



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 29, 2016

Contact: 608-266-0517
WDVAMedia@dva.wi.gov

Veterans Home at King Provides Top-Quality Care to Veterans

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is confident that we provide safe, top-quality care to our nation's heroes and our record reflects that reality.

"We believe caring for our veterans and their families is an honor," WDVA John A. Scocos said. "It is our top priority to ensure that we provide the safest and best quality care to our nation's heroes. We want veterans and their family members to enjoy living at King while also receiving the top quality care they deserve. Our record reflects that attitude. Wisconsin should be proud of our veterans homes."

Wisconsin Veterans Homes undergo regular rigorous inspection by both State and Federal entities who review a set of 187 healthcare standards and 82 life safety standards. State Department of Health Services and US Department of Veterans Affairs annual inspections of the Wisconsin Veterans Homes take several days to complete by teams of professionals whose job it is to understand the many regulations that affect the care that individuals receive at 24-hour skilled nursing care facilities.

At the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, there are three buildings that are rated five stars (out of five) and one that is rated four. The rating assigned to each individual nursing home is based on: quality of care delivered; direct care staffing levels; and the results of annual healthcare inspections conducted by each state's department of health. Only 15 percent of homes in the country receive a five star rating. The US Department of Veterans Affairs has not cited a single health care deficiency during its 2015 or 2016 survey at King.

King has recently undergone a financial turnaround. In 2011, financial statements reflected a \$12.8 million deficit at Wisconsin Veterans Homes. In 2016 the homes have an over \$40 million cash balance. With the Wisconsin Veterans Homes thriving, the state has authorized over \$150 million in reinvestment into the veterans homes since 2011. In April 2014, Governor Walker signed legislation also authorizing the construction of a new \$80 million state of the art facility at King to replace some of the aging buildings.

Governor Walker has provided the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) with more than \$10 million since 2012, the first general fund appropriations that the VTF received since 1988.

In addition to the general fund appropriations, the Legislature - with input by state veterans service organizations and a recommendation from a veterans task force - in a bipartisan vote gave the WDVA the ability to transfer funds to the VTF from the WDVA's main source of income, the Wisconsin Veterans Homes.

-MORE-

This means that once WDVA has spent its full spending authority that is authorized by the Wisconsin State Legislature at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, remaining cash balances are then forwarded to the VTF for use on programs, benefits and services that go to all of Wisconsin's 400,000 veterans.

Funding at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes is generated primarily from federal resources such as payments based on daily census at the Homes. Beginning in 2007, prior to Governor Scott Walker taking office, the transfers from the nursing home balance to the trust fund have been approved by members of both parties.

Ensuring that Wisconsin Veterans Homes have appropriate staffing levels in the face of a nationwide shortage of LPNs and nurse aides is an ongoing priority. Looking at King's most recent payroll, about 5.5% of all hours paid were paid at overtime for our caregivers. To keep these rates low, the WDVA utilizes temp agency staffing to fill shifts. At King, staff retention rates for full-time RNs, LPNs, and nurse aides are better than the statewide rates by about 20 percent due to WDVA efforts to raise wages, offer competitive benefits and alter scheduling practices.

###