

## **THE CENTRE COUNTY VETERAN'S NEWSLETTER**

***By Holly Serface  
January 27, 2009***

Welcome to the first edition of The Centre County Veteran's Newsletter. This newsletter is being published to keep our Centre County veterans informed of updates in the VA system and other news items of interest as they occur. Hopefully, you will find this newsletter informative and benefit from its publication. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Centre County Veterans Affairs office at 355-6812.

### **CANINES FOR COMBAT VETERANS:**

Assistance dogs are now available for any combat veteran whose service injury resulted in deafness or a disability. These dogs are provided for no cost to the veteran through the Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Americans/NEADS. Visit [www.neads.org](http://www.neads.org) and click on "Canines for Combat Veterans" for more information or call (978)-422-9064 ext. 22.

### **VA ASSISTS VETERANS WITH HEALTH CARE COSTS:**

For veterans who may be struggling financially due to a job loss or decreased income, the Department of Veterans Affairs offers an assortment of programs that can relieve the costs of health care or provide care at no cost. Veterans whose previous income was too high for VA health care assistance may be able to enter the VA system based upon a hardship if their current year's income is projected to fall below federal income thresholds due to a job loss, separation from service or some other financial setback. Veterans determined eligible due to hardship can avoid co pays applied to higher-income veterans. Qualifying veterans may be eligible for enrollment and receive health care at no cost. Also eligible for no-cost VA care are most veterans who recently returned from a combat zone. They are entitled to receive five years of free VA health care. The five year rule begins the day they are discharged. You can visit the VA health eligibility website at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility) for more information.

### **SURVIVING SPOUSE PAYMENTS:**

The Department of Veterans Affairs identified nearly 11,000 surviving spouses of deceased veterans who will receive a lump-sum payment to correct an error in their VA benefits. This is because a 1996 federal law makes a surviving spouse eligible to receive the veteran's VA compensation or pension benefit for the month of the veteran's death. VA failed to properly implement that law in

all cases. Those eligible are surviving spouses of veterans who died after Dec. 31, 1996. VA doesn't have current addresses for many of them, which makes the process of contacting them very difficult. VA has established a special Survivor Call Center (1-800-749-8397) for spouses who believe they may be eligible for this retroactive benefit. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Central Standard time.

### **GULF WAR ILLNESS:**

A Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illness has determined that Gulf War illness is a very real disease caused by exposure to toxic chemicals, including pesticides, and a drug that was given to protect service members from nerve gas. As reported, the disease has no effective treatment. Gulf War illness is a combination of memory and concentration problems, persistent headaches, unexplained fatigue, and widespread pain. It may also include chronic digestive problems, respiratory symptoms and skin rashes.

### **VA PLANS TO HIRE MORE DISABLED VETERANS:**

Thirty percent of VA employees are veterans; nearly 8 percent of those are service-connected disabled veterans. But VA intends to increase the number of disabled veterans in its work force.

All severely injured veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be contacted by VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service ([VECS](#)) to determine their interest in and qualifications for VA jobs. So far, the office has identified 2,300 severely injured veterans of those wars, of who 600 expressed interest in VA employment.

VECS has nine regional coordinators working with local-facility human resources offices across the country, not only to reach out to potential job candidates but to ensure that local managers know about special authorities available to hire veterans. For example, qualified disabled veterans rated by DoD or VA with a 30-percent or more service-connected disability can be hired non-competitively.

VA coordinators participate in military career fairs and transition briefings, and partner with veterans service organizations, the [Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service](#), as well as VA's [Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service](#) and the Marine Corps [Wounded Warrior Regiment](#).

