

***THE CENTRE COUNTY VETERAN'S NEWSLETTER***  
***By Holly Serface***  
***Oct 8, 2009***

Welcome to the fourth edition of The Centre County Veteran's Newsletter. I appreciate your feedback from the newsletter. If you have anything you would like to add or you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Centre County Veterans Affairs office at 355-6812. I would also like remind all of our Centre County Veterans that we have a VA Outpatient Clinic in State College. It is located at 3048 Enterprise Drive, Ferguson Square, State College, PA. Their phone number is 867-5415. If you are enrolled in the VA healthcare system and haven't been seen at the State College clinic, give them a call today to sign up for a primary care provider.

**NO MORE SSNs ON DEPENDENT ID CARDS:**

The printed dependent social security number is being removed from dependent ID cards and replaced with "xxx-xx-xxxx". This change is being made to protect the identity information of the cardholder. Eligible family members will see this change when they renew their ID cards. The sponsor's SSN will remain visible on the card. This does not need to be done until the dependent ID card expires. You can find the nearest ID card office by going to <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/owa/home> or you can call Carlisle Barracks at 717-245-4501 or Williamsport Army Reserve Center at (570) 322-4696 ext. 213 to get more information.

**FIRST ARMY RESERVE RETIREMENT GUIDE:**

The Army has created a 26-page Army Reserve Non-Regular Retirement Information Guide to cover the unique circumstances of Reserve retirement. The Guide is in the process of being distributed through the Reserves. In the meantime, it is available online on both the Army G-1 retirement Services homepage <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/retire> and on the special AKO for Army Retires website <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/559634>

**IN-STATE TUITION FOR MILITARY MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS:**

For periods of enrollment that begin after July 1, 2009, members of the armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) on active duty for a period of more than 30 days and his or her spouse, or his or her dependent children will be eligible to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state where they reside or are permanently stationed. Once a Service member or their family members are enrolled and paying in-

state tuition, they will continue to pay the in-state tuition rate as long as they remain continuously enrolled at the institution even if the Service member is reassigned outside the state.

This change is included in section 135 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H. R. 4137) (HEOA) which was signed into law on August 14, 2008 and amends and extends the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). This requirement applies to all public institutions that receive funds under a program authorized by the HEA.

The Department of Education has worked with the institutions of higher education and is confident they are aware of the changes in the law and are fully implementing the policy. However, as we all know, there is always the chance that someone just doesn't get the word. If this happens, you should contact the financial aid or registrar's office at the institution. You can also contact the Veterans Affairs office at the institution. Even though you are active duty, these offices should be able to assist you.

In the rare cases where these steps don't resolve the situation, please contact the Department of Education's Ombudsman's office (toll-free at 877-557-2575) or via the internet. The online [Ombudsman Assistance Request Form](#) can be found at the [Office of the Ombudsman](#) website. Both links access complaint information.

### **OEF/OIF OUTREACH EFFORT:**

On July 1, 2009 the Health Resource Center (HRC) began its OEF/OIF Outreach Campaign. HRC is initiating contact with recently discharged Service Members (SM) via the telephone and offering them the opportunity to enroll in VA's health care system live on the telephone or through other avenues. If the SM wishes to enroll via the telephone the HRC will warm transfer the SM to a live Health Eligibility Center (HEC) Representative to complete the registration and enrollment process. The HEC Representative initiates the registration and enrollment process on the telephone. As of July 17, the HEC has successfully enrolled 98 Veterans. In order to provide this service, the HEC has extended its hours of operation; Monday - Friday from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. For more details contact the VHA HEC Alert mail group or call 404-828-5257.

### **CAMP LEJEUNE HEALTH BILL INTRODUCED:**

**Attention Navy, Marines and civilians:** Do you remember the article in my 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter in reference to the contaminated water at Camp LeJeune prior to the year 1988? If not, here it is again:

Did you live or work at the Marine Corps Base in Camp Lejeune in 1987 or before? If so, please register with the Marine Corps by visiting [www.marines.mil/clsurvey](http://www.marines.mil/clsurvey) or by calling the Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water Call Center at 877-261-9782, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

EST. In the early 1980's, two solvents, trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE), both unregulated at the time, were found in two water systems serving the Tarawa Terrace and Hadnot Point areas. Certain drinking water wells were identified as the source of the chemicals and were taken out of service in 1984 and 1985. The Department of the Navy is funding two independent research initiatives. The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is determining if there is an association between exposure to the water and certain adverse health effects. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is evaluating specific health risks associated with exposure. Upon completion of the research, the Marine Corps will directly notify those on the registry through direct mail and email. Camp Lejeune water meets or exceeds all environmental standards today. Drinking water wells at Camp Lejeune are tested four times a year for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), in addition to monthly drinking water sampling. The base is in compliance with all federal and state laws and regulations to ensure safe drinking water.

Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, introduced the *Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act of 2009*. The legislation would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide health care to veterans and their family members who experienced adverse health effects as a result of exposure to well water contaminated by human carcinogens at Camp Lejeune, N.C. Senator Burr's bill would allow a veteran or military family member who was stationed at Camp Lejeune during the time the water was contaminated to receive needed health care at a VA facility. I will ensure to keep you updated on the legislation of this bill.

### **AGENT ORANGE LINKED TO MANY AILMENTS:**

A new report from the Institute of Medicine panel finds that exposure to Agent Orange may raise the risk of heart disease and Parkinson's disease. The findings add to a growing list of conditions that could be linked to Agent Orange, including leukemia, prostate cancer, type II diabetes and birth defects in the children of the veterans exposed. The report "Veterans and Agent Orange" is available on the [National Academies Press](#) website.

