**2021 WDVA Impact Awardee**

**Angela “Ella” Parker**

Angela “Ella” Parker, a Shell Lake resident, served in the Army from 2002-2012 and retired achieving the rank of Major. As a skilled surgeon in the Veterinary Corps, Parker served stateside and overseas in Germany with a deployment to Iraq in 2005-2006. While deployed with the 72nd Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service), Parker oversaw all veterinary care and food inspection within the AL Anbar Province, Iraq in support of Marine Expeditionary Force I and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. She was also awarded the Brigadier General Elia Veterinary Excellence Award while serving stateside.

Parker has served as the County Veterans Service Officer in Burnett County for over a year and prior to that was the Assistant County Veterans Service Officer in Washburn County for four years. Her efforts and contributions to veterans and their families in the community have been exceptional. As a retired officer in the military and Operation Enduring Freedom veteran, Parker utilizes her leadership skills and sharp wit to provide outstanding service to local veterans, surviving spouses, and other family members by offering compassionate and knowledgeable guidance regarding VA benefits, as well as other state and local programs.

Parker’s medical background, ensures that she is extremely successful with assisting veterans with service-connected disability claims and appeals with the VA.

While busy serving the community as a CVSO Parker also played a key role in the organizing and fundraising of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Project from 2017-2020. The tomb replica cast was first made in Madison and then was molded into a more durable fiberglass covering to withstand weather, then relocated to the Veterans Memorial Waterfront Park in Spooner along US Highway 63. This monument is visible to thousands of travelers to Northern Wisconsin every year.

During her time as the Burnett CVSO, neighboring Washburn County was unexpectedly without a CVSO in spring of 2021 and Ella Parker selflessly dedicated countless hours of her own personal time to assist the Washburn CVSO office with complex claims and appeals submissions and trained remaining staff to ensure that the veterans of Washburn County continued to receive exceptional service until the vacant position was filled.

In September of 2021 Parker aired on an online news site called Drydenwire, a popular news source that covers six counties in northwestern Wisconsin. Parker and the Minneapolis VAMC Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator Andrea Sandberg spoke about veteran suicide prevention, in recognition of September being National Suicide Prevention Month. Parker felt that the opportunity to speak with Drydenwire would potentially reach the many veterans do not seek help because they are fearful or don’t want to be associated with the stigma that can be attached to those who need mental health assistance. She wanted to reach out to veterans and their families using a media that they can receive in the private comforts of their own home. The forty-five-minute interview addressed identifying risk factors for becoming suicidal, how to reach out to and help those who are struggling and provided important information and resources for assisting veterans who are or are at risk of becoming suicidal. Parker described the role of VORP Coordinators and Vet Center Counselors, and listed area Veterans Affairs Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) facilities and in-patient treatment centers where veterans can receive care.

Parker is an active member of the Shell Lake American Legion Post 225 and serves as VSO and 2nd Vice Commander. She is also serves on Shell Lake Honor Guard team and was honored to be the Sergeant in Arms for several years. Parker is a member of the Springbrook VFW Post 10568 serving as VSO and prior surgeon. Additionally, she is treasurer of the United Women Veterans – Northwest Chapter. She participates annually in her local community Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs and has been guest speaker two different years, delivering powerful patriotic messages on each occasion. Due to outstanding work in as the CVSO in Burnett County, Parker was also recently elected vice president of the Northern Wisconsin CVSO Association.