

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Quarterly Meeting**  
**Wednesday, April 3, 2024 10:00 a.m.**  
**Iowa Veterans Home, Whitehill**  
**Marshalltown, IA 50158**

**Commission of Veterans Affairs Members**

**Present:** Todd Jacobus, Elizabeth Ledvina, Darlene McMartin, Scott Miller, Joella Perry, Robert Suesakul, Mary Van Horn, Gary Wattnem

**Virtual:** Becky Dirks Haugsted

**Absent:** George Mosby (Excused), Greg Paulline (Excused)

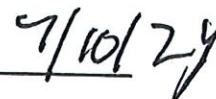
**Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Members Present:** Penny Cutler-Bermudez, Sarah Bruner, Ben Dales, Todd Jacobus, Karl Lettow, Emily Lopez, Melissa Miller, Mike Olson, John Ralls

**NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE UNAPPROVED UNTIL ACCEPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT THE NEXT MEETING.**

**APPROVED:**

  
 Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

**Date:**



1. **Call to Order** Chairperson Ledvina called the meeting to order at 10:03a.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence**
3. **Welcome**
4. **Roll Call**
5. **Report from Director Tracie Pinkston of Veterans Affairs Regional Office.** Director Pinkston was not able to attend the meeting; she passed along these comments and Todd Jacobus presented for her at the meeting.
  - a. [Iowa Veteran population](#) 174,215, 27% receiving benefits, 73% in non-receipt of benefits.
  - b. Iowa Veterans age 65 and over account for 49% of the Veteran population.
  - c. Percent of Iowa adult population that are Veterans is 7.2%, 6.4% is the national average.
  - d. VA achieved all-time record accomplishments for Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors in fiscal year 2023 to include:
    - e. Delivering more earned benefits to Veterans and survivors: VA delivered \$163 billion in earned benefits, including \$150 billion in compensation and pension benefits, to 1,535,685 Veterans and



survivors – all of which are all-time records. VA also processed 1,981,854 Veteran and survivor claims, surpassing the previous all-time record by 15.9%.

f. Encouraging more Veterans to apply for earned benefits: Thanks to the largest outreach campaign in VA history, Veterans submitted 2,433,729 claims applications – an all-time record and 39% more than in 2022. Veterans also submitted 2,299,815 intents-to-file – an all-time record and 62% more than in 2022.

g. Supporting more Veterans in crisis: The Veterans Crisis Line received 1,059,962 calls, texts, and chats over the previous year – up 12.1% over the prior year. VA also provided no-cost emergency health care to 47,723 Veterans in acute suicidal crises through a new program launched in January.

h. As of March 1, 2024, VBA completed over 1,000,000 claims for the 2024 fiscal year, reaching this historic milestone earlier than ever and nearly six weeks faster than last year. Fiscal year 2023 claims completions of 1,981,854 exceeded VBA's prior record-breaking completions in fiscal year 2022, by 15.9%

i. From October 1, 2021 through March 9, 2024, we have onboarded 14,300 claims processors – growing our claims processing workforce by approximately 58.1% and increasing the total size of the Veterans Benefits Administration to more than 33,772 employees for the first time in VA history (prior to 2023, VBA had never even reached 28,000 employees).

j. From day one, the VA has taken aggressive action to combat Veteran homelessness. In the calendar year 2023 VA permanently housed 46,552 homeless Veterans, exceeding its goal to house 38,000 by 22.5%.

## **6. Report from Director Judith Johnson-Mekota of VA Medical Clinic Iowa City**

### **a. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

(1) White Ribbon VA is a national call to action to eliminate sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence across the Department of Veterans Affairs by promoting a positive change in culture so that the actions outlined in the pledge become the organizational norm. White Ribbon VA is an awareness movement where All—regardless of their gender—can participate.

(2) Background: White Ribbon VA was inspired by the White Ribbon organization which is the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls, and to promote gender equity and healthy relationships. Since its inception in Toronto in 1991, the White Ribbon Campaign has spread to over 60 countries around the world, including college campuses, military bases, and stations, and within a number of states across the country.

(3) White Ribbon USA and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) are partnering with the VA to promote White Ribbon VA under the Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now Campaign. White Ribbon USA, NASW, and VA have the shared goal of taking an active stand in ending sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

b. April is Counseling Awareness Month. National Counseling Awareness Month is a month-long event that celebrates the important role of counselors in promoting mental health, recovery, and wellness. It is



an opportunity to recognize the dedicated professionals who help individuals, families, and communities cope with challenges and lead healthier lives. By recognizing this important profession and its impact on our society, we can continue to build a more supportive environment for those struggling with mental health issues.

c. Suicide Prevention.

(1) Outreach to underserved and rural communities. Use data-driven strategy to reach more communities identified as “rural” and “extremely rural”, with increased emphasis on firearm safety (given higher rates of firearm ownership in these communities), as well as Veterans Crisis Line awareness.

(2) Iowa Governor’s Challenge; Peggy Dickey and Deb Moeller, both of our Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinators, are leading 2 of 3 major priority workgroups for this statewide effort. Peggy is co-leading Priority Group 2; Deb is co-leading Priority Group 3.

(3) Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinators (CEPC) (Peggy and Deb):

- o Currently have 24 community coalitions in Iowa that are part of our official count (more are either in work and/or CEPC’s have contact with)

- o Working on numerous projects and collaborations, including working with the Iowa National Guard and John Deere’s “Military Employee Resource Groups” at their locations nationwide (starting with “VA SAVE” Training on April 3)

- o Both CEPCs serving on a planning committee for the Iowa Suicide Prevention Coalitions Summit – scheduled to be held this year on Thursday, August 29 in Cedar Falls, IA

- o Law Enforcement Diversion/Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training; Suicide Prevention Team is partnering with VA Police and Veterans Justice Outreach Program to increase our VA presence at multiagency CIT trainings in our catchment area. We are also developing an in-house law enforcement diversion training program for VA staff, and potentially invite other non-VA agencies/first responders to attend.

- o Veterans Crisis Line 988, Press 1 Yard Signs; Carolyn Marty, SP Coordinator, developed and implemented a campaign to design, procure and distribute VCL yard signs across the ICVA HCS catchment area. Extremely well received by ICVA staff and community partners alike and has received a lot of positive attention in our communities.

- o Postvention multidisciplinary team; providing increased support for next of kin (care packages, regular follow-up calls shortly after suicide is reported, then after 30, 60, 90 days, and 12 months). Deb Moeller, Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator is leading this effort. Continuing to develop this program and hope to include more departments and specialties.

