all apply. But the bottom line is that the only reason most of the American Artillerymen and the Allied soldiers survived and are alive today, is because of Capt. Albracht's fight or die bravery, his physical and mental endurance, and his unwavering, selfless devotion to duty.

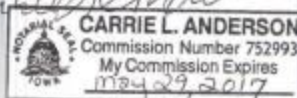
John D. Kerr

John D. Kerr: Captain, United States Army

12-12-14

State of Iowa
County of Linn
Signed before me on this 12th day
of December 2014

Carrie L. Anderson 12/12/14



Attachment D – Ray Meylor and Scott Johnson Presentation
Partnership brings new solution to watershed mitigation

ANKENY, Iowa — Ray Meylor has a vision, an idea of how Iowa could solve many of its water quality problems and revitalize rural areas at the same time. And he approaches the idea with a missionary's zeal.

"I think this is an economic solution for an ecological problem," Meylor says as he stands in the middle of his 10-acre watershed mitigation farm, also known as Cherry Glen Farm.

The idea is simple and complicated at the same time. Meylor, a chiropractor by trade, is a believer in healthy diets and healthy environments. As Iowa and other agricultural states struggled with issues related to agricultural runoff and water quality, he tried to think outside the box.

In 2009, Iowa put together a Rebuild Iowa Office plan to enhance productive lands. Meyer looked at that and came up with a proposal to buy a few acres of land at the bottom of a small watershed. That land likely would be less productive and expensive than most of the rest of the farm above it. He would then build retention ponds and other watershed structures.

Those actions would reduce runoff into the river. He could then use the water to irrigate horticultural crops and make a living in that area. In theory, both he and the farmer who sold him the land would benefit. What's more, the community would benefit both from cleaner water but also by increased economic activity. Best of all, the idea is one that he thinks could be replicated in thousands of locations.

"I'm very impressed with how this is a very thoughtful way you can have sustainable agriculture," says Dr. Cornelia Flora, professor emeritus of rural sociology at Iowa State University. She says a key to Meylor's approach is that it is not an attack on conventional agriculture but rather that it provides a method that allows different types of agriculture to work side-by-side to improve both the environment and the rural economy. "I'm very enthusiastic about it," she says.

At Cherry Glen Farm, Meylor is doing a lot of different things and working with a lot of different people. His 10-acre operation includes a retention pond that is used to irrigate crops and clean water than comes out of tile lines and fields above him in the watershed. With that water, which he says includes many nutrients which ran off of other farmland, he is growing fruits and vegetables. He has planted apple and chestnut trees. He has bee hives and sells honey. He is even cultivating mushrooms.

In addition, he says the project is improving soil quality and building topsoil. It has clearly reduced erosion coming off his land, and he says the water coming off his farm is much cleaner than the water that comes onto it.

"My discharge is slow and clean," he says. But there is more. He is working with FFA chapters on educational programs. He is talking to university researchers. And he is working with a variety of officials about ways to re-create similar mini-farms all over the state. "You could create thousands of these," he says.

For the farmers who are dealing with water quality issues, Meylor says selling a few acres to a person or family to build this type of farm would be more economical than spending money to build bio-reactors or conservation structures. And he says it would could bring young families to those rural areas and establish sources for fresh fruits and vegetables as well. In time those 10-acre farmers may look to expand and bring another generation of farmers to the area.

Meylor, an Army veteran, is working with veterans groups, as well as agricultural groups and educational groups, to promote his idea.

Ray Grassroots

"Procurement"

A Quarterly Newsletter from
Iowa Farmers Union

Spring 2019

IFU Receives Funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to Strengthen Relationships between Children and Local Food

When most people think of children eating local foods, the images that come to mind are of kids getting their hands dirty in the garden or a family strolling through a farmers market on the weekend. What most people don't picture is the lunch line at a school cafeteria. But what if we could change that? Many children eat one or more meals a day at schools and childcare centers. What if we could make this a place where they regularly consume fresh, healthy, local food?

Recently, IFU received \$325,000 in funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to embark on a new project linking Early Care and Education (ECE) sites to local food. This project is an exciting opportunity for IFU to create and strengthen bonds with our partners on the statewide Farm to ECE Coalition, including the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children, Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach's Local Foods program. The overarching goal: to create positive changes in our food system that support small producers, create better access and distribution of local food, and ultimately provide healthier meals for all children in Iowa, especially for vulnerable or disadvantaged populations.