### **VIETNAM WAR RESOURCES:**

Everything you wanted to know about Vietnam is located on a wonderful link called "Vietnam War Resources". Whether you are doing a research project or just looking for narratives or war stories, this link can take you there. The Vietnam War Resources link can provide you with bases/units/POW camp

names, types of weapons used, women in Vietnam, the names of campaigns, Vietnam photo albums, and convoy operations, just to name a few. Here's the link to get started:

<http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/fac/Thomas.Pilsch/Vietnam.html>

### **JOB SEEKERS:**

There will be a Veteran's Career Job Fair in Harrisburg on Thursday, April 9, 2009, from 2-7 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center, 2300 Cameron Street in Harrisburg. These career opportunities will be with the South Central Region of Pennsylvania.

### **SEND THANK YOU CARDS TO DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS IN IRAQ:**

At [www.LetsSayThanks.com](http://www.LetsSayThanks.com) you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to a member of the armed services. This takes just 10 seconds and it's a wonderful way to say thank you.

### **HELMETS TO HARDHATS HELPS VETS FIND JOBS:**

Helmets to Hardhats is a national program that connects National Guard, Reserve and transitioning active-duty military members with quality career training and employment opportunities within the construction industry. The program is administered by the Center for Military Recruitment, Assessment, and Veterans Employment and headquartered in Washington, D.C. The program places quality men and women from the Armed Forces into promising building and construction careers. Eligibility varies based on the standards set by each individual career provider. In most cases, you must be at least 18 years of age, have an honorable discharge, have a high school diploma or equivalent, pass a drug test, conduct an interview and be physically fit to perform work. There are no upper age restrictions for applicants. Many employers list other types of careers for their construction company such as administrative, engineering and management positions. Interested personnel are encouraged to register at <http://recruiter.helmetstohardhats.org>. After completing the registration, you will be contacted by a Helmets to Hardhats representative concerning your request.

### **SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE FOR WOMEN VETERANS:**

The U.S. Army Women's Foundation, headquartered in Fort Lee, Virginia, recognizes the service of women in the Army. The foundation is offering scholarships to Army women and their lineal descendants. Scholarships are based on merit, academic potential, community service and need. The applicant must be a woman who has served or is serving honorably in the U.S. Army, U.S. Army Reserve, Army National Guard or the child of a woman who served honorably in the U.S. Army and must be enrolled at an accredited

college or university, have academic credits for junior or senior standing and have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better. Email [info@awfdn.org](mailto:info@awfdn.org) for more information.

## **NEW SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

On January 20, 2009, retired Army Gen. Eric K. Shinseki took the oath of office as the Nation's seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs, assuming the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs, replacing Dr. James B. Peake. Shinseki plans to develop a 2010 budget within his first 90 days that realizes the vision of President Obama to transform VA into an organization that is people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

Key issues on his agenda include smooth activation of an enhanced GI Bill education benefit that eligible Veterans can begin using next fall, streamlining the disability claims system, leveraging information technology to accelerate and modernize services, and opening VA's health care system to Veterans previously unable to enroll in it, while facilitating access for returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.

## **OBTAINING MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS:**

Military service records are the only proof of military service available. In some cases, records are destroyed and have to be replaced. In others, records were incorrect and need to be updated. These links contain answers to policy, procedures, and instructions for requesting changes or replacements to military records.

Use [eVetRecs](#) system to create a customized order form to request information from your, or your relative's, military personnel records. If you are not the veteran or next of kin, you must complete the Standard Form 180 ([SF 180](#)).

## **WHAT IS PTSD?**

After a trauma or life threatening event it is common to have upsetting memories of what happened, to have trouble sleeping, to feel jumpy, or to lose interest in things you used to enjoy. For some people these reactions do not go away on their own, or may even get worse over time. These people may have **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**. Read more about PTSD below.

- [What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)?](#)  
Find out about the symptoms of PTSD and how they develop.
- [FAQs about PTSD](#)  
Frequently asked questions about PTSD.
- [Treatment of PTSD](#)  
Describes the treatments shown to be effective for PTSD and what you can expect from your therapist.

- [How common is PTSD?](#)  
Find out how many people have PTSD and who is most likely to develop PTSD.
- [What can I do if I think I have PTSD?](#)  
Learn what you can do if you think you have PTSD.
- [Helping a Family Member Who Has PTSD](#)  
Ways you can help a loved one with PTSD and ways you can help yourself.