- o Collaboration with Rock Island Arsenal in Rock Island, IL; SP Program Coordinator (Rob) has given multiple presentations (which will continue) on the topics of suicide prevention and postvention, as well as how/where to access VA resources/services. Presentations have been very well attended,

including active-duty military command staff, Guard, Reserve, DoD Civilian employees, as well as others assigned to Rock Island Arsenal who are stationed overseas in Europe, Middle East and Korea.

o Outstanding collaboration with VA Vet Centers in the ICVA HCS catchment area (Cedar Rapids and Quad Cities); SP Coordinator does regular case consultation and outreach with Quad Cities Vet Center staff, SP Program Coordinator does regular monthly clinical consultation with both CR and QC Vet Centers, and both CR and QC Vet Center Directors are voting members of the ICVA HCS SP Committee (which was identified as a Best Practice by the VISN 23 MH ICC Team).

d. Homeless and under-served Veterans

(1) Iowa City VA Homeless Services Partnerships

(a) Grant and Per Diem Programs - This program provides safe supportive housing and supportive services through grants with community-based programs. This includes a grant for temporary housing in shelters as well as the Transition in Place program.

- Salvation Army
- Willis Dady Shelter
- Shelter House
- Humility Homes and Services
- Christian Care Shelter
- Goodwill Industries of the Heartland

(b) HUD-VASH partnerships with Public Housing Authorities - The HUD-VASH (Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) program partners with Public Housing Authorities to provide case management services to assist with sustaining permanent housing for Veterans. Through this program, the VA provides case management and assistance in connecting with the Public Housing Authorities who issue a Section 8 voucher to assist with the cost of rent for low-income Veteran populations.

- Cedar Rapids
- Davenport
- Dubuque
- Greater Metro (IL)
- Iowa City
- Moline (IL)
- Waterloo
- Whiteside County (IL)

(c) Supportive Services for Veteran Families - This is a program to provide financial assistance and minimal case management to prevent imminent loss of housing for low-income Veterans as well as assist with rapidly re-housing Veterans and families who are homeless or might remain homeless.

- Family Alliance for Veterans of America (FAVA) - This agency is similar to HACAP but provides services to the counties in the northern portion of our catchment area.

- Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) – This is one of the agencies who administer the SSVF services, and they are a close partner of the VA Homeless Programs. This agency

also administers programs for households to receive assistance with their utilities during the winter and/or on a crisis basis.

- Humility Homes and Services
- Salvation Army
- Shelter House

(d) Homeless Programs Permanent Housing Placements

- o Calendar Year 2022 – 122.75%
- o Iowa City VA target- 189
- o Unique Veterans Housed- 232
- o Calendar Year 2023 – 115.2%
- o Iowa City VA Target – 198
- o Unique Veterans Housed – 228
- o Fiscal Year 2024 – 50.9 % of target.
- o Iowa City VA Target – 212
- o Unique Veterans Housed ~107

e. PACT Act. On March 5, 2024, the VA made three new groups of Veterans eligible for VA health care. This was accomplished years earlier than called for by the PACT Act:

- (1) Veterans who were exposed to toxins or other hazards during military service;
- (2) Veterans who were assigned to certain duty stations in Southwest Asia or parts of Africa; and
- (3) Veterans who deployed in support of certain operations after 9/11.
- (4) Here's what this means for Veterans:
  - (a) If you served in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, or Afghanistan, you can enroll.
  - (b) If you deployed to any combat zone after 9/11, you can enroll.
  - (c) If you deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, you can enroll.

(d) Even service members who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or serving on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more – can enroll.

(e) Bottom line: all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards – at home or abroad – are eligible to enroll in VA care beginning March 5.

f. Facility Updates

- (1) Galesburg CBOC - Construction has started, expect completion October 2024.
- (2) Decorah CBOC – Construction has started, expect completion February 2025.

(3) Burlington CBOC – Market survey scheduled for April, 2024

(4) Cerner Project (EHRM Infrastructure) - Work continues in several areas throughout Building 1 and warehouse.

(5) Construct Ambulance Garage – Out to bid, expect to award summer 2024.

(6) Renovate 2W for IR/Cath/EP - Construction on-going in Phase 1 (shell space within the former Dental clinic). Phase 1 will last through May 2024.

(7) Iowa City VA Fisher House - Fisher house expects due diligence and property acquisition to begin this Q3 FY24, full estimated completion FY27.

(8) Renovate 9E Secured Medicine Ward – Construction on-going, expect completion Spring 2025.

(9) Relocate Women’s Clinic – Reviewing bids for contractor selection, expected to award in May 2024

(10) Remodel Morgue – Construction contract awarded, expect to start in May, 2024

g. Other significant items: Joe Goedken, Business Office Manager, providing CHAMPVA training for spring Iowa County Veteran Service Officers training.

## 6. Report from Director Lisa Curnes of VA Medical Clinic Des Moines / Central Iowa

### a. Update on PACT Act

(1) The PACT Act is a law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.

(2) Beginning March 5, 2024, the PACT Act expanded VA health care to millions of Veterans—years earlier than called for by the PACT Act.

(a) Veterans who were exposed to toxins or other hazards during military service.

(b) Veterans who were assigned to certain duty stations in Southwest Asia or parts of Africa; and

(c) Veterans who deployed in support of certain operations after 9/11.

Here’s what that means for Veterans:

o If you served in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, or Afghanistan, you can enroll.

o If you deployed to any combat zone after 9/11, you can enroll.

o If you deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, you can enroll.

o Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or serving on active duty stateside by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, are eligible to enroll.

o Bottom line is this: all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards – at home or abroad – are eligible to enroll in VA care. Every toxic exposed veteran including all veterans who deployed post



9/11 and in the gulf war, now qualify for VA healthcare. This eligibility is irrespective of whether Veterans have conditions related to their service. With this being said, now Veterans can obtain health care access with us to PREVENT the incidence of disease – not just treat disease when Veterans are already sick. Veterans who qualify are eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.

- o Toxic exposure screenings are available at VA health facilities across Iowa. Every Veteran enrolled in VA health care will receive an initial screening and a follow-up screening at least once every 5 years. Veterans who are not enrolled and who meet eligibility requirements will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.

- o VA Central Iowa has completed almost 24 thousand Toxic Exposure Screenings on area Veterans so far.

b. My strategic update for VA Central Iowa Health Care System:

(1) In the past year, VA Central Iowa has increased our staff to 1,725 in 2024. That is up from 1,602 in 2023. That is an increase of 123 full-time employees.

