

To: Mr. Richard D. Larson
CARES Commission, 810 Vermont Ave.
Washington D.C. 20480

**Veterans Outpatient Clinic Shenandoah, Iowa
Summary – September 2003**

Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) through studies conducted under the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services-CARES Commission has identified Shenandoah, Iowa as a good location for a VA Outpatient Clinic. The information reflects 17,000 veterans live within an easy commute to Shenandoah which means they could more easily receive treatment if a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) was located here.

Community

Shenandoah is a viable, progressive, stable rural community offering excellent services with updated facilities provided by local government, business and industry. Highways 2, 59, and 48 provide easy access to the city from the surrounding area. The city has an attractive updated down town main street with new streetscape, new safety center including police and fire station with new equipment. The Community school district has just completed the new K-8th grade school facility and a ground breaking has taken place for a new \$3 million child care center. Industries remain stable in the community with a quality workforce. Shenandoah Medical Center is a state of the art operation that has invested more the \$10 million in recent years to update their facilities.

Service

Activities in Shenandoah reflect an active volunteer spirit. Associated with Veterans there are active American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS and the Auxiliaries providing service. The community has many active service organizations affiliated with churches and the traditional international service clubs. Significant efforts are put forth to transport veterans to receive VA assistance with a 140-mile round trip.

Support

Having identified the need for assistance to veterans in the surrounding area the Shenandoah community has made an overwhelming response.

- The Shenandoah Medical Center has offered assistance with available facilities and willingness to cooperate with the VA should they want to enter in to some shared services or contract service.
- The area Banks have offered financial assistance to establish a veterans clinic.
- The City of Shenandoah endorses establishment of a clinic and cooperation with providing services.
- Service organizations and individuals from Shenandoah and the surrounding area endorse and support this CBOC. Many of the surrounding areas 17,000 identified veterans face longer travel than the 140-mile round trip from Shenandoah. Increasing available assistance, reducing the travel to receive service and the ease of access in a small community versus the traffic into a large city will be of great benefit to the veteran and volunteers assisting them.

Documentation

This report includes 80 testimonials and endorsements, which provides more detail of need, assistance available and opportunity beyond the above outlined summary. Use this information in support of the CARES initiative to serve the unmet needs of veterans and the establishment of a CBOC in Shenandoah to help meet those needs.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of many interests to benefit veterans, by:

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Gregg Connell Mayor Shenandoah | Charles L. Millburg, R.N., M.B.A. President and CEO Shenandoah Medical Center | Douglas D. McGinnis Service Officer Post 88 Shenandoah | Erwin Aust Commander Post 88 American Legion |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|



COMMISSION OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

WINNESHIEK COUNTY
Courthouse, 201 W. Main Street
Decorah, Iowa 52101

September 3, 2003

Mr. Everett Alvarez, Jr., Chairman
CARES Commission
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D. C. 20380

Dear Mr. Alvarez:

RE: Establishment of a Community Based Out-Patient Clinic in Decorah, Iowa

Winneshiek County Veteran Affairs, in coordination with Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette and Howard Counties in Iowa, Fillmore and Houston Counties in Minnesota, and Crawford County, Wisconsin, hereby request that a Community Based Out-Patient Clinic be established in Decorah, Iowa.

In support of this request, the following information is provided to you:

Decorah, (Winneshiek County) Iowa is located in the Northeast Corner of Iowa. The distance from Decorah to any of the CBOC's and/or VAMC's is as follows:

| Area | Travel Time |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Decorah to Mason City CBOC | 2 Hours 20 Minutes |
| Decorah to Waterloo CBOC | 2 Hours 23 Minutes |
| Decorah to Dubuque CBOC | 2 Hours 38 Minutes |
| Decorah to Iowa City VAMC | 3 Hours |
| Decorah to Rochester, MN CBOC | 1 Hour 52 Minutes |
| Decorah to LaCrosse, WI CBOC | 1 Hour 52 Minutes |
| Decorah to Tomah, WI CBOC | 2 Hours 31 Minutes |

Currently, 711 Iowa veterans, 66 of whom are from Winneshiek County, are receiving their healthcare either at the LaCrosse CBOC and/or the Tomah VAMC. A total of 1,329 Minnesota veterans, 500 of who are from Houston County, Minnesota (which is part of VISN 12) are receiving their health care at these two Wisconsin VA medical facilities. Of the 711 Iowa veterans, and the 829 Minnesota veterans that are not a part of VISN 12,

VISN 23 loses \$3,200.00 for each veteran receiving Basic Care and \$36,000 for each veteran receiving Complex Care.

