John Bensend, left, UW-Stout military education benefits coordinator, and student veteran Matthias Eiserman share thoughts about the center that opened in February.

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Veterans Club receives resource center grant

By UW-Stout News Bureau

MENOMONIE — The Veterans Club at UW-Stout is a recipient of the national Vet Center Initiative grant.

The $10,000 grant is sponsored by Student Veterans of America, a nonprofit coalition of more than 1,200 organizations that represent approximately 440,000 veterans in higher education.
The grant, made possible by the Home Depot Foundation, will be used to furnish the Military and Veteran Resource Center (MVRC) that opened on campus in January, said John Bensend, the military education benefits coordinator at the university.

The center, in Room 304A in Bowman Hall, will be equipped with a small kitchen area that will include cabinets, a refrigerator, a microwave and a coffee pot.

Room furnishings, such as a marker and cork boards, end tables, a small couch, sitting chairs, computer desks and chairs also will be purchased.

An open house is planned for November.

The center aims to assist military veterans, service members and their families in transitioning to college, Bensend said. It is a place to study, relax and interact with peers. The center also offers support services if needed.

Student Tyler Fregine, of Wilson, was a co-writer of the proposal.

“When we found out that Student Veterans of America was offering grants for the construction and furnishing of a campus MVRC, we saw this as our opportunity to furnish (it) so it can be better utilized by the student veterans on campus,” he said.

“The MVRC is important because it provides a place for student veterans to network with each other and find out information about the benefits available to them,” Fregine said.

Fregine worked in the Veteran Services Office from September 2013 to December 2014. During that time he processed benefits paperwork and provided assistance for education benefits. Presently working at Gusmer Enterprises in Waupaca for an educational cooperative experience, Fregine will return to the office and classes in September.

Fregine, who is majoring in engineering technology with a concentration in mechanical design, served in the Navy from October 2007 until September 2012. He plans to graduate in May 2017.