(2) With more staff, we have increased access and services to Veterans.

(3) We are increasing the capabilities of our domiciliary. The domiciliary (“dom”) provides state-of-the-art, high-quality residential rehabilitation and treatment services for Veterans with multiple and severe medical conditions, mental illness, addiction, or psychosocial deficits. The staff identifies and addresses goals of rehabilitation, recovery, health maintenance, improved quality of life, and community integration in addition to specific treatment of medical conditions, mental illnesses, addictive disorders, and homelessness.

(4) Over the past year, the Dom has hired clinical staff to increase the bed census from 20 to 38 beds available with a goal for our Dom is to return to 60 beds available.

(5) We are also expanding our Community Living Center (CLC). The VA CIHCS CLC provides skilled nursing care, rehabilitation, mental health recovery care, dementia care, hospice and palliative care, continuing care, respite care, and geriatric evaluation and management.

(6) Over the past year our Central Iowa CLC has been successful in onboarding nursing staff to allow us to increase bed census from 52 to 67 beds. We continue to recruit several positions so we can continue to increase bed capacity with a goal of at least 70 beds by the end of the year and a total of 87 beds within two years. Increasing our inpatient operating beds of our Community Living Center and our Domiciliary to maximize the number of Veterans we care for within the CLC and Mental Health.

(7) The below comparisons are from FY19 to FY24.

- o We increased all outpatient encounters by 9.7% and unique Veterans being seen by 2%.
- o We increased our Primary Care workload by 37% and unique Veterans being seen by 6%.
- o We increased our Mental Health unique Veterans being seen by 15%
- o We increased our Specialty Care workload by 19% and unique Veterans being seen by 22%.
- o We increased Rehab & Extended Care workload by 40% & unique Veterans being seen by 32%.
- o Our inpatient Med/Surgical Avg Daily Census has increased by 23%.

c. Budget

(1) \$469M budget for FY24 with a projected deficit of \$12.7M. Strategies that are being implemented is to offer VA Care first as we know Veterans want to receive their care at VA; we have a high Veteran satisfaction score; we also are 5 Stars in our CLC, and our Acute care as compared to the community. Many times, when Veterans get their care in the community, they drive by a VA facility to receive that care, or they wait longer for their care in the community than they would wait to receive care from us.

(2) We also are reviewing our FTE through attrition and reviewing what positions we need to fill currently and what can wait based on our priorities. Our priorities are to open more beds in our CLC and DOM and bring care back from the community.

(3) Third strategy is we are also preparing to offer mobile health care through a clinic which will visit rural areas of Iowa to offer telecare services to Veterans in rural areas as well as homeless Veterans at our Community Resource and Referral Center or CRRC.

d. Construction update:

(1) Marshalltown CBOC is ongoing. This project is ahead of schedule, and we anticipate the handover for this space will be in July. We plan a ribbon cutting to celebrate this event. No date is set.

(2) 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.

(3) ICU, intensive care unit renovation on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the main hospital is ongoing. We anticipate this summer renovations will be complete. When complete this space will consist of 9, single, patient rooms with a bathroom. Currently we 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.

(4) Warehouse – building 27, is nearing completion. We are anticipating a handover this month. 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.

(5) Lab Addition – 10,000 square foot building expansion with anticipated start of construction at the end of FY2024.

7. Presentation by Chad Cook, Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisor

a. The Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisor program was first enacted in 2005.

b. By law Transition Assistance Advisors serve as points of contact to assist eligible members of the reserve components in accessing benefits and healthcare furnished under laws administered by the Secretary of Defense and benefits and healthcare furnished by the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

- c. Expanded in 2013 to all reserve components.
- d. Make people aware of benefits and how to access those.
- e. Areas of assistance:

- (1) State and local benefits
- (2) VA Assistance for physical and mental health
- (3) Disabled Veterans Program Assistance
- (4) Education & Training Assistance
- (5) Health & Life Insurance
- (6) Financial Assistance
- (7) Legal Assistance
- (8) Relocation Assistance
- (9) Outreach Efforts

8. Presentation by Lisa Whitmarsh Peterson, Volunteer with Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (ESGR)

a. Office of the Department of Defense created the ESGR in 1972 when the U.S. Armed Forces became an All-Volunteer force following the plan to eliminate the draft.

b. The ESGR promotes cooperation and understanding between service members and their civilian employers to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from the employee's military commitment in the reserve components.

c. ESGR volunteers facilitate discussions when there may be a difficulty with an employer and service member.

d. Lisa Whitmarsh Peterson shared that she came to the Commission meeting today to provide this brief update, and also so that Commandant Todd Jacobus could sign a Department of Defense Statement of Support of reserve component service members working for the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. Lisa presented the certificate to Todd Jacobus so that it can be displayed.

9. Presentation by Sergeant First Class Anthony Hartman & Staff Sergeant Aaron Barnett, U.S. Army Recruiting Command from Des Moines Area Recruitment Company.

a. Goal today is to communicate to the Commission and the public what we are seeing in our communities. We are seeing a lack of education in our schools and not just about military. They do not know about events coming up or programs that you are speaking about today.

b. Events and activities that are taking place within the Veterans community, activities of Veteran Service Organizations, can have a big impact on propensity to serve. It seems like there is a lack of information on what is taking place in the Veterans community.

c. Experiencing a lack of knowledge in schools and colleges about benefits of military service. Building a force to defend our country starts with our students.

d. It is important that our high school students make an informed decision on whether to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces – and it is the responsibility of our Recruiters to present information and provide opportunity.

e. We need to do a better job of synchronizing our efforts. All of us have email addresses, social media accounts, and we all interact with others throughout the State and even across the Country. How do we connect better? We need someone to take the lead on synchronizing these efforts.

