

TO THOSE IN UNIFORM SERVING TODAY AND TO
THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE PAST, WE
HONOR YOU TODAY AND EVERY DAY!



GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT

2018

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
2650 LAFRANIER RD, TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN 49686

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This 2018 annual report is a compilation of data from various sources to show the direct impact that Veterans and their families have on Grand Traverse County. The Veteran Services Center assists them in applying for compensation, pension, healthcare, education and a wide variety of other benefits for which they are entitled. This, in turn, affords them the opportunity to maintain a livelihood and take advantage of the many things Grand Traverse County has to offer.

Veterans and their families are a cornerstone in this county and provide an invaluable economic impact. With the assistance of the various veterans organizations here in Grand Traverse County and other outreach programs, we ensure Veterans are made aware and maximize all the benefits and resources available to them. We work diligently to enrich the lives of every Veteran and their dependents that call Northern Michigan home.

The staff here at Grand Traverse County Department of Veterans Affairs are proud of our accomplishments over the last year and the continued growth we are experiencing. We strive to provide the best services to the Veterans and their dependents of Grand Traverse County for the sacrifices they have made while serving our country.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Grand Traverse County Veterans Affairs Office strives to provide professional assistance to veterans and their families with understanding and accessing available benefits through Federal, State of Michigan and local government agencies.

BACKGROUND

The Grand Traverse County Department of Veterans Affairs (GTCVA) was created November 27, 1991 by Grand Traverse County Commissioners resolution 277-91 of adoption of Michigan Act 192 of 1953 "An act to create a county department of veterans' affairs in certain counties, and to prescribe its powers and duties; to create the county veteran service fund and to provide for contributors to and expenditures from that fund; and to transfer the powers and duties of the soldier's relief commission in those counties."

The Grand Traverse County VA Committee is comprised of 7 veterans appointed by the Grand Traverse County Commissioners for 2-4 year terms. The office is comprised of a Director, an Office Specialist and 3 Benefit Counselors (Veteran Service Officers).

The Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners established a levy of .1185 mills in 2016. This millage provided \$ 549,700 in FY 2017, and \$ 564,770 in FY 2018.

Our office had Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with Benzie and Leelanau counties until the end of 2018. In 2018, Benzie paid \$33,401 and Leelanau paid \$46,618 for veteran services provided to their counties. During this MOU, GTCVA would staff their office one day a week (Monday- Benzie, Tuesday- Leelanau) in their counties to see and assist their veterans. In November 2018, Benzie decided not to renew the contract for 2019 and hired their own Veteran Service Officer. The contract with Leelanau is ongoing.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Shortly after I took over as Director on January 3, 2018, I successfully worked with the staff on creating more structure through new office procedures. The office had been without a Director for several months. By the end the first quarter of FY 2018, I had also worked with the VA Committee on creating the Grand Traverse County VA Committee Bylaws. This was the first set of Bylaws utilized by the VA Committee.

Throughout FY 2018, the office adapted to changes in technology and opportunities they provide. The purchase of a new copier/fax machine made the office printing and copying more efficient. Our office underwent a complete remodel of old office space that was in a different part of the building for a total cost of \$55,101.29. This allowed all offices to be located within the same area and with updated furniture.

The office switched from a closed solution to the Michigan State Solution of Vetraspec. We had over 14,000 veterans records transferred to our new Vetraspec information database which is utilized by most county offices. This system provides our staff with immediate access to current veteran information, automated forms completion and scanned documents. This system enhances our ability to consistently and efficiently deliver veterans' benefits assistance to our veterans and their families. This created an annual savings of \$2,500 as the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency pays for the software for each county.

Throughout FY 2018, the Director and all staff attended various veteran benefits training conferences, including: Michigan Association of County Veteran Counselors Training conferences, National Association of County Veteran Service Officers training conference, US Department of Veteran Affairs (USDVA), America's Warrior Partnership, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) and Training, Responsibility, Involvement & Preparation (TRIP) training. This accreditation helps ensure that our benefits counselors are properly trained, up-to-date on veterans benefit laws and prepared to provide quality service to veterans and families.

Our staff participated in or presented in various Veterans Day ceremonies with the Senior Care Network. Staff also represented our office with various community organizations, which include: Grand Traverse Veterans Coalition, Reining Liberty Ranch, Parkinson's Network North, Michigan Works!, Senior Care Network, Grand Traverse County Parks & Recreation, Grand Traverse Public Health, Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Michigan, Bay Area Senior Advocates (BASA), Habitat for Humanity, Warrior Sailing, NMC BBQ, DK5K Race, Vets Center, Northern Michigan Fair and North Michigan Community Action Agency. Our staff also made presentations at several funeral homes and numerous senior care facilities in Grand Traverse County.

In addition to representing Grand Traverse County, the Director holds the position of National Service Director with the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO). This keeps the office connected to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Throughout this report, you will notice statistics and information regarding our workload and the amount of funds which are expended on veterans' benefits in Grand Traverse County. Please keep in mind that our office is not dealing with numbers and statistics, but the lives of those who served our country.

If there are any questions regarding this report or our office, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael W. Roof

Michael W. Roof
Director

US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPENDITURES

The statistics within this report are from the latest GDx report released February 2018.

The chart below summarizes the monetary benefits expended to Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau County veterans and their dependents for Federal Benefits during Fiscal Year ending on September 30, 2018.

