

Lancaster County Veterans Service

2017 Director's Report

November 16, 2017

Rick Ringlein

Lancaster County Veterans Service Center

Under the direction and guidance of the Veterans Service Committee the national accredited staff of the Lancaster County Veterans Service Center assists and advises armed forces veterans, along with their dependents, of the benefits available to them under federal, state, and local regulations.

We file and process veterans' service-connected compensation claims and non-service-connected disability pension claims; along with claims for state and federal benefits. We ensure that all applications are properly completed and submitted to the appropriate adjudicating agency.

We assist clients in applying for Nebraska Veterans' Aid Fund monies. We process claims for wartime veterans who are applying for Lancaster County Veterans Aid Fund monies.

We assist clients in securing Department of Veteran Affairs' education benefits at the federal level and tuition waivers at the state level.

We assist clients in applying for admission to the Nebraska Veterans Home system.

We assist surviving spouses in securing Department of Veteran Affairs' death and burial benefits.

We advise veterans on the Department of Veteran Affairs' guaranteed home loan program and assist them in obtaining Certificates of Eligibility.

We assist veterans and their dependents in obtaining missing or replacement military medals, ribbons and badges.

We assist veterans and their dependents with applications to correct errors in military records.

We assist veterans with military discharge upgrade applications.

We counsel veterans on issues they may be facing and direct or refer them to the appropriate professional services.

We attend community events and share information on the various veteran programs in the county and make oral presentations to groups, as requested, on topics pertaining to veterans' affairs.

<http://lancaster.ne.gov/vets/index.htm>

Lancaster County Veterans Service Officer

Under the direction and guidance of the Veterans Service Committee is the Director of the Lancaster County veterans' service office; supervises a four person staff and oversees the day to day operations of the office. Makes sure said staff is well trained and that all agency members make a professional impression on those they come in contact with; be it clients, other county agencies, other service offices, state agencies and federal agencies. In conjunction with the finance department develops and maintains the agency's budget. We serve a population of more than 20,000 veterans and dependents. As the senior service officer I review and make determinations regarding the eligibility of persons applying for Veterans' benefits at the county, state and federal level and assist veterans and their dependents in the application process for those benefits.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities:

As agency director, on a daily basis I supervise all administrative matters in Veterans Service Office, including personnel, budget preparation and general ledger monitoring of the county veterans aid fund. I am also the senior service officer and I meet with clients and process their claims for benefits. As the Senior Veterans Service Officer I perform administrative work in advising armed forces veterans and their dependents of benefits available under federal, state, and local laws. My work involves legal representation of clients in assisting them in determining eligibility for veteran's benefits. I assist in completing and submitting required forms, obtaining necessary legal documents, medical reports and other data as required by law or in support of claim.

Our Clients

LANCASTER COUNTY'S total population is 306,468

19,140 county residents are veterans 6.24%

5,564 are drawing VA compensation 28.5%

207 are drawing VA pensions

Veterans' population by percentage of Disability Compensation

0-20% 2,447 10% is \$133.17 20% is \$263.23

30-40% 991 30% is \$407.75 40% is \$587.36

50-60% 735 50% is \$836.13 60% is \$1,059.09

70-90% 843 70% is \$1,334.71 80% is \$1,551.48

90% is \$1,743.48

100% 441 100% is \$2,906.83

(Rates shown are the single/unmarried rates)

100% disability is a minimum payment of \$2,906.83. The 441 veterans are paid a combined total of \$1,281,912 each month by the VA)

Important accomplishments

- Moved our office to a new location with little disruption of services. New modern office space has been well received and appreciated by clients and staff.
- Parking has not been an issue for our clients.