10. Jerry Bohr (USA & USMC Veteran) Presentation VA Disability Compensation being apportioned to former spouses and families by Iowa Courts

a. Jerry started by sharing that he speaks in a tone that may be misunderstood, he does not want to upset anyone by his tone, but he is not going to hold back on his beliefs.

b. Jerry asked the Commissioners and the meeting attendees if they remember the oath that we made to the Constitution of the United States. Judges have an oath to also swear an oath to the Constitution.

c. The National Archives of the United States under our Constitution reads as follows: “The power of Congress to provide for payment of claims derives from the 1st clause Section 8 of the Constitution, which provides that Congress shall have the power to pay the debts of the United States. Throughout American history this provision has been construed to include not only legal but also moral obligations. This position is stated in 1895 Supreme Court Case in the U.S. versus Realtor Company. (Copy provided).

d. The term “debts’ includes those debts or claims which rest upon a merely equitable or honorable obligation and which would not be recoverable in a court of law if existing against an individual. The Nation broadly speaking owes a debt to an individual when his claim grows out of general principles of right and justice.

e. “With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.” – President Abraham Lincoln

f. The VA has changed their motto. Now we are being inclusive of families. The laws and regulations under Title 38 are for the Veteran, widow, and orphans. The VA is changing these daily behind the backs of a lot of people. By integrating the family

g. Jerry Bohr has a letter to Secretary Shinseki from Congress, which spells out Public Law 3850.301. He also has a letter from the Department of Health & Human Services to State Agencies saying that VA disability compensation is not remuneration for employment – cannot be calculated. Ann Risart of the Iowa Bureau of Collections acknowledged that we follow this memorandum, but that if the judge makes decisions that contradict the memorandum then we follow the decisions of the judge / court. In Jerry's view the decisions of these judges put our Veterans in hardship.

i. Scholarly sources identify the cost to raise a child from birth to age 18 is \$270,000. In 2024 the cost to raise a child per year is \$25,000 per year.  $\$270 / 18$  (number of years) = \$15,000 per year / 12 = \$1,200 per month. The VA rating scale provides no dependent funding for 0-20%; 30% = \$65.00 prorated up to

100% at \$130.00 for first child and \$80.00 for second child. Let's estimate that the Veteran will receive \$100.00 per month for dependents – that's \$1,200 per year. This is what Congress deems is reasonable. How can Veterans survive when State Courts grab their disability compensation?

j. When it comes to our courts – you are innocent until proven guilty. State courts do not have the authority to just arbitrarily violate federal law by taking VA disability compensation. Citizens have both federal rights and state rights. Who is the ultimate authority of federal laws? The federal government. U.S. Code 38 Chapter 511 gives Secretary of the VA decision making and finality over any court in the United States on VA benefits. The letter says that “the courts are prohibited from diverting, attaching, leveeing, or seizing under any equitable process in receipt of before or after. The only way they can do so is through waived retirement – because at one time Congress did waive a limited sovereign immunity under retirement – not VA disability compensation.

k. The problem is that the courts are grabbing whatever they can. U.S. Code 42 Chapter 666 states that there is money for the States for every dollar collected, so States are incentivized to awarding these Federal funds to Veterans.

l. Action Jerry Bohr wants the Commission to take: Jerry summarized at the conclusion of his presentation by saying that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is on his side on this matter. Jerry wants the Commission to understand that the Iowa Courts are basing their decisions to award VA disability compensation to former spouses based on a wrongfully ruled case in 1997 (Rose v Rose) saying that Veterans benefits are intended for the Veteran and his/her family - - - then the family should be part of the rating scale. The Commission should be informing Congress that Veterans are living in poverty. The Constitution and Federal VA are clear that VA disability compensation should not be distributed to the family. But, if Congress wants that to happen then Congress should provide funding for dependents at the actual cost of those dependents – minimum of \$1,200 per month instead of the current \$100 per month. Specifically: Jerry requests that the Commission write a resolution that the family is part of the rating scale and if Congress allows States to take VA disability compensation from the Veteran then the amount allowed for dependents should be increased by at least 10x the current level. Jerry is communicating with the Legislative leadership teams of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American Veterans and he will make sure to get the Commission's resolution to these Veteran Service Organizations so that they can build it into their legislative priorities. Jerry does not believe that Congress will take action on this.

11. Presentation by Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Sextro (Iowa Army National Guard), Director J9 Prevention Resilience Services

a. Thank the Commission for continued support of the Iowa Survivor Outreach Services Program. We support over 1400 survivors across the state of Iowa.

b. Annually we host 2 events. One specifically related to the topic of suicide and the surviving family members. The other event is for all of our survivors whether it be combat related death or other circumstances. These events are rotated throughout the state of Iowa.

c. **Motion by Darlene McMartin to approve \$55,000 from the license plate fund to support the Survivor Outreach Services Annual Survivor Retreat on July 20, 2024, in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Second by Mary Van Horn. Motion approved unanimously.**

12. Presentation by Kirt Sickels & Randy Brown of Veterans Casting Away Disabilities

a. Veterans Casting Away Disabilities, PO Box 280, West Liberty, Iowa 52776, is a 501c(3) non-profit which provides a week long fishing / social event for disabled veterans and their caretakers every May at Honey Cree Resort on Lake Rathbun in Moravia, Appanoose County, Iowa.

b. This event is about fishing, healing, providing resources, and allows caregiver respite as well. There are activities for companions and caregivers such as crafts, wine tasting, and shopping excursions. There are also social activities such as nightly campfires with popcorn and s'mores, woodworking and fish fries.

c. The cost of this event is around \$75,000, which covers the hotel accommodations, meals / food, fuel, bait, etc. The organization provides on-site meals at the event.

d. Veterans Casting Away Disabilities raises money through a wide range of outreach programs, Chapters of the Disabled American Veterans, and other fundraisers, and requests support from the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs through the License Plate Fund.

e. Currently, there are 47 Veterans and 101 spouses and volunteers signed up to participate in the week-long event and there is a waiting list. The coordination team plans to do an event in the Fall 2024, as well.

**f. Motion by Robert Suesakul to approve \$20,000 from the license plate fund to support the Veterans Casting Away Disabilities fishing event on May 12-18, 2024, at Honey Creek Resort on Lake Rathbun in Moravia, Appanoose County, Iowa. Second by Gary Wattnem. Motion approved unanimously.**

13. Presentation by Karl Lettow, Public Affairs Officer for Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs:

a. Governors Challenge for Suicide Prevention is a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs program. Because it is an "unfunded mandate", which means that federal dollars are not connected to the program, we recognize it as a great initiative to address Veteran suicide, and partner with groups throughout the state that handle suicide prevention and mental health issues.

b. The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and Iowa Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) co-chair the Iowa Governor's Challenge Committee.

c. Julie Moss is the HHS Suicide Prevention Director for the State of Iowa, applied for and received a \$120,000 grant to help promote the 988 crisis line here in the State. "Veterans Press 1 has now been added as an option. HHS used the grant to become a sponsor of the NASCAR Race at the Iowa Speedway on June 14-16, 2024, and has asked the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs to support this effort with \$25,000 from the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.