This is slow, deliberate work, but is crucial for creating the type of broad changes we'd like to see in Iowa's food systems. IFU brings to the table our strong connections with the farm community and experience with advocacy and policy development. Our involvement in this project is twofold: we will be working to find solutions to procurement challenges, making local foods more available, and we will create a

set of policy recommendations that will make serving local foods more attractive and feasible. Over a two-year period, IFU will research programs and policies that are already in place, both in Iowa and other states, and conduct surveys and focus groups to identify needs and solutions. These findings will be used to create a set of policy recommendations that will help us advocate for laws that will support the systematic changes that will help Iowa's children and farmers thrive.

Many small programs already exist, such as school garden programs, but in order to see real change, action is needed on a larger scale. Instead of relying on individual teachers, caregivers, or schools to champion their own programs, we will work toward creating a better system to allow and encourage all ECE sites to integrate local foods into their regular food plan. One part of this is that systems need to be created so that anyone can easily access local foods. This means improving infrastructure to allow farmers to sell their produce to food hubs and co-ops who can then connect buyers to the produce they want in the quantities they need. It's one thing for an in-home daycare provider to procure food for 3-4 children, and an entirely different matter for a school system to procure even occasional local foods to feature when they are serving hundreds of children. The other half of the equation is creating policies that encourage schools to integrate local foods into their menu. One example of a successful policy addressing this problem is Michigan's incentive pilot program that provides up to ten cents per meal in matching funds

Continued on next page

www.iowafarmersunion.org

Attachment F - Ray Meylor and Scott Johnson Presentation

12.6.23 Winter Iowa Food System Coalition Meeting

NOTES

Meeting recording - passcode:st*Ce1Bt

Opening Mentimeter question

Updates - Part I

- Funding announcement
 - IFSC awarded \$350,000 from Builders Initiative
 - Builders has been active in Iowa supporting Farm to School efforts in SW Iowa through Center for Rural Affairs and food hub work through Practical Farmers of Iowa
 - Funding for 3 years to support ongoing Coalition coordination and convening
 - Iowa Farmers Union serving as applicant and will implement through IFSC Steering Committee
 - IFU also awarded \$5K mini-grant from the National Right to Food Community of Practice to support IFSC policy advocacy efforts (IFU is fiscal agent).

Meeting Slides

Plan overview - **slides #6-18**

Evaluation Introduction - **Sides # 19-23** - Arlene Enderton, ISU Food, Farm, and Enterprise Development

- Mapping out the evaluation plan
- Evaluator language and definitions

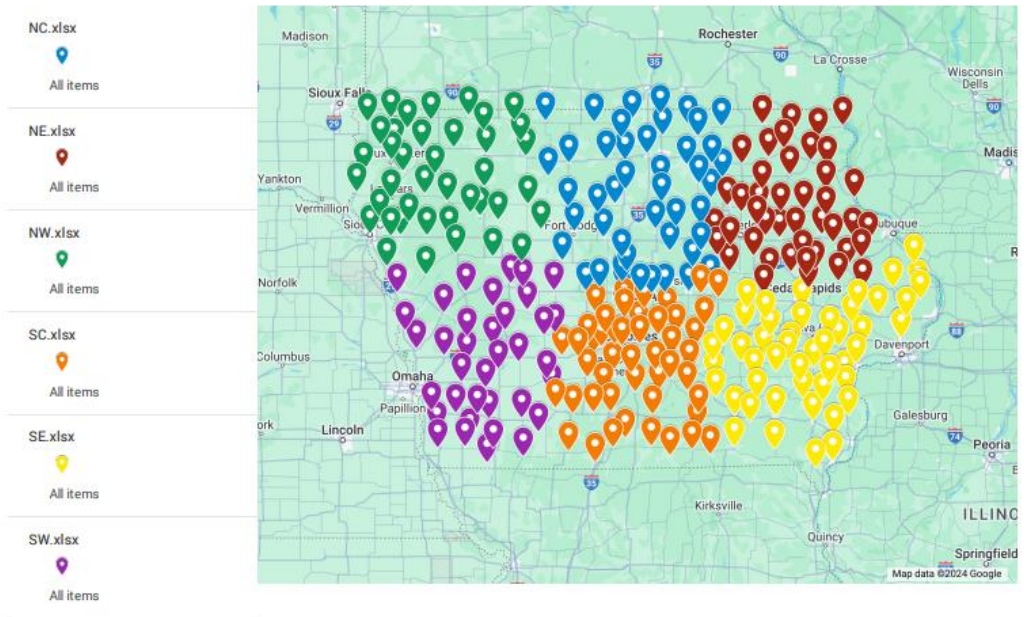
Developing Plans of Work for each team - **slide # 24** - Jodie Huergrich, UNI Local Food Program