The above veteran numbers were received from Judy Clay of the Tomah VAMC. The lost dollar figures were received from the Iowa City, VAMC and verified by Sharyl Schaepe.

I have been provided with information that the areas that are seriously being considered for the establishment of CBOC's are:

| Area | Veteran Population |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Carroll Area | 9,064 |
| Cedar Rapids Area | 25,021 |
| Marshalltown Area | 14,574 |
| Ottumwa Area | 10,815 |

For VA purposes, the Decorah area is comprised of the counties of Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek in Iowa and Fillmore County, Minnesota has a veteran population of 9,388.

Although Houston County, Minnesota is in VISN 12, it along with Fillmore County, Minnesota, does border Winneshiek County, Iowa of which Decorah is the county seat. If a CBOC were to be established in Decorah, veterans from southern Houston County, Minnesota will utilize the clinic as it is closer than Rochester, Minnesota or LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Therefore, this will increase the number of veterans utilizing a CBOC in Decorah.

Furthermore, this office has been in contact with the Veterans Service Office in Prairie du Chien (Crawford County), Wisconsin and they are fully supportive of establishing a CBOC in Decorah. Veterans from the Prairie du Chien area will utilize a clinic in Decorah as it is closer to travel to Decorah, Iowa than to LaCrosse, Madison, Milwaukee or Tomah, Wisconsin. The veteran population for Crawford County, Wisconsin is 1600. In all fairness considering the veteran population and/or eligibility criteria of Crawford County, Wisconsin and those veterans who would utilize a CBOC in Decorah, Iowa, I feel it is safe to say that a Decorah CBOC would see a minimum of 400 veterans from that area.

| Area | Travel Time |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Decorah to Prairie du Chien | 1 Hour |
| Prairie du Chien to LaCrosse, WI | 1 Hour 35 Minutes |
| Prairie du Chien to Madison, WI | 2 Hours 17 Minutes |
| Prairie du Chien to Milwaukee, WI | 3 Hours 35 Minutes |
| Prairie du Chien to Tomah, WI | 2 Hours 22 Minutes |

Under VHA Directive 2002-049:

POLICY: It is VHA policy, in accordance with Title 38, U.S.C., Section 1710(e)(1)(D), veterans who served in combat operation during a period of war after the Gulf War, or in combat against a hostile force after November 11, 1998, must be provided hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for any illness (exceptions are found in subpar.4a(1)(a)) for a 2-year period following separation from military service, notwithstanding that there is insufficient medical evidence to conclude that such condition is attributable to such service. *Note: Veterans under this authority may be enrolled as priority category 6, and are not to be subject to co-payments for care provided under this authority.*

Decorah, Iowa is the home of **Company B, 389th Engineer Battalion**, with 140 men and women soldiers who were called to active duty on February 12, 2003. They arrived in Kuwait May 14, 2003 and have been serving in Iraq since June 6th or 7th. In that these 140 men and women USAR soldiers may now be eligible for health care services under the above VHA Directive, and may be eligible for VA health care services for up to two years upon their return home, the Decorah area will be able to add another 140 veterans to the total veteran population upon their return home.

Taking into consideration what this office feels would be an accurate veteran population for the Decorah area is as follows:

Decorah area: 9,388; Plus one-half of the veteran population from Houston County, Minnesota: 250; Plus 140 soldiers of Company B, 389th Engineer Battalion returning from Iraq; Plus one-fourth of the veteran population from Crawford County, Wisconsin: 400.

Total Veteran Population for the Decorah Area based upon the information provided in this letter: 10,178.

Even though each state and/or county is categorized into a specific VISN, this is still **ONE VA**, and veterans will seek their health care services at the nearest VA CBOC and/or VA Medical Center.

By establishing a CBOC in Decorah this will alleviate some of the patient load on the VA Medical Center in Iowa City as many veterans from Northeast Iowa travel to Iowa City for their health care.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact this office at (563) 382-5786; e-mail: dhackman@co.winneshiek,ia.us or in writing to: Winneshiek County Veteran Affairs, Courthouse, 201 West Main Street, Decorah, Iowa 52101.

I thank you for your time and attention to this written testimony, requesting that a Community Based Out-Patient Clinic be established in Decorah, Iowa to serve the veterans of Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties in Iowa; Fillmore and Houston Counties in Minnesota; and Crawford County, Wisconsin.