**d. Motion by Joella Perry to approve \$25,000 from the license plate fund to support the Governor's Challenge / 988 Crisis Line initiative at the Iowa Speedway on June 14-16, 2024. Second by Darlene McMartin. Motion approved unanimously.**

14. Presentation by Krista Beck, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8879 of West Des Moines.

a. Krista Beck is a member of VFW Post 8879 in West Des Moines and has been working with many stakeholders to organize a “Women’s Veterans Day” event on June 12, 2024.

b. The concept for this event is a “Women’s Only Dinner”. Veteran Service Organizations will be invited, and women can attend the event, gather information, and learn about service opportunities. The goal is for 100 women Veterans to attend.

c. The shortfall for this event is funding, and Krista is coming to the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs to get financial support so that she can finish making arrangements.

d. **Motion by Scott Miller to approve \$2,500 from the license plate fund to support the “Women’s Veterans Day” program / dinner on June 12, 2024 in West Des Moines, Iowa.** Second by Gary Wattnem. Motion approved unanimously.

15. Presentation by David Haines, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities Management Bureau Chief

a. There was a fire at the Iowa Veterans Home in room 420 in the Dack Building.

(1) The State of Iowa Executive Council, which consists of the Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer of State, Secretary of Agriculture, and Auditor of the State, manages disaster aid from the Iowa economic emergency fund to address emergency funding situation, like this.

(2) This fund is managed in accordance with Iowa Code Chapter 29C.20 Contingent Fund – Disaster Aid, and is being used to pay for the Fire Recovery effort.

(3) ServiceMaster has been on-site with industrial equipment working on drying walls. Progress as of now is going well, but will need several more weeks to make sure that we don’t have a mold problem later.

b. There is a separate project taking place on the IVH Campus involving the Dispatch Building recovery & rebuild.

(1) This building started to lean, and is no longer safe for operations.

(2) IDVA Facilities team has been working with the Department of Administrative Services and DCI Group to recover and rebuild this facility.

(3) Shive Hattery Architecture Engineering conducted an assessment of the building and determined that the cause of the damage is related to a single incident – most likely the derecho on August 10-11, 2020.

(4) This is an estimated \$300,000 project which is funded by DAS (Major Maintenance)

c. Major Maintenance Projects. The Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) is used to resource vertical infrastructure projects. Major Maintenance is defined as expenditures made beyond the regular, normal upkeep of physical properties for the repair or replacement of failed or failing building components as necessary to return a facility to its currently intended use to prevent further damage or make it

compliant with changes in laws, regulations, codes or standards. This fund is shared with multiple state agencies and maintained by DAS. The Iowa Veterans Home has multiple projects on the list and are on a graded scale determined by the Department of Administrative Services. These are awaiting on funding which includes:

- (1) Malloy west parking lot replacement
- (2) All cottage roofs to be replaced
- (3) Cottage parking lot replacement
- (4) Sheeler garage tuckpointing
- (5) Terrazzo repairs throughout Dack and Malloy
- (6) Sidewalk and paving repairs
- (7) Replacement of the Guardhouse windows
- (8) Replacement of Guardhouse roof
- (9) Replacement of cast iron fittings in the basement of Dack, Malloy and Sheeler.
- (10) Replacement of Whitehill auditorium windows.
- (11) Replacement of Whitehill Auditorium steps
- (12) Dack building roof replacement
- (13) Malloy building roof replacement
- (14) All exterior campus lighting replacement

d. Projects underway which are funded by Major Maintenance

- (1) Dack 2 sundeck sealing and coating
- (2) Sheeler Medical Clinic roof replacement, including the repairs to the rooftop HVAC unit

e. Projects supported by donations: IVH main courtyard sunshade project will begin in two weeks and anticipate project completion by June 30, 2024.

f. IVH Funded Projects with the VA Reimbursement

- (1) Nurse Call system-Fox. Currently working with DCI Group and DAS for budget information.
- (2) Pharmacy renovation-Arxium go live.

g. VA and Iowa Appropriation Project

- (1) Expansion of the Malloy Dietary - submission to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs by April 15, 2024. Final budget not established. Equipment and kitchen area 24 years old and in need of modernizing
- (2) Iowa Veterans Cemetery Projects – Columbarium expansion and irrigation update.

15. Presentation by Andrea Maher, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Quality & Compliance Bureau Chief

a. In January 2024 we distributed a “resident and family satisfaction survey” to the family members of each resident. 140 family members responded to these questions:

- (1) In recommending the facility to your friends and family how would you rate IVH overall?
- (2) Overall, how would you rate the staff?
- (3) Overall, how would you rate the care your family member receives?
- (4) We had 140 family responses and they were all positive reviews



b. In January 2024 we distributed a “resident and family satisfaction survey” to residents. 292 of 400 residents responded to these questions:

- (1) In recommending the facility to your friends and family how would you rate IVH overall?
- (2) Overall, how would you rate the staff?
- (3) Overall, how would you rate the care your family member receives?
- (4) How do you rate the quality of your room?
- (5) How do you rate food service?
- (6) How do you rate activities?
- (7) How do you rate the quality of nursing care?
- (8) How do you rate responsiveness to requests for support / call lights?

c. We are very satisfied with the results of the survey, although we will continue to work on improving – specifically in the food service area.

d. We will share the results of this survey with residents during our next forum.

16. Mike Olson, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Legislative Liaison update:

a. In early February 2024, Mike Olson, Penny Cutler-Bermudez, and Todd Jacobus visited with each member of the Iowa Congressional Delegation at their offices in Washington, DC. Each of them is committed to the Department and to Iowa Veterans and their staff members are very responsive to us.

b. We have seen some legislative successes during this session:

(1) **HF 259 is waiting for Governor Reynolds’ signature.** HF 259 was both ICVA’s & IDVA’s #1 legislative priority, and expands the definition of “Veteran”. This legislation will confer Veteran status on a former service member injured during training, who may not have had the 90 days of active duty for other than training. This legislation will also require that all County Veteran Service officers obtain and retain a Personal Identification Verification (PIV) Card within 1 year of being hired, and current CVSOs must have a PIV Card within 1 year of the law being enacted.

(2) **HF 2306** adds Marine Corps League to the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs and is waiting for Governor Reynolds’ signature.

c. Outlined below is an update on Iowa House of Representatives legislation impacting Iowa Veterans currently in the pipeline:

(1) **HF 163** increases eligibility for disabled veteran homestead credit – phased in over a period of years based on the Veteran’s disability rating. Passed House Ways and Means Subcommittee

(2) **SF 461** adds Veterans for eligibility for Iowa Small Business Linked Loans. Passed Senate, passed House Veterans Affairs Committee.