Breakout rooms by Priority Team -

Agenda

1. Set team's regular meeting time for 2024
2. Capture comment, questions, or concerns re: the outlined evaluation plan
3. Work on 1 or more of these 3 tasks:
 - Confirm chapter/finalize writing of chapter
 - **Who? What? When?** For each activity, determine who will do what and by when. Use sticky notes or red font to write this information directly on the chart (*you will have been provided a link to your team's working document chart*)

Iowa FFA 2023-24



Iowa FFA Association
Grow Leaders, Build Communities and Strengthen Agriculture

First organized in 1929, Iowa FFA makes classroom instruction come to life through realistic, hands-on applications.

In response to expanded opportunities in agriculture, we prepare students for careers in business, marketing, science, communications, education, horticulture, production, natural resources, forestry and many other diverse fields.

235 unique careers!

With help from the Iowa Department of Education, Iowa FFA offers members in 254 student chapters and 105 alumni chapters valuable real-world agricultural information and opportunities.

Today, Iowa FFA includes 18,598 student members and 19,024 alumni members.

90% graduate members
11.3% middle school

78.7% high school
40.7% male
53.3% female

20% increase since 2012

MISSION
FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

MOTTO
Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve.

Ag Ed Return on Investment

Preparing Youth for the Future

The agricultural education program provides a well-rounded, practical approach to learning through: **classroom education**, **hands-on supervised agricultural career experiences** and **FFA**.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Agriculture adds \$39.7 billion in total value to Iowa's economy. (Source: USDA and Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers Ag Intel)
- 20% of residents in Iowa are employed by agriculture and agriculture-related industries. (Source: USDA and Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers Ag Intel)
- Graduates from degree programs in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment will comprise of approximately 61% of the new graduate pool. We can also expect a 2.6% increase in available opportunities in these fields. (Source: USDA and Purdue)

School-Based Ag Ed

Preparing students for careers in global agriculture, food, fibers and natural resource systems

ACQUIRE Academic instruction Interactive classroom and laboratory learning about ag science, business and technology	21,000 ag ed high school students in Iowa 12,000 ag ed middle school students in Iowa
ENGAGE Student leadership Personal growth and career preparation through FFA programs, competitions and activities	82% of ag ed students plan to pursue post-secondary education and/or enter the military upon graduation.
IMPLEMENT Supervised ag experience Opportunity to develop specific skills while an industry and learn cooperative workplace behavior	In 2022, Ag Ed Students in Iowa: - Earned \$37.3 million from SAE projects - Invested 4.8 million hours in SAE projects - Completed 3,600 SAE research projects

For more information, visit www.iowaffa.com.

Prepared by the Iowa FFA Association

Attachment H – Staffing and Finance Data, Nathan Wilson Presentation

Revenue Sources	FY 2024		FY 2023		FY 2022	
	Budget Projections	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
			Percentage			
VA Per Diem-Nursing	\$ 19,800,000	\$ 7,205,034.78	36%	\$ 6,648,157.82	\$ 6,475,361.11	
VA Per Diem-Dom	\$ 850,000	\$ 350,988.81	41%	\$ 296,246.83	\$ 280,957.91	
VA Drug Reimbursement	\$ 25,000	\$ 13,991.24	56%	\$ 10,067.60	\$ 2,681.23	
VA CBCC	\$ 10,000	\$ 4,378.95	44%	\$ 4,918.67	\$ 9,769.85	
VA State Home PL116.260 Funding Pmt #1		\$ 190,156.16		\$ 1,845,694.46		
Medicaid (Per diem, fees & medications)	\$ 27,900,000	\$ 8,896,072.73	32%	\$ 8,487,862.14	\$ 9,749,960.50	
3rd Party Insurance Companies	\$ 2,700,000	\$ 824,829.88	31%	\$ 770,379.70	\$ 793,240.48	
Resident Support	\$ 10,400,000	\$ 3,628,248.06	35%	\$ 3,313,228.49	\$ 3,514,025.62	
Reimbr for trainings, pharmacy, graves	\$ 3,500	\$ 543.69	16%	\$ 939.38	\$ 1,250.00	
Intra-State Transfers		\$ 34,423.75		\$ 8,167.40		
Fees & Licenses/Interest/Salvage/DOT/Routine Maintenance	\$ 159,022	\$ 155,610.55	98%	\$ 260,095.67	\$ 619,063.45	
Rental Income	\$ 20,000	\$ 4,900.00	24%	\$ 4,820.00	\$ 620.00	
Meal Tickets	\$ 50,000	\$ 71,734.62	143%	\$ 20,740.23	\$ 13,687.85	
	\$ 65,738,379	\$ 21,381,013.24		\$ 21,671,318.59	\$ 21,460,818.00	
Appropriation	\$ 7,115,335	\$ 7,115,335.00		\$ 7,131,552.00	\$ 7,131,552.00	
Carryforward from last FY	\$ 6,996,869	\$ 13,345,981.00		\$ 18,248,153.13	\$ 20,695,172.13	
	\$ 14,112,204	\$ 20,461,316.00		\$ 25,379,705.13	\$ 27,826,724.13	
Total Revenue Sources	\$ 79,850,583	\$ 41,842,329.24		\$ 47,051,023.72	\$ 49,287,542	
TOTAL Revenues Year to Date		\$ 28,496,348.24		\$ 28,802,870.59	\$ 28,592,370.00	