Most Respectfully Submitted,


Deb Hackman, Director
Winneshiek County Veteran Affairs

DH:dh.
Enclosures

Deb Hackman

From: <Kathleen.Harrison@med.va.gov>
To: <dhackman@co.winneshiek.ia.us>
Sent: Monday, August 25, 2003 1:25 PM
Subject: Veteran Population CBOCs

Dcb,

Here is the data you requested for the proposed CBOCs.

Veteran Population:

- * Marshalltown area: 14,574 veterans
- * Ottumwa area: 10,815
- * Carroll area: 9,064
- * Cedar Rapids area: 25,021
- * Decora area: 9,388

The counties used for the Decora area were Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Fillmore, Howard, and Winneshiek.

I look forward to meeting you at the hearing. I will be at the table checking in the people who testify prior to the hearing.

Kathleen Harrison, CFE
Planning Officer
VISN 23
612-970-5871

2002

| COUNTY OR INDEPENDENT CITY (CONG. DISTRICT) | VETERAN POPULATION (*) |
|---|------------------------|
| IOWA | |
| ADAIR (04) | 929 |
| ADAMS (03) | 448 |
| ALLAMAKEE (02) | 1,478 |
| APPANOOSE (03) | 1,271 |
| AUDUBON (04) | 686 |
| BENTON (02) | 2,444 |
| BLACK HAWK (02) | 12,591 |
| BOONE (05) | 2,829 |
| BREMER (02) | 2,202 |
| BUCHANAN (02) | 1,982 |
| BUENA VISTA (05) | 1,793 |
| BUTLER (02) | 1,470 |
| CALHOUN (05) | 1,249 |
| CARROLL (05) | 1,947 |
| CASS (04) | 1,474 |
| CEDAR (01) | 1,858 |
| CERRO GORDO (02) | 4,719 |
| CHEROKEE (05) | 1,354 |
| CHICKASAW (02) | 1,214 |
| CLARKE (03) | 856 |
| CLAY (05) | 1,787 |
| CLAYTON (02) | 1,912 |
| CLINTON (01) | 5,388 |
| CRAWFORD (05) | 1,556 |
| DALLAS (04) | 3,610 |
| DAVIS (03) | 743 |
| DECATUR (03) | 750 |
| DELAWARE (02) | 1,449 |
| DES MOINES (03) | 4,889 |
| DICKINSON (05) | 1,922 |
| DUBUQUE (02) | 8,358 |
| EMMET (05) | 1,076 |
| FAYETTE (02) | 2,058 |
| FLOYD (02) | 1,690 |
| FRANKLIN (05) | 1,026 |

| COUNTY OR INDEPENDENT CITY (CONG. DISTRICT) | VETERAN POPULATION (*) |
|---|------------------------|
| IOWA | |
| FREMONT (04) | 898 |
| GREENE (05) | 988 |
| GRUNDY (02) | 1,191 |
| GUTHRIE (04) | 1,265 |
| HAMILTON (05) | 1,511 |
| HANCOCK (05) | 1,196 |
| HARDIN (05) | 1,878 |
| HARRISON (04) | 1,571 |
| HENRY (03) | 1,852 |
| HOWARD (02) | 888 |
| HUMBOLDT (05) | 1,067 |
| IDA (05) | 818 |
| IOWA (02) | 1,475 |
| JACKSON (02) | 2,111 |
| JASPER (03) | 3,634 |
| JEFFERSON (03) | 1,410 |
| JOHNSON (01) | 7,712 |
| JONES (01) | 2,255 |
| KEOKUK (03) | 1,037 |
| KOSSUTH (05) | 1,733 |
| LEE (03) | 4,242 |
| LINN (01) | 20,110 |
| LOUISA (01) | 1,082 |
| LUCAS (03) | 859 |
| LYON (05) | 870 |
| MADISON (04) | 1,410 |
| MAHASKA (03) | 1,969 |
| MARION (03) | 3,146 |
| MARSHALL (03) | 4,234 |
| MILLS (04) | 1,622 |
| MITCHELL (02) | 1,093 |
| MONONA (05) | 1,188 |
| MONROE (03) | 773 |
| MONTGOMERY (04) | 1,134 |
| MUSCATINE (01) | 3,723 |
| O'BRIEN (05) | 1,445 |