(3) **HF 2144** establishes a United States Army Reserve service scholarship program within the College Student Aid Commission. Passed House Appropriations Subcommittee.

(4) **HF 2561** establishes an American Legion Auxiliary Girls State grant program. The bill requires the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs to adopt application procedures, forms, administrative guidelines, and other rules for purposes of implementing the program, as well as submission of an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly. It appropriates \$150,000 for FY 24-25 for the administration of the program and providing grants. Referred to Appropriations

(5) **SF 2396** is a Department of Revenue bill that among many other things addresses the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund by clarifying the dates on which annual funds will be distributed to the county veterans service offices once the fund has a balance of \$50 million – on July 1 of the current (sometime in the future) and preceding fiscal years. Passed Senate, passed House Ways and Means Committee

(6) **SF 2407** is legislation that would require IDVA to assist the DNR in verification of disabled Veteran or POW status for a lifetime fur harvester license. This legislation was introduced and referred to Ways and Means.

(7) **HF 2446** waives a business filing fee for Veterans. Passed House, referred to Senate Ways and Means.

(8) **HF 2505** provides State services and benefits to veterans, including state grants, public assistance programs, business fee waivers, substance use disorder programs, mental health and disability services, undergraduate tuition and fees, disabled veteran tax credits, department of natural resources' licenses and fees, civil litigation priority, vehicle registration fees, and driver's licenses. Introduced, referred to Ways and Means.

(9) **HF 2640** appropriates from the General Fund \$75,000 for the commissioning of the USS Iowa (not from IDVA funds). Passed House Appropriations Subcommittee

(10) **HF 2663: Passed House, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Assigned**  
Allocates \$300K annually from the amount received from the Iowa Lottery for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund to pay for national CVSO training. Effect would be that the trust fund reaches \$50 million slightly later than originally planned.

d. Outlined below is an update on Iowa Senate legislation impacting Iowa Veteran currently in the pipeline:

(1) **SF 461** Adds veterans for eligibility for Iowa Small Business Linked Loans. Passed Senate Veterans Affairs.

(2) **SF 2076** authorizes an additional \$300,000 annually to pay for National CVSO training. Passed Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, referred to Appropriations Appropriates

(3) **SF 2385** provides minor changes to Iowa Code 35A.2 regarding names of member organizations on the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs. It does not change the member organizations. Allows the Governor to appoint a member of the Veteran Service Organization to fill a vacancy if an organization fails to provide recommended members for consideration. Passed Senate State Government Committee, remains active as unfinished business.

(4) **SF 2396** Department of Revenue bill that among many other things addresses the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund by clarifying the dates on which annual funds will be distributed to the county veterans service offices. Once the fund has a balance of \$50 million on July 1 of the current (sometime in the future) and preceding fiscal years. Passed Senate, passed House Ways and Means Committee

(5) **SF 2406** Requires IDVA to work with the Department of Inspections and Appeals on the creation of a veterans benefit poster which that department will distribute. Passed Senate Ways and Means Subcommittee, unfinished business

(6) **SF 2407** Requires IDVA to assist the DNR in verification of disabled veteran or POW status for a lifetime fur harvester license. Passed Senate

(7) **SF 2415** authorizes the issuance of stickers to be placed on special license plates for a fee of \$10 with the proceeds being deposited into the Veterans License Plate Fund. The stickers include: Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Action Badge, Combat Action Ribbon, Air Force Combat Action Medal, and the Combat Medical Badge. These plates would be similar to other military plates with the difference being the DOT would issue a plate with a blank space for the sticker rather than the plate being printed with the emblem. Passed Senate Ways and Means Committee

(8) **SF 2446** waives business filing fee for Veterans. Passed House, referred to Senate Ways and Means, subcommittee assigned

(9) **SF 2663** allocates \$300K annually from the amount received from the Iowa Lottery for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund to pay for national CVSO training. Effect would be that the trust fund reaches \$50 million slightly later than originally planned. Passed House, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Assigned

17. Presentation by Todd Jacobus for Charlene Gooch, Iowa Ambassador for Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation

a. Charlene Gooch plans to attend the July 10, 2024 meeting, but asked for the IDVA to provide an update on this Memorial Foundation.

b. The Military Women's Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery's ceremonial entrance is America's only national memorial dedicated to its military women.

c. The mission of the Foundation is to honor military women, past and present, for their service and sacrifice to our Nation's defense and to educate and empower the public with personal stories and experiences of women patriots throughout America's history who have chosen to serve the Nation and the cause of freedom, and to remember those who paved the way. Charlene Gooch is encouraging Iowa women Veterans to preserve their story by going to this website: [www.womensmemorial.org](http://www.womensmemorial.org) and clicking on "Register Your Service"

18. Presentation by Todd Jacobus, Commandant Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

a. **Kudos – Iowa Hawkeye Women in Final Four for 2<sup>nd</sup> Consecutive Year!** All of Iowa should be proud of the Iowa Hawkeye Women's Basketball Team. Obviously they are talented athletes. They are led by West Des Moines native, Caitlin Clark, who has set so many NCAA records that I've lost count. They win.

But more importantly – they win with class. I hope some of you noticed the Iowa Hawkeyes standing together in-line, holding hands, as our National Anthem was played before their game in Albany, New York against Louisiana State. They honored our Nation by showing great respect. I want to call that out to this group. I think even our Cyclone fans out there will join me in cheering on the Iowa Hawkeyes during their games in Cleveland, Ohio. Go Hawks!