Notes:	1. IVH has revenues of \$28,266,424 & has spent \$29,983,031.
	2. IVH continues to evaluate all positions and expenditures to cut costs. Over the
	a. Over the last 3 years food prices have increased by 34%.
	b. IVH received a letter from Alliant Energy that they are seeking a 20% rate increase over the net 2 years. If they achieve the 20% rate increase that would equate to 200k increase in our energy costs.
	c. Other contributing factors are the high costs of medical supplies, fuel, and pharmaceuticals.
	d. High cost of attracting and retaining Licensed Staff.
	3. IVH was awarded a grant from the VA to pay 50% of our sign-on and retention bonuses.
	4. IVH continues to hire and train CNAs.

Donations as of 10/30	
Restricted Funds	\$180,857.86
Unrestricted Funds	\$110,099.46

Expenditures & Encumbrances	FY 2024		FY 2023		FY 2022	
	Year-To-Date	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
			Percentage			
Personnel	\$ 57,279,146	\$ 21,757,889	38%	\$ 21,599,518	\$ 22,517,863	
In State Travel	\$ 12,000	\$ 3,203	27%	\$ 3,081	\$ 743	
State Vehicle Operation	\$ 80,000	\$ 37,305	47%	\$ 35,140	\$ 26,305	
State Vehicle Depreciation	\$ 60,000	\$ 9,240	15%	\$ 18,736	\$ 18,624	
Out of State Travel	\$ 8,500	\$ 8,564	101%	\$ 4,629	\$ -	
Office Supplies	\$ 84,000	\$ 42,269	50%	\$ 37,108	\$ 33,556	
Facility Maintenance Supplies	\$ 209,500	\$ 53,999	26%	\$ 66,510	\$ 58,465	
Equipment Maintenance Supplies	\$ 344,000	\$ 131,765	38%	\$ 145,610	\$ 139,893	
Professional & Scientific Supplies	\$ 1,031,000	\$ 335,917	33%	\$ 273,464	\$ 314,545	
Housing & Subsistence Supplies	\$ 515,000	\$ 212,482	41%	\$ 184,168	\$ 138,429	
Ag., Conservation & Hort. Supplies	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,677	56%	\$ 954	\$ 46	
Other Supplies	\$ 120,750	\$ 39,411	33%	\$ 42,729	\$ 42,864	
Drugs & Biologicals	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 909,547	45%	\$ 691,801	\$ 735,582	
Food	\$ 1,624,000	\$ 528,765	33%	\$ 500,151	\$ 393,619	
Uniforms & related	\$ 24,000	\$ 8,278	34%	\$ 7,039	\$ 3,181	
Postage	\$ 16,000	\$ 12,338	77%	\$ 2,021	\$ 7,398	
Communication	\$ 380,000	\$ 216,512	57%	\$ 155,560	\$ 146,001	
Rentals	\$ 66,500	\$ 20,695	31%	\$ 20,840	\$ 19,859	
Utilities	\$ 1,750,000	\$ 531,531	30%	\$ 631,093	\$ 579,075	
Professional & Scientific Services	\$ 700,000	\$ 246,905	35%	\$ 245,342	\$ 209,379	
Outside Services	\$ 3,386,000	\$ 1,273,185	38%	\$ 651,437	\$ 1,147,075	
Advertising & Publicity	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,823	108%	\$ 6,035	\$ 3,075	
Outside Repairs	\$ 183,500	\$ 65,102	35%	\$ 98,781	\$ 46,461	
Reimb to Other Agencies (DAS)	\$ 369,262	\$ 98,121	27%	\$ 106,872	\$ 121,347	
ITS Reimbursements	\$ 2,600,000	\$ 894,843	34%	\$ 988,422	\$ 1,023,710	
Workers Comp	\$ 745,850	\$ 248,617	33%	\$ 225,322	\$ 176,294	
IT Outside Services	\$ 400,000	\$ -		\$ -	\$ 65,723	
Gov Trsf - Auditor of State	\$ 100,000	\$ -		\$ 51,569	\$ -	
Gov Trsf - Other Agencies (DAS construction)	\$ 7,000	\$ 1,662,493		\$ 6,410,086	\$ 10,076,623	
Equipment Inventory	\$ 300,000	\$ 7,257	2%	\$ 18,386	\$ -	
Equipment Non-Inventory	\$ 250,000	\$ 26,675	11%	\$ 44,896	\$ 102,080	
IT Equipment/software/leases/supplies	\$ 605,000	\$ 575,872	95%	\$ 758,599	\$ 688,084	
Claims	\$ 1,750	\$ 351	20%	\$ 165	\$ 260	
Other Expenses & Obligations	\$ 112,500	\$ 9,088	8%	\$ 89,079	\$ 100,244	
Licenses	\$ 7,000	\$ 2,332	33%	\$ 1,948	\$ 5,280	
Refunds-Other	\$ 60,250	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	
Total Expenses before carryforward	\$ 75,445,508	\$ 29,983,031		\$ 34,097,193	\$ 38,941,504	
Carryforward to next FY	\$ 4,405,075	\$ 11,859,298.48		\$ 12,953,830.95	\$ 10,346,037.86	
	\$ 79,850,583	\$ 41,842,329.24		\$ 47,051,023.72	\$ 49,287,542.13	