| COUNTY OR INDEPENDENT CITY (CONG. DISTRICT) | VETERAN POPULATION (*) |
|---|------------------------|
| IOWA | |
| OSCEOLA (06) | 678 |
| PAGE (03) | 1,800 |
| PALO ALTO (05) | 1,043 |
| PLYMOUTH (05) | 2,392 |
| POCAHONTAS (05) | 1,063 |
| POLK (04) | 33,303 |
| POTTAWATTAMIE (04) | 9,623 |
| POWESHIEK (03) | 1,749 |
| RINGGOLD (03) | 570 |
| SAC (05) | 1,250 |
| SCOTT (01) | 16,007 |
| SHELBY (04) | 1,394 |
| SIOUX (05) | 2,177 |
| STORY (03) | 5,938 |
| TAMA (02) | 1,915 |
| TAYLOR (03) | 717 |
| UNION (03) | 1,313 |
| VAN BUREN (03) | 798 |
| WAPELLO (03) | 4,264 |
| WARREN (03) | 3,776 |
| WASHINGTON (03) | 1,809 |
| WAYNE (03) | 650 |
| WEBSTER (05) | 4,119 |
| WINNEBAGO (05) | 1,052 |
| WINNESHIEK (02) | 1,621 |
| WOODBURY (05) | 10,035 |
| WORTH (02) | 933 |
| WRIGHT (05) | 1,319 |
| TOTAL CONG. DIST (01) | 58,122 |
| TOTAL CONG. DIST (02) | 54,763 |
| TOTAL CONG. DIST (03) | 55,304 |
| TOTAL CONG. DIST (04) | 58,918 |
| TOTAL CONG. DIST (05) | 54,157 |
| IOWA (Totals) | 281,295 |

(*) Veteran population estimates as of September

- Decorah Area →
 - Carroll Area →
 { These numbers do not include the veteran population from Fillmore + Houston Counties in Minnesota; Crawford County, WI; + Company B, 389th Engineer Battalion currently serving in Iraq, please refer to VHA Director 2002-049. }

**GREAT RIVER
TRAUMA COUNSELING & EDUCATION CENTER
608-326-0420**

**Greg Clark, M.A.
429 S. Prairie St.
Prairie du Chien, WI. 53821**

September 5, 2003

RE: Establishment of a Community Based Out-Patient Clinic in Decorah, Iowa

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a private practice counselor serving 5 counties in NE Iowa and 5 in SW Wisconsin. I am also a VA retiree and combat wounded Vietnam Veteran. I have worked in an outreach capacity since 1985 when I started the Cedar Rapids Vet Center. Thus, I am mindful of the needs of our historically underserved rural veteran community in NE Iowa. That is precisely why I now am a contractor in Prairie du Chien (to serve these rural veterans in NE Iowa and SW Wisconsin.) In my practice I have received several referrals from the Winnebago County Veterans Service Officer (Deb Hackman,) and the Allamakee County Veterans Service Officer (Ken Flagg.) These referrals have not only allowed me to help veterans who have been silently suffering from PTSD, but have also led to further referrals for additional treatment needs into the VA hospitals. I know the VA is very concerned about its veterans and seeks to educate them to what they are entitled to and to assist them in accessing these entitlements. It has been my observation that most rural veterans simply do not know much at all about such entitlements, and if they do know this, they do not have the means to, or know how to access them.

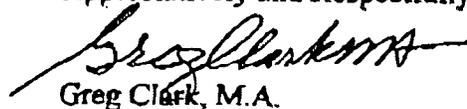
I believe it has been a VA objective to have no veteran traveling further than 50 miles (or 1 hour) to get to a VA facility. Establishing a CBOC in Decorah would meet this objective and be a "win-win" for the rural veterans and the VA -- providing access to at least this minimum level of local health care for the rural veterans, and also increasing referrals to specialty clinics within the VA hospital system from this CBOC. I believe many rural veterans have historically resigned themselves to the fact that they are "too far away" from the VAMCs, and so they have ignored and been disinterested in what the VA has to offer them. A CBOC in Decorah would not only show these veterans the VA is trying to reach them, but would provide an opportunity for them to become educated to using the VA system, spreading the word, and increasing the VAMC's efficiency and productivity.