**b. Info – Fire in Dack Building.** On Tuesday, March 26, 2024, a fire alarm went off at 4:43 am in Dack Building West Wing. The resident in the room is blind and does not hear well. He was woken by water pouring out of the sprinkler system and smoke in his room. Members of our direct-care team, Nicole Bailey (Night Shift Public Service Supervisor), Nicole Kendall (Night Shift Registered Nurse), Lashay Wiebenbohn (Certified Nursing Assistant), and Kendra Castellanos, were on duty and were in the room next door doing cares when the fire started. As black smoke poured out of the room into the hallway, Nicole Bailey and Nikole Kendall rushed into the room, pulled him on his bed out of the room, and got him to a dry area. The resident shared with me that these health care professionals saved his life. The sprinkler system continued to dispense water. The Marshalltown Fire Department was notified immediately through both our contracted JCI Monitoring Station and our switchboard and was on site within minutes. The Marshalltown Police Department was on-site in four minutes. IVH third shift staff from throughout campus consolidated where they could and sent available team members to the Dack Building to address the emergency and immediately began moving residents out of their rooms, away from the dispensing sprinkler system, and into a dry area, as per the Iowa Veterans Home Standard Operating Procedures. At one point there was an inch of water on the floor. That water also affected the 3rd and 2nd Floors, and residents in several of those rooms needed to be moved to dry areas. Those residents were moved back into their rooms by 7:30 am. There was a small Army of staff members with massive quantities of towels and squeegees soaking up water on Dack 2, 3, & 4, and the majority of the water was cleaned up on all three floors by 7:35 am. Upon further investigation, it is **suspected** that the source of the fire was a Magnifier reader that reflected light into a basket, which then became hot and caught on fire. Our Iowa Veterans Home staff cared for affected residents like they would their own family members.

**c. Action – Nursing Position Vacancies at Iowa Veterans Home.** We have a capacity for 447 residents at the Iowa Veterans Home. Like many long-term care facilities, we are challenged in hiring and retaining certified staff. We have an outstanding recruiting and retention team engaged in events throughout the State of Iowa. If any of our Veterans community / stakeholders knows of medical professionals looking for an outstanding workplace and opportunity, then please direct them to me! Listed below are the positions and the number of vacancies in each position.

- (1) Nurse Clinician – 1 vacancy
- (2) Registered Nurse (RN) – 4 vacancies
- (3) Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) – 19 vacancies
- (4) Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA) – 53 vacancies

**d. Inform – Commissioner Update.** Two commissioners on the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs are attending their final meeting as Commissioners today.

(1) Gary Wattnem has represented the Reserve Organization of America (ROA) on the ICVA since 2016. His second term concludes on April 30, 2024. Thank you, Gary, for your work!

(2) Mary Van Horn has represented the American Veterans (AMVETS) on the ICVA since 2016. Her second term concludes on April 30, 2024. Thank you, Mary, for your work!

**e. Inform – Commissioners.** We have four commissioners who were appointed / reappointed to the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs.

(1) Governor Reynolds appointed Linda Jones to represent AMVETS on the ICVA. This appointment was confirmed by the Senate on April 1, 2024. Linda's tenure on the Commission will commence on May 1, 2024.

(2) Governor Reynolds appointed Reginald Richardson to represent ROA on the ICVA. This appointment was confirmed by the Senate on April 1, 2024. Reginald's tenure on the Commission will commence on May 1, 2024.

(3) Governor Reynolds re-appointed Becky Dirks Haugsted to represent the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Becky was completing Carol Whitmore's 4-year initial appointment that she vacated when she became National Junior Vice Commander In Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Becky's re-appointment was confirmed by the Senate on April 1, 2024.

(4) Governor Reynolds re-appointed Scott Miller to represent the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Scott was completing Kenneth Lloyd's 4-year appointment. Scott's re-appointment was confirmed by the Senate on April 1, 2024.

**f. Inform – Coffee & Camaraderie.** I met with Kris Jones (United States Marine Corps Veteran & Waterloo native) and Dave Grimm (USMC & Iowa Army National Guard Retiree, and Waterloo native) at the Iowa Veterans Home on March 26 to discuss the "Coffee & Camaraderie" program that Kris Jones began in Black Hawk County, and which has become a standard that others have modeled throughout the State of Iowa. Kris and Dave talked about this program, how it builds friendships, provides venues for information exchange, and provides a network that results in our Veterans community knowing that they are never alone. I wish each Iowa Veteran could have the opportunity to meet Kris, as he is enthusiastic about helping people, has dedicated significant time and his own resources in building this network, and has volunteered to help others do the same in their community. Kris Jones can be reached at cell: (319) 269-2937. Look for details about this program in your opportunity. These C & Cs are scheduled to meet monthly on the same day, time and location, attendance is optional, someone organizes the agenda and facilitates the conversation, and all present at the event share their experiences, perspectives, lessons learned, points of contact, and "how to" address problems / issues. These organizations / gatherings are already taking place in:

(1) Mason City (see Josh Davison and Tommy Balterria)

(2) Hamilton County (see Ryan Sawyer)

(3) Des Moines (see Kaylor Schumacher & Jeremy Frisbey)

(4) Black Hawk County / Waterloo (see Jen & Andy Schreiber & Kris Jones)

(5) Iowa City (see John Mikelson & Brandon Brandy Hudson)

(6) Marengo | Iowa County (see Jenni Olson)

(7) Dubuque (see Randy Rennison).

g. **Inform – Iowa World War II Soldier MIA Honored on April 6.** There will be a celebration of life with full military honors for Raymond U. Schlamp, on Saturday, April 6, 2024 at 10:00 am at Lawrence Community Center, 600 East Main Street, Anamosa, Iowa. Raymond Schlamp was killed in action in the “Horshoe Woods” near Darnot, France during World War II while serving with the U.S. Army in Company G 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. He was a native of Riceville, Mitchell County, and his remains were exhumed from the Lorraine American Cemetery in Limey, France in June 2021, and he was later identified by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). Raymond will be interred during a private ceremony at Linwood Cemetery in Dubuque, Iowa, where his ashes will be interred in his mother’s casket. Great coverage and details in these two articles.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/467224/remains-world-war-ii-soldier-buried-dubuque-iowa>

<https://www.thegazette.com/news/world-war-ii-soldier-killed-in-action-returns-home-for-anamosa-funeral/>

h. **Action – Communication with Veterans & Stakeholders.** I have received several inquiries about the flow of Veterans related information from the Department to Counties, Veteran Service Organization, and individual Veterans. Basically, our information flow consists of press releases and postings on our IDVA and IVH Facebook pages. Obviously, there is a great deal of information that is of interest to Veterans but does not merit a press release or a social media posting. And, many of our stakeholders are not on social media. Dave Grimm, a Black Hawk County resident, suggested that we publish a newsletter. Dave is on a newsletter distribution list from the State of Nebraska, and he is grateful for the information that comes out each month. I will be looking into this with Karl Lettow to see how we improve our communication.

i. **Inform – Communication with Staff & Commissioners.** Each month our IDVA Bureau Chiefs send out an end of month newsletter to staff and to the Commission with an overview of our on-going operations. In addition, staff members can anonymously submit feedback (compliments, concerns, complaints, criticisms) to me in a written form. I respond to feedback in a monthly video, which I also share with the Commission. Bottom line is that we are accountable to our team, and respond to every inquiry. If there is anyone out there who has comments or feedback to me, or anyone on our team, then please reach out to me. I can be reached at [todd.jacobus@ivh.state.ia.us](mailto:todd.jacobus@ivh.state.ia.us) and cell: (641) 750-9399.