Nursing Department Totals			
Position	Authorized	Current	Percentage
AON	1	1	100.00%
NSD	3	3	100.00%
Nurse Supervisor	25	24	96.00%
Nurse Clinician	12	11	91.67%
RN	18	12	66.67%
LPN	48	34	70.83%
CMA	75	64	85.33%
RTW	181	136	75.14%
RA	35	31	88.57%
Staffing Coordinator	6	6	100.00%
NUC	5	5	100.00%
Restorative Aide	6	6	100.00%
Recreation Assistant	5	5	100.00%
AA 1	1	1	100.00%
Compliance Officer 1	1	1	100.00%
Total	422	340	80.57%
# of Temp RTWs	0	14	*3 working FT hours
# of Temp RN/LPN		9	*1 working FT hours

-1 4.00%
8.33%
-1 33.33%
29.17%
14.67%
3+ 24.86%
11.43%
0.00%
-1 0.00%
0.00%
19.43%



Nursing Department Mandates

Shift	November v/m	October v/m	September v/m	August v/m	November f/m	October f/m	September f/m	August f/m
Days	55	70	107	78	2	7	19	8
Eves	67	96	102	71	8	20	32	10
Nocs	50	43	49	57	5	7	21	12
Totals	172	209	258	206	15	34	72	20

November 2023 by Building	Volunteer Mandate	Forced Mandate	Lx Forced Mandates	Lx Call-ins
Malloy	52	8	1	18
Dack	65	4	3	13
Ulery	55	3	1	10

- Licensed mandates stayed the same at 5 for October and November, but decreased from 13 in September and back in line with the low of 5 in August, 9 in July, and 8 in June
- In the month of November, Nursing saw a significant decrease in missed shifts to increase in missed shifts to 269, down from 381 in October, 451 in September, 437 in August, while providing 49 attendants for trips. There were no 1:1's staffed!
- 11 licensed shifts were covered by supervisors in the month of November outside of their regular work schedule
- 68 vacation shifts were granted under 60 days!

Benefits and Cemetery Bureau

Appropriations		
	Appropriation amount	\$1,033,289.00
	Expenditures	\$ 469,219.20

Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund		
	Total	\$ 2,362,269.46
	Expenditures	\$ 209,096.41

Trust Fund			
	Balance	\$ 42,079,527.11	
	Spendable Balance	\$ 1,488,357.09	
	Interest		
	Nov.	Oct.	Sept.
	\$ 159,718.00	\$ 150,241.52	\$ 147,159.71
	Number of Approved Applications	47	
	Obligated Amount	\$ 196,063.47	
	Applications older than 6mos	6	

License Plate Fund		
	Balance	\$ 400,972.07
	Interest Year to date	\$ 5,948.13
	Claims processed FY-to-date	\$ 45,356.53