

# Aitkin County Board of Commissioners Board Meeting Attendance Record

Date: February 25, 2020

Name	Please check the boxes that apply.		
	Aitkin County Citizen	Aitkin County Employee	Company Representative – please list.
Carl Goble			
Erin Melz			
Julie Herbst			
Cynthia Bennett			
Jessi Schultz			
Joel Happe			
Kari Paulsen			
Lynn Mizner			Aitkin Age.
<del>Matt Jones</del>			KRIN
<del>Kurt Jones</del>			Auditor
Mike Dangers			Assessor



# Veterans Services Office Report

February 25, 2020

The number of Veterans living in Aitkin County in FY 18 is approximately 1840 – up 20 from FY17

I. **Veterans Services Office data** – January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019

- a. 860 office visits – up 200 from 2018
- b. 310 outreach visits including McGregor, Hill City, Malmo and home visits – 120 more than in 2018.
- c. 1000 forms were completed and mailed to the VA
- d. 95% success rate for positive outcomes on claims filed from our office.
- e. 66 Aitkin County Veterans died in 2019
- f. 115 new clients – 246 new clients were added in the last 2 years.
- g. 40 veterans signed up for VA medical benefits for the first time.
- h. 52 veterans came to our office from other counties.

II. **2019 Vet Van Statistics**

- a. 97 trips to Mpls and St. Cloud VAMC's
- b. 113 veterans rode the Aitkin County Veterans van
- c. Total Expenses - \$ 7,695 Reimbursements - \$2784 Net expenses \$4,910

III. **Federal Benefits to Aitkin County Veterans FY 18**

- a. Compensation and Pension - **\$ 7,160,000** - down \$754,000 from previous year mostly due to deaths
- b. Education and Vocational Rehabilitation - **\$ 292,000**
- c. Insurance and Indemnities benefits to surviving spouses - **\$ 479,000** This number has more than tripled since the previous year of \$123,000.

**Total Federal VA \$s coming directly to veterans in Aitkin County = \$ 7,931,000**

**This is more than double the amount from 12 years ago. 2007 = \$3,678,000**

- d. Medical Care to Aitkin County Veterans - **\$ 10,849,000** 908 veterans in Aitkin County received care at a VA medical center in 2018. This dollar amount increased by almost 2 million dollars from the previous year. **Total Federal VA expenditures to Aitkin County Vets for FY2018 = \$ 18,780,000**

IV. **MN Department of Veterans Affairs State Soldier's Assistance Program (SSAP)** offers Dental, Optical, Subsistence, and Special Needs Grants to needy veterans and their families.

In 2019, 14 veterans and their family members benefitted from this program. Special needs grants included \$11,000 to assist 2 different veterans in getting a new well. Remaining funds were used for routine dental care and eyeglasses. **Total to Aitkin County veterans in 2019 = \$ 28,982**

v. **Minnesota Assistance Council to Veterans (MACV)** provides assistance to Aitkin County Veterans for 1 time emergency fund payments for rent, utilities, etc; and ongoing subsistence to families having financial difficulties. In 2019, 3 veterans and their families were assisted by MACV **Total \$1,800**

VI. **The CVSO Operational Improvement Grant** awards Aitkin County \$10,000 per year to enhance the operations of the County Veterans Service Office. In FY 19, approximately \$5400 was used for office supplies and equipment, \$2200 was spent on advertising, \$1,400 paid for hotels and travel for trainings and \$1000 was used to purchase Bronze star markers for veterans' graves. This coming year grant moneys will be used mainly for advertising, office supplies, and training.

## Community Collaboration and other information:

Aitkin County Veterans Service Organizations continue to keep us supplied with gas and grocery cards throughout the year along with bags of household supplies. We are able to give them to veterans as we see the need. In 2019, we gave out 66 gas cards, 61 grocery cards and 12 Dollar Store cards valued at \$25 each. We also distributed 10 grocery bags filled with household supplies to veterans in need. The Aitkin DAV, AL, VFW and their auxiliaries donated the gift cards and bags for us to give out.

Homeless and Wounded Warriors of Minnesota asked again this Christmas if we had any families in need. We connected them with 3 Aitkin County veteran's families who were given numerous gifts for each of the family members.