## **AUTHORIZATION OF VETERANS' SALUTE DURING NATIONAL ANTHEM**

Veterans and active duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem. The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act which covers "conduct during hoisting, lowering or passing of flag" has changed. During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may also render the military salute.

## **EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION:**

Veteran's employment representatives at all Pennsylvania CareerLink offices provide free job counseling, training referrals, and placement services to veterans. Eligible veterans are given priority in the referral to job openings and training opportunities. Disabled veterans are given the highest priority in referrals. Employment offices also assist veterans by providing information about unemployment compensation, job marts, and on-the-job and apprenticeship opportunities. Your local CareerLink office is located at 1300 Benner Pike, State College, PA. The Veteran's Representative is Barrie Kutruff at 814-272-5465 Ext. 225. Give him a call and start your job search today.

## **OPERATION SHOEBOX:**

Operation Shoebox is sponsored by Campanis Orthopedic, 148 S. Allegheny St. in Bellefonte. You can support our troops in hostile areas by bringing items on the below list to Campanis Orthopedic. They will pack and ship the items to our local troops for distribution in their units overseas. You can drop off items between 9-5, Tuesday through Saturday. Donations to help defray packing and shipping material costs would also be greatly appreciated and volunteer packers are always welcomed.

**TOBACCO**

Chewing Tobacco &amp; Cigarettes

**CANDY**

Fruit Breezes (Throat Drops)

Twizzlers

Bubble Gum

Lollipops

Assorted Hard Candies

**NO CHOCOLATE****PRINTED MATERIAL**

Paperback Books

Magazines: Sports, Hunting/fishing, Car, Gun, VHS, Reader's Digest, News Magazines.

(No Pornographic magazines)

**GAMES**

Board Games

Checkers/Chess (Travel Size)

Crossword Puzzles

Word Searches

Slinkies

Foam Balls

Electronic Hand Held Games

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Writing Paper &amp; Envelopes

Pre-paid Phone Cards (AT&amp;T)

**FOOD ITEMS (Dry Goods & Snacks)**

Beef Jerky

Slim Jims

Crackers &amp; Easy Cheese

Triscuits &amp; Ritz Crackers

Granola Bars

Power Bars

Dried Fruit

Chex Mix

Instant Oatmeal (Variety Packs)

Cookies

Rice Krispie Treats

Snack Cakes

Soup (Cans/Instant)

Canned Meat

Condiments (Salt, pepper, mustard, ketchup, relish, hot sauce, mayo)

Sugar Packets

Canned Pasta (Pop top cans)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Small Flashlights

Sweatbands

Duct tape

Battery powered hand held fans

Flashlight bulbs

Sunglasses

Bug Spray

Sun Block

Chapstick/Lipbalm

Washcloths

T-Shirts

Socks (Monthly)

Underwear

Batteries

**PRACTICAL (Toiletries/Hygiene)**

Clorox Wipes

Baby wipes

Soap

Razors &amp; Shaving Gel (No bottles/cans)

Towels

Dental Floss

Deodorant

Combs &amp; Hairbrushes

Eye Drops

Contact Lens Cleaner

Liquid Hand Sanitizer

Baby Powder

Foot Powder

**PROHIBITED ITEMS**

Aerosol Cans

Firearms &amp; Pyrotechnics

Flammable Liquids &amp; Lighters

Anything depicting nude or semi-nude persons/porn

or sexual items

Alcoholic beverages or materials used in the production of alcoholic beverages (Distilling materials, hops, malts, yeast, etc.)

Pork or pork by-products.

Anything containing unauthorized political material.

This refers to material that could be used to impose our political view on the host country.

(Does not prohibit mailing a US flag or a picture containing a flag to a service member.

Religious material contrary to Islamic faith. This

refers to material that speaks out negatively against Islam and material sent in bulk in an effort to convert or evangelize.

It is acceptable to send a Bible/religious books.