	POP	# of Compensation	# of Pension	Comp & Pen \$
Benzie	1,728	308	23	\$ 5,997,000
Grand Traverse	6,298	1,391	102	\$ 25,500,000
Leelanau	1,826	238	15	\$ 4,353,000

County/ Congressional District	Veteran Population*	Total Expenditure	Compensation & Pension	Construction	Education & Vocational Rehabilitation/ Employment	Loan Guaranty#	General Operating Expenses	Insurance & Indemnities	Medical Care	Unique Patients**
BENZIE	1,728	\$ 9,647	\$ 5,997	\$ -	\$ 369	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 57	\$ 3,226	496
GRAND TRAVERSE	6,298	\$ 40,866	\$ 25,508	\$ -	\$ 2,896	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 928	\$ 11,535	1,713
LEELANAU	1,826	\$ 7,367	\$ 4,353	\$ -	\$ 304	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 114	\$ 2,596	412

COUNTY VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The data below is snapshot into the scope of work from FY 2018.

OFFICE STATISTICS– FY 2018

Office Visits

Grand Traverse	2,287
Benzie	285
Leelanau	92

Phone Calls

Incoming	14,255
Outgoing	8,771

BURIAL & MARKER EXPENSES – FY 2018

Michigan Public Act 235 of 1911 (MCL 35.801-35.804) mandates the payment by the county of \$300 towards the burial of eligible veterans and their spouses and to set government markers. It is the duty of the Veterans Affairs Committee to administer this program.

In FY 2018, we processed 44 applications for burial benefits. Our office approved 48 County Burial Allowance applications for a total expenditure of \$ 13,200.00 We also approved 14 Marker Installation applications for a cost of \$ 675.17. The total spent for burial allowances and marker installations was \$13,875.17.

County Burial / Marker Applications

Grand Traverse	58
Benzie	10
Leelanau	22

Grand Traverse County Burial Expenditures

\$ 13,875.17

RELIEF EXPENSES – FY 2018

Under Michigan Act 214 of 1899 states the county board of commissioners of each county shall annually levy a tax, not exceeding 1/10 of a mill on each dollar, to be levied and collected as provided by law, upon the taxable property of each township and city, for their respective counties, for the *purpose of creating a fund for the relief of honorably discharged indigent members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and women's auxiliaries and the indigent spouses, minor children, and parents of each indigent or deceased member who served during a period of war as described in 38 CFR 3.2.*

The emergency relief budget for FY 2018 was \$30,000.

Emergency Relief Applications

18 Approved

Annual Relief Expenditures

\$ 14,214.08

MICHIGAN VETERANS TRUST FUND



In 1946, the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund was created from \$50 million in post-World War II reserve funds. From utility bills to home repairs to medical costs, the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund (MVTF) offers combat-era veterans and their families a way to overcome unexpected expenses and get back on their feet financially.

The Grand Traverse County Department of Veterans Affairs has four Trust Fund Agents that assist veterans in applying for this financial assistance program. *The MVTF provides another avenue of financial assistance to veterans and their families at NO COST to Grand Traverse County taxpayers.*

FY 2018 MVTF DETAILS

	Withdrawn	Approved	Partial Approval	Disapproved	# of People Assisted	#of Paid Grants	Total # of Apps
Benzie	0	7	0	3	14	9	10
Grand Traverse	1	24	2	9	58	36	36
Leelanau	1	1	0	0	2	1	2

Types of Assistance Granted

County	Shelter	Utilities	Transportation	Medical	Misc	Total	
Benzie	\$ 4,466.64	\$ 708.31	\$ 1,024.80	\$ 459.75	\$ 1,220.37	\$ 7,879.87	
Grand Traverse	\$ 13,856.96	\$ 5,642.99	\$ 6,297.51	\$ 1,884.00	0	\$ 27,681.46	
Leelanau	0	\$ 497.79	0	0	0	\$ 497.79	

STRATEGIES FOR 2019

Assist in forming Veterans Treatment Court

We have been awarded a Veterans Treatment Court Planning Initiative grant from Justice for Vets. The grant pays for trainers to travel to our area to train the Veterans Court Team. This is scheduled to take place in September 2019. We are currently getting daily jail reports that show the number of veterans incarcerated overnight and those currently booked in the GTC jail.

Expand Outreach

We have set up outreach in several different locations to help assist veterans and their dependents in learning about VA benefits. Every Friday we will rotate locations: Kingsley library, Interlochen library, Leelanau Government Center, and Mill Creek Elementary. We will also be at Reining Liberty Ranch every Thursday afternoon to provide assistance to veterans utilizing services at their location.

New Vehicle Purchase

Due to the outreach expansion, the board has approved the purchase of a 2019 Dodge Durango. This has been put before the Grand Traverse County Commissioners for final approval in January 2019. The department has been without a department vehicle for over a year. We have a tent, table, chairs and marketing materials that will need to be transported to all outreach events.

New Partnerships

We have partnered up with the Senior Center Network to help pay for various health classes for area senior veterans. These classes are provided at a low cost of \$2 - \$5 per class. A punch card will be provided to veterans for \$2 off any class at the Senior Center. This is to help promote active living among veterans who are on a fixed monthly budget.

DAV Transportation

At the end of December 2018, we started taking the calls from the Disable American Veterans (DAV) transportation line. We take all phone calls from veterans needing transportation for VA medical appointments and send a daily report to the DAV transport dispatcher.

Staff

Director

Michael W. Roof

Office Specialist

Michael Redmond

Veteran Service Officers

Erin Whitney

Chris Dailey

Lucas Clark

2018 VA Committee Members

Chairman

Robert "Art" Eisner

Vice-Chairman

Ron Hofmeister

Secretary

John Block

Neal Horning

Laverne Broughton

Jakob Rossi

Jim Wegener