

# 2017 Wisconsin Woman Veteran of the Year Speaker at Iola Memorial Day Service

The American Legion Sheveland-Taylor Post 14 is honored to have retired Veteran, Captain Connie Walker as keynote speaker at the Memorial Day Service at the Veterans Memorial Park at 200 N. Main Street in Iola. Connie served 23 years in the United States Navy.

Connie Walker became an advocate for her son Michael Segich, who joined the Army in June of 2001, just three months before 9-11. In early 2003 Michael was deployed to Iraq and Kuwait. When her son Michael returned home in late 2003 he was a different person.

The Army began to administratively separate Michael from the military, which would have left him without benefits. Connie pushed for physical and mental health exams.

Walker, has the credentials to challenge the system, she has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Masters Degree in Adult Education and planned to go to law school after retiring from the Navy, but that has been placed on hold.

Connie Walker, the mother fought for her son Michael, to get help from the Government. After examinations were given, Michael was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and schizophrenia, and struggled to find mental health services. She then had to fight the complicated Veterans Affairs health care system to get him medical benefits, appropriate medication, support services and jobs he could do even with intellectual disability he had developed.

Connie and her husband Paul Kob and her son Michael moved to Iola in 2011 and purchased Chet Krause's home. They moved here to get mental health services for Michael in nearby Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. The services turned out to be inadequate.

Connie and her son Michael moved to Verona near Madison to get help through the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Madison. They each have their own apartment in the same apartment complex and Michael is now working two different jobs. Connie didn't stop there, she continued being an advocate for other veterans, active military personnel and their families.

In Madison, Connie worked to bring VA's Community Clergy Training Program to Wisconsin for the first time in order to educate faith communities about how they can support Veterans and their families, as well as identify and support rural Veterans with reintegration challenges.

She has established training programs and provided training on many Veterans issues to raise cultural competency of Veterans issues. For instance, Walker is working with UW-Madison to include training on Veterans issues into their medical school curricula; she advocates for the same in nursing, social work and other medical sectors of education throughout the country.

In September of 2017, Connie was named 'Wisconsin Woman Veteran of the Year' by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. The Wisconsin Woman Veteran of the Year Award recognizes women veterans who have compiled a record of exemplary service as a military service member, a veteran, and outstanding member of the community.

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Daniel Zimmerman stated the following when announcing the award. "Connie is a tireless advocate for veterans, active duty, and their families and the State of Wisconsin is a better place to live for Veterans because of people like her. Women have played a critical role in our military history and I am honored to present this award to Connie who has demonstrated time and again dedicated public Service."

Come and listen to Connie Walker talk about her fight for her son and later for all veterans as an advocate for mental health services.

The Memorial Day Parade starts at 11:00 am with the Memorial Day Service following at the Veterans Memorial Park at 200 N. Main Street in Iola.

There is a Pork Roast dinner at the Iola Historical Society at 210 Depot Street following the Memorial Day Services. The Cost of the Dinner is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children and free for all veterans.