Waiting Room



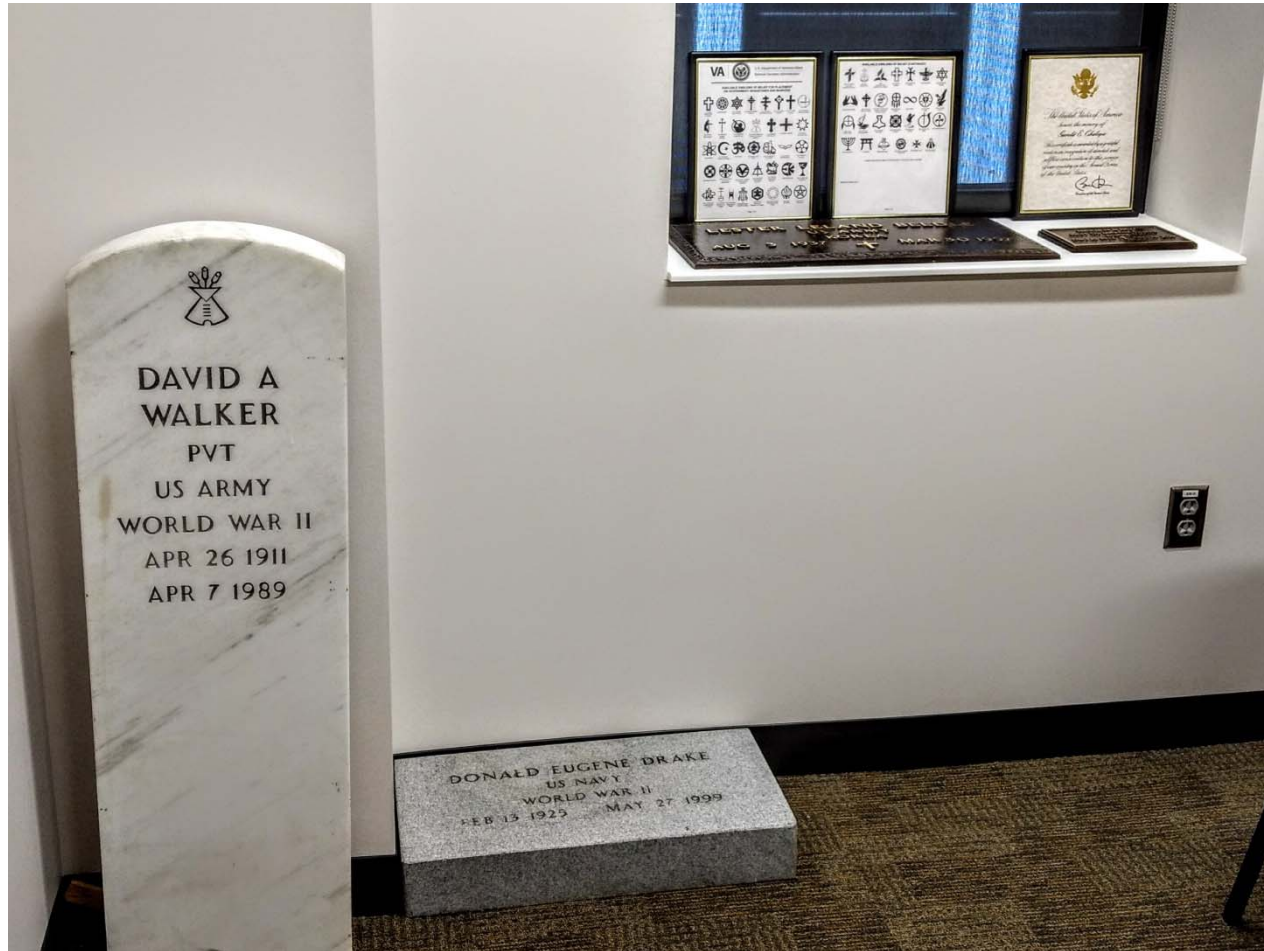
Waiting Room



Conference Room



VA Headstones and Markers



Goals

- Continue to provide the best possible service to our clients in every aspect.
- Continue to further our professional education through attending structured training from our state association.
- Make sure our clients' needs have been fully met when dealing with veterans issues.

Challenges

- Will need to add new personnel as staff ages and retires.
- Difficult to replace experienced personnel quickly; as this career has a steep learning curve.

Information Technology Needs

- With only four employees, our needs in this area are minimal. Will need to replace all PCs in the near future, as all four desktop systems are outdated.

Summary

- Our staff continues to set the standard for the Veterans Service Officers in the State of Nebraska. I truly believe we do our best to make our clients' journey through the veterans' benefits process as painless as possible.
- We all appreciate being able to serve our veterans and their dependents on a daily basis.