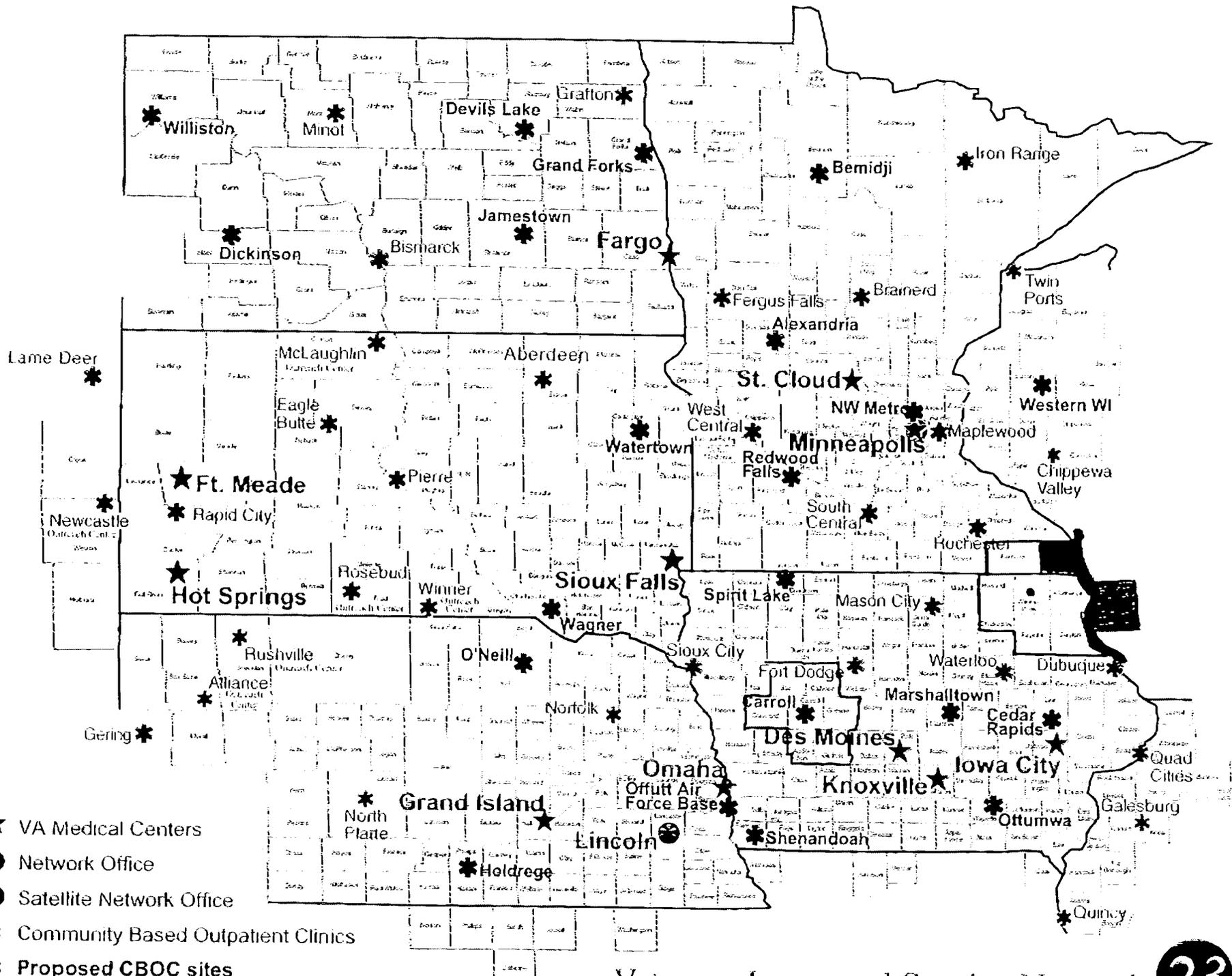
As you undoubtedly know, veterans from all wars and "conflicts" continue to come in for counseling, surprised that after all these years their war experiences and memories have caused them so much suffering in theirs and their family's lives. Education and accessibility is the key to caring for these suffering veterans -- and a CBOC in Decorah will be a large step in providing just that.

I thank you in advance for your serious and heart-felt consideration of establishing a CBOC in Decorah, Iowa to reach these underserved rural veterans.

If I may be of any further assistance in helping this to materialize, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appreciatively and Respectfully Submitted,


Greg Clark, M.A.



- ★ VA Medical Centers
- Network Office
- Satellite Network Office
- * Community Based Outpatient Clinics
- * Proposed CBOC sites

● Decorah, Winneshiek County, Iowa
 ■ Houston County, Minnesota

— Mississippi River
 — Crawford County, Wisconsin

Veterans Integrated Service Network **23**