

**(Neb.)-New Changes To Dawes County Veteran's Service Office**     [Listen](#)

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 02/07/2013 09:22 AM

(DAWES COUNTY)-Dawes County veteran's service officer Alan Connell has been hard at work learning the ropes of his new job and assisting veterans in a variety of ways. He says he's really enjoying what he's doing.  
\*Listen to story for sound bite\*

Connell visited with the Dawes County commissioners about a new online database system that will do away with having to send paperwork down to Lincoln for safekeeping and needless phone calls for information that will be securely available on the computer. The program is called Vetra-Spec, and though optional now, Connell says, will be a state requirement before long. Connell says he thinks the program will prove to be beneficial overall.

\*Listen to story for sound bite\*

Connell explained to the commissioners that he had spent over an hour on the phone this week to get a questions answered that could have been easily accessed by a quick visit to Vetra-Spec. He says just because records will be online does not mean that will no longer be kept confidential and safe. For instance, Connell says he will only have access to information on Dawes County veterans, not vets in any other counties, and no one else except for the state office will be able to access information on Dawes County vets.

In other news, veterans are benefiting from a newer van that is being used to take them to and from appointments in Hot Springs, Rapid City, and Fort Meade. Connell said the former van had over 168,000 miles on it, and it was time for a newer one. The "new" van already had 31,000 miles on it when purchased, but Connell said it's a step up from the old one. There were not quite enough budgeted funds for the van in this fiscal year, so Connell says \$1,200 remains. If anyone would like to donate funds to help pay the van off, they can help do so. The van is available to any veteran who would like a ride to appointments at the VA hospitals or clinics in South Dakota. Connell says medical appointments set up on Tuesday through Thursday are ideal, but the van can run on Mondays and Fridays if needed.

Connell said there are approximately 787 veterans living in Dawes County. He said he sometimes will make routine calls or visits to vets, but he also depends on vets contacting him if there is anything he can do for them specifically. He said some of the current hot topics that seem to be on local veterans' minds are...

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Connell can be reached at 308-432-0119 or by stopping by 250 Main St. between the hours of 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

(Questions? Comments? E-mail [roxie@chadrad.com](mailto:roxie@chadrad.com).)

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