



Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Women Veterans News

February 2023



WDVA First Woman Veteran Secretary Mary Kolar Retires

WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar retired effective on January 2, 2023. Over the last four years, Kolar dedicated herself to improve veteran benefits, services, and opportunities in Wisconsin.

She also chaired a special blue-ribbon commission created by Governor Evers to develop programs addressing challenges facing veterans in the state, including increased support and resources for



Past VFW State Commander Renee Lockington Simpson, wins Wisconsin Women Veteran Quarterly Impact Award

Renee began her military journey when she enlisted in the Army in 1993 and served as an Army Medic until 1997. Besides being trained as a Medic, she also completed the following courses: Combat Lifesaver Course, Ambulance Crew Instructor Advance First Aid Instructor, Wound Care & Suturing, Phlebotomy Course, IV Therapy, Immunization, Composite Health Care System,

mental health, housing, and substance use disorders.

"Mary has been with us since Day One and has always been a fierce advocate for Wisconsin's more than 300,000 veterans," Evers said regarding her retirement. "As a veteran herself, we have valued Mary's insights and expertise to bolster supports and services to our nation's heroes and their families."

In an email to department staff, Kolar thanked all WDVA employees and said she plans to continue helping veterans.

"As my time as leader of this department comes to an end, please know that I am not saying 'Goodbye' but that I look forward to continuing to serve Wisconsin veterans and their families in different ways," said Kolar

Prior to joining Evers' cabinet, Kolar was on the Dane County Board of Supervisors and previously served in the Navy for 28 years retiring at the rank of Captain.

Fair Winds and Following Seas!

Thank you, former Secretary Mary Kolar, for being a fearless leader these past four years!



Are you looking for a way to express your "heartfelt" appreciation for our veterans this Valentine's Day? WDVA is asking for caring individuals to send Valentine's Day cards or letters of appreciation to our veterans living at our skilled care Homes in Chippewa Falls, King, and Union Grove.

Field Sanitation, and Threat and Risk Assessment Course.

She was an Acute Care Medical Specialist/ Medical Team Supervisor during her deployment to Bosnia with the 108th Military Police Company. Renee's most notable military awards include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, and others.

Renee Simpson has been active in the veteran community since her return to Wisconsin and is passionate about helping veterans and their families. Renee has continuously served in the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) since 2003. She served as Post Commander, District Commander, and State Commander. Renee was the first female to serve as Wisconsin VFW State Commander 2013-2014. Not only was she the first female, but she was also the second youngest veteran to be the VFW State Commander ever.

Renee currently works with the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs as a Soldier and Family Readiness Specialist (SFRS) servicing the Army National Guard. Being an SFRS is more than a nine-to-five job. Renee has to assist service members or their families whenever they need her, including weekends, evenings, and even holidays, as the service members are deployed worldwide. Renee continues her passion for helping service members, veterans, and family members through her civilian job and the VFW.

Congratulations Renee! Thank you for your service to our #WisVets. Renee's complete biography including active duty and veteran awards and achievements can be found by clicking [here](#).

"While it may seem like a small gesture, these small acts of kindness can really make a huge difference to those living in our Veterans Homes," said Diane Lynch, Administrator of the Division of Homes at WDVA. "This is a wonderful opportunity to thank our veterans and their loved ones in our care."

Please be sure to mail your Valentine's Day cards to our veterans no later than February 10, so they may arrive in time to be distributed to all our Homes on February 14.

Please send to: Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, Attn: Veteran Valentines, PO Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843