The Aitkin DAV donated \$2000 in the past 3 years to the Aitkin County Homeless Coalition. In 2019, we also received over \$1500 from local veterans wishing to help others. This money is earmarked for veterans and their families to be used to prevent homelessness. In 2019, 6 veterans were assisted using these funds.

Castaways Bar and Restaurant has an annual fundraiser called Castaways Cares. This year they donated half of the money raised to the CVSO office for needy veterans. This donation was over \$4700.

The Aitkin CVSO office collaborates with local agencies including Aitkin County H&HS, Salvation Army, The Workforce Center, Rural Rides, Aitkin County Homeless Coalition, Good Samaritan Outreach and Habitat for Humanity to help our veterans. We also assist veterans with applications for Food Stamps, Medical Assistance, Energy Assistance, and Home rehabilitation.

In 2019, Aitkin County lost 66 veterans – 20 more than 2018: 7 WWII veterans, 19 Korean War veterans, 34 Vietnam veterans, 5 who served during Peacetime, 1 Gulf war and 1 OEF/OIF veteran

With the elderly veteran population in Aitkin County, we are continually working to ensure they are using all of the resources available to them through the VA. They can receive home care, adult day care, ramps, medical supplies, assistive devices, hearing aids, etc., when they are enrolled in the VAMC.

Attached is a page from the MNDVA website comparing the state and county populations by age. The first 2 charts show the state overall population and the Aitkin County overall population by age. Throughout the state of Minnesota, just over ¼ of the population is 55 and over while in Aitkin County ½ of the residents are 55 and over. The last 2 charts show the state veteran population and the Aitkin County veteran populations by age. While ¼ of the veterans in Minnesota are over 75, in Aitkin County it is closer to 20% with at least 2/3 of them over 65. That is approximately 1200 veterans in Aitkin County that are currently over 65.

The goal of the Aitkin County Veterans Services Office is to take care of our veterans by working to ensure they get the most out of their VA benefits and any other benefits to which they are entitled.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as the VSO for Aitkin County.

Penny Harms  
Aitkin CVSO

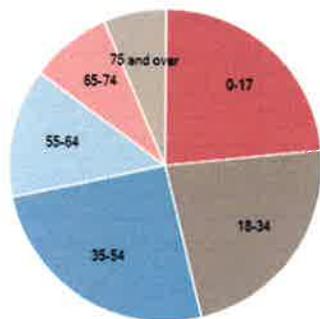
Select Area Type

Select Area

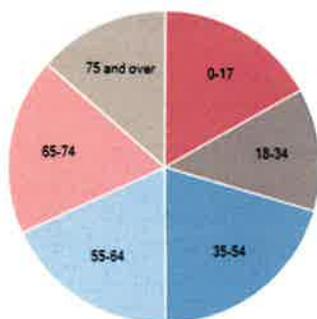
County

Aitkin County

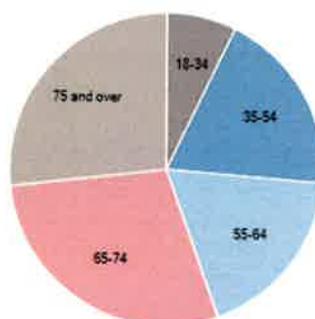
State Overall Population



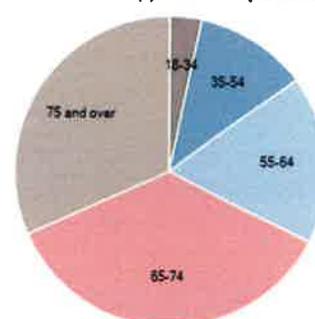
Selected Area(s) Overall Population



State Veteran Population



Selected Area(s) Veteran Population



2014-2018\*\* Veterans Population Breakdown

Area	Population	Veterans	Veterans (%)	Male Vets	Male Vets (%)	Female Vets	Female Vets (%)
Aitkin County	15,834	1,840	11.6	1,730	94.0	110	6.0

\*\*The following data is collected from the US Census Bureau 5-year data (2014-2018)

- Geographic Boundary Data (TIGER/LINE)
- State Veteran Population
- State Veteran Employment

The 5-year data is used due to of limitations in the 3-year and 1-year data. Please refer to the Census Bureau's information on the American Community Survey and geography limitations via the link below.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html>