j. **Action – Iowa Veterans Entrepreneurship Conference.** Iowa State University is hosting a Veterans Entrepreneurship Conference on May 3-4, 2024 at ISU Research Park Core Facility, 1805 Collaboration Place, Ames, Iowa 50010. I encourage Veterans interested in learning more about business opportunities to attend this conference. For more information reach out to [info@isupicenter.org](mailto:info@isupicenter.org). Details available online at <https://www.isupicenter.org/event/iowa-veterans-entrepreneurship-conference/>

k. **Action – 2024 / 2025 Veterans Day on the Hill.** Thanks to all of the Commissioners who attended Veterans Day on the Hill on Wednesday, January 17, 2024. This was an excellent kickoff to the legislative session. Governor Reynolds asked to meet with Commissioners and State level Veteran service organization leadership the leadership in her office in advance of the ceremony. It was great to capture a

photo of all participants in the staircase before the program started. Let's plan on doing this again on January 22, 2025. **We need to put together a list of 2024-25 leaders to invite to this event.** Thanks to all for our cooperation!

**l. Inform – Spring 2024 School.** The IDVA & IACCVSO Spring 2024 School for County Veteran Service Officers will take place on Tuesday thru 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. We will review the schedule for the Spring School during a separate meeting at 1:00 pm today.

#### m. Events

April 6, 2024 – Celebration of Life for Raymond Schlamp, World War II MIA / KIA in France. Location: Lawrence Community Center, 600 East Main Street, Anamosa, Iowa

April 17, 2024 6:00-8:00 pm – The River Valley Veterans Network – a place for companies in and around the Boone and Story County areas to attract high level talent for their teams and communities – will be meeting at Story City American Legion Post 59, 301 Washington St., Story City. Point of Contact: [RRVetNet@yahoo.com](mailto:RRVetNet@yahoo.com). (Thanks John Mikelson!)

April 24, 2024 11:30 am-4:00 pm – Blood Drive at Iowa Veterans Home

May 14, 2024 11:00 am – Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day Ceremony / 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Iowa Vietnam Memorial Wall Dedication at Iowa Vietnam Veteran Memorial on East Side of Capitol Grounds

May 27, 2024 8:00 am – Memorial Day Program at Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Keynote Speaker: Brigadier General Jodi Tymeson (Iowa Army National Guard, Retired)

May 27, 2024 10:30 am – Memorial Day Program at Iowa Veterans Home, Keynote Speaker: Colonel Brad Dostal (U.S. Army Retired)

May 29-30, 2024 – Commandant & Licensed Nursing Home Administrator attending VA Midwest Health Care Network (VISN 23) Planning Summit, St. Paul, MN

July 10, 2024 10:00 am – Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters, Johnston

August 12, 2024 10:00 am – Iowa State Fair Veterans Parade, Iowa State Fairgrounds, Des Moines

August 12-16, 2024 – National Association of State Veterans Homes Conference, Orlando, FL

August 18-21, 2024 – National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs Conference, Indianapolis, IN

September 27, 2024 10:00 am – The Final Salute to Unclaimed Veterans, West Des Moines Christian Church / Iowa Veterans Cemetery

October 2, 2024 – Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Veterans Home, Malloy Leisure Resource Center, Marshalltown

November 11, 2024 8:00 am – Veterans Day Program at Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Van Meter

November 11, 2024 10:30 am – Veterans Day Program at Iowa Veterans Home, Marshalltown

December 14, 2024 8:00 am – Wreaths Across America Program at Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Van Meter

December 14, 2024 10:00 am – Wreaths Across America Program at Iowa Veterans Home, Marshalltown

January 8, 2025 10:00 am – Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters, Johnston

January 22, 2025 – Veterans Day on the Hill at Iowa State Capitol

April 2, 2025 – Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, Iowa Veterans Home, Malloy Leisure Resource Center, Marshalltown

**19. Motion by Gary Wattnem to approve minutes from Trust Fund conference call meeting on January 4, 2024.** Second by Mary Van Horn. Motion Approved unanimously

**20. Motion by Darlene McMartin to approve minutes from Trust Fund conference call meeting on February 1, 2024.** Second by Joella Perry. Motion Approved unanimously

**21. Motion by Mary Van Horn to approve minutes from Trust Fund conference call meeting on March 7, 2024.** Second by Scott Miller. Motion Approved unanimously

**22. New Business. Motion by Mary Van Horn to deny an appeal to an original application denial.** Second by Darlene McMartin. Motion approved unanimously. Background: The original application was denied because the Veteran had the work completed before the application had been approved, and the Trust Fund will not pay for incurred debt. Melissa Miller confirmed that the County Veteran Service Officer had explained the process to the Veteran, he was aware of the approval process, but proceeded to get the work done before the application was approved regardless.

**23. Public Comment:**

a. Dan Gannon made a reminder of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day on May 14, 2024. We will be sending out a press release soon. This is the 40th anniversary of the May 14, 1984 dedication of the Vietnam Wall here in Iowa. Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will read the 868 names of Iowans killed in Vietnam. Those who attend will receive a new and improved directory.



b. Dan Green, Kossuth County CVSO: Dan wanted to call to the attention of the Commission that CVSOs are having a problem with the stepped up timetable for enrollment into VA Health Care. [Dan Green, dgreen@kossuthcounty.iowa.gov, (515) 295-9036]

(1) Dan stated that the PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for free health care.

(2) The problem is that the VA Initial Application Form 1010EZ provides the Veteran an option of providing financial information in Section 6. If the Veteran selects "no", then it appears that the VA does not process the application.

(3) We believe that the VA should process the application – even if the Veteran does not provide their financial data. If the Veteran enters "yes", then all of the financials for the Veteran and spouse are input into Section 7.

(4) Dan suggests that even if the Veteran does not include their financial information that the application should be processed. Later, the VA could do a means test, send out a follow-up financial data request, and determine if the Veteran makes too much money to qualify for free health care at the VA.

(5) If they make too much money, then will the VA recoup the cost of all appointments attended from the time eligibility was established until the time that means confirmed that co-pay is required?

**24. Motion to adjourn at 12:50 pm by Darlene McMartin. Second by Joella Perry. Motion approved unanimously.**