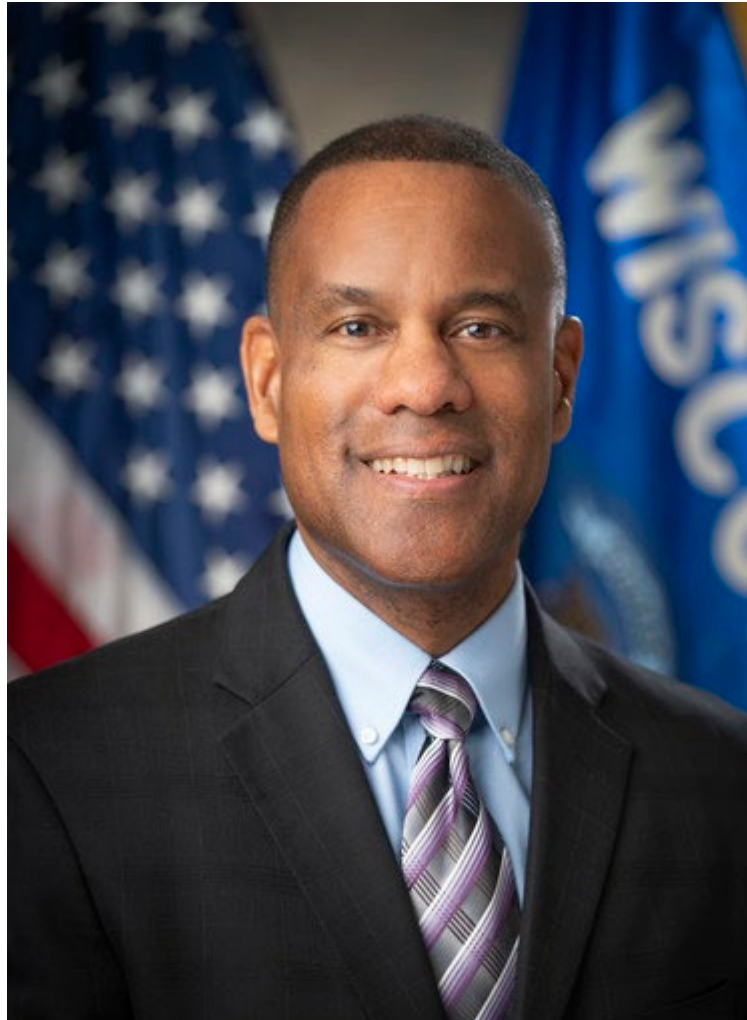
Save the Date!

Kickoff event on Friday June 2, 2023, and Saturday June 3, 2023, will be main event.

WDVA is excited to partner once again with our friends at [Trinity Equestrian Center](#) in Eau Claire, WI. Registration information and event details will be available on March 1, 2022.

We hope you will join us!

[#WisVetsWomen](#) [#femaleveteranretreat](#)



Gov. Evers appoints James Bond to lead WDVA

Governor Tony Evers announced the appointment of James Bond to be the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, effective January 9, 2023. His appointment fills the vacancy left by the retirement of former Secretary Mary Kolar earlier January.

Secretary-designee Bond brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the role as he has been with the department since 2010, most recently serving as Deputy Secretary, and previously as the Administrator of the Division of Benefits and Services.

"I am excited to work together to further the impact of veteran-focused initiatives and programs



Have you checked in on a fellow veteran lately? Winter months can be a difficult time for many, especially veterans. The cold weather can also keep us indoors and isolated. Staying in contact with friends and loved ones during the winter months is crucial for positive mental health and emotional happiness. WDVA encourages you to reach out to a veteran you may know in your life who would appreciate hearing from you. Your message can mean the world to them.

If you know of a veteran struggling with mental health issues, or if you are experiencing a personal crisis in your life, confidential help is available 24/7: Call 988, then press 1, to be connected to the Veteran Crisis Line.

[#WisVetsWednesdays](#) [#WisVets](#)
[#WisVetsWomen](#)



here in Wisconsin," says Bond. "I look forward to continue the great work with my colleagues at WDVA, our veteran service organizations, and local partners to ensure our veterans and their families voices are heard and needs are met."

[View the official release from the Governor's Office here](#)



I Am Not Invisible Campaign January 28, 2023

American Legion Department Commander Julie Muhle recently participated in the I Am Not Invisible (IANI) photoshoot co-sponsored by [American Legion Post 477 - St Nazianz, WI](#), and [Manitowoc County Veterans](#).

By spotlighting the many faces of this diverse and vital segment of the veteran community, I Am Not Invisible exhibits can be found across the country and aim to increase awareness and dialogue about

[Plan Your Visit!](#)

Take a break from your screens and make real memories with friends and family with a visit to the [Wisconsin Veterans Museum](#) on the Capitol Square. You'll learn about ordinary people who made the history you've read about. Our free [museum](#) is just one of the unique experiences downtown Madison offers. Can't wait to see you in the galleries!

The [Wisconsin Veterans Museum](#) holds events both virtually and in person. Find out more by visiting our events Calendar @ [Events - Wisconsin Veterans Museum \(wisvetsmuseum.com\)](#)

women veterans. These powerful images open viewers' eyes to the various levels of expertise found within the women veterans community. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum, a division of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, created its IANI exhibit centered around a photograph of a woman veteran and a quote tied to their military service.

At the fourth Wisconsin I Am Not Invisible photoshoot, short interviews were conducted, and participants were photographed by United States Veterans Affairs photographer Eugene Russell.

Please stay connected to [WDVA Women Veteran Program](#) and the [Wisconsin Veterans Museum](#) for upcoming **I Am Not Invisible** events across the state.

[#veteransupport](#) [#IANI](#) [#iamnotinvisible](#)
[#BeTheOne](#) [I AM NOT INVISIBLE, WISCONSIN](#)
[#juliemuhle](#)

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