### **GROUP 8 VETERANS INVITED BACK TO VA:**

The VA health care system has lifted the six-year ban on new enrollments of Priority Group 8 veterans. This decision qualified about 266,000 more veterans - middle income without service-connected health conditions - for entry into the system. The first 3,900 of these veterans were notified June 15 by mail that recent enrollment applications had been approved. VHA is sending letters and application forms to 420,000 veterans who were rejected for enrollment since January 18, 2003. These letters will encourage them to reapply for health care benefits.

As you probably are aware, we are working with the Altoona VA Medical Center with open enrollments for the VA health care program all over the county in assisting veterans with the application process. If you have not applied for the VA health care program, stop by the office and pick up an application to see if you may be eligible.

### **TRANSFERRING POST 9/11 GI BILL BENEFITS:**

Great news. You can now transfer the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to a spouse and/or child(ren). First, you must apply for the Post 9/11 GI Bill. You can switch from REAP, Montgomery GI Bill-Reserves, Montgomery GI Bill-Active to the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Even if you may not be able to transfer your benefits to your family, you are still eligible for the benefits. If you can transfer your benefits, complete a VA Form 22-1990E. You can transfer benefits without serving additional military service if you became eligible for retirement between August 1, 2009 and July 31, 2010. Starting August 1, 2010, additional service time must be completed. To apply and learn about the Post 9/11 GI Bill, go to <http://www.gibill.va.gov> or call 888-442-4551. To learn more about transferring your benefits, go to the following website: [http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI\\_Bill\\_Info/CH33/Transfer.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Transfer.htm)

### **SCAM TARGETS VETS:**

Veterans are being contacted by a "Patient Care Group" representing that they are helping administer VA prescriptions and stating that the pharmacy billing procedures have changed and they are therefore requesting Veteran credit card numbers for prescription payments in advance of filling their prescriptions. This is false. VA does not call Veterans asking to disclose personal financial information over the phone. VA has **not** changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines.

### **WIN A FREE TRIP TO VIETNAM:**

If you received a Purple Heart for being wounded in Vietnam, you could be one of 15 veterans to win VFW's "Return to Vietnam" trip. This in-country tour from April 28-May 9, 2010, will visit Hanoi, Saigon, Chu Lai, Cu Chi, Hue, the DMZ, Hoi An, Marble Mountain and China Beach. Airfare, accommodations and meals are included. Entries must be received prior to the drawing on Jan. 15, 2010. To claim their trip, winners must send a copy of their Purple Heart documentation to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 15, 2010, and their passport by March 1, 2010. An entry form and more information are available on the [Veterans of Foreign Wars](http://www.veteransofforeignwars.com) website.

## **Measure hopes to include Guardsmen who were left out of new GI Bill (As posted by the American Legion)**

The landmark Post 9/11 GI Bill sent an unprecedented number of veterans to college this fall. But a large chunk of personnel from one service branch missed out. National Guard members activated only under Title 32 status were not included in the new GI Bill. Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa) hopes to change that with the passage of the National Guard Education Equality Act, a measure that will include Title 32 service in the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The bill will grant full benefits to an estimated 30,000 Guardsmen who served entirely or in part on our country's home soil, as airport security directly after the 9/11 attacks, as protectorates of U.S. airspace, as Hurricane Katrina responders, as border security with Operation Jumpstart, or on full-time active duty as part of the Active Guard Reserve. Currently, only Title 10 service and missions count toward GI Bill benefits.

Loebsack's measure will also correct a discrepancy that kept Guardsmen with service-connected disabilities from receiving a four-year college education. Under current law, National Guardsmen who served under Title 32 status and received a disability-related discharge aren't eligible for the college aid they'd receive if they were serving under Title 10 status or with a different military branch. If passed, the National Guard Education Equality Act will change that.

"Our National Guard members who participate in disaster response, protection of U.S. airspace, border security and many other critical missions deserve the Post 9/11 GI benefits and the opportunities that come with those benefits," said Loebsack, a former political science professor at Cornell College. Loebsack's bill, introduced Sept. 10, has the full backing of The American Legion.

### **IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS:**

When a claim is filed with the Regional Office, whether it be a claim for service connection, pension or death benefits, VA will request documents be attached to the application. To obtain a copy of a birth certificate, marriage certificate, marriage license or divorce decree, you will need to contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health/Vital Statistics at the following site for those documents if you do not have them in your possession:

<http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=168&Q=229939> or contact the appropriate state in which these events took place.

You can also obtain your marriage certificate with the Register of Wills and your divorce decree with the Prothonotary's office in Centre County.

If you would like to obtain a copy of your DD 214 or Discharge via the internet, please access the following site: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html> then scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on "Request Military Records".

Please remember that each county in the State of Pennsylvania provides services to their veterans, therefore, the application procedures and funding may vary from county to county. So, it is important that veterans and their dependents need to request assistance through their county of residence.

### **The Charlie Company Welcome Home Effort:**

The Charlie Company Welcome Home Committee is requesting assistance from all the Centre County Veteran's Organizations to help us raise money to provide a gift certificate for each one of the deployed members of the Charlie Company Stryker Brigade that recently returned from service in Iraq.

We are planning a welcome home party and parade that will take place in May, 2010. Current plans are for the party to be block party-style. The public will be invited and the soldiers and their families will be the guests of honor. Members of the public will pay for their own food and refreshments from on site vendors, but all food and refreshments will be free to the soldiers and immediate families of Charlie Company. Entertainment will be free to all attendees.

Cash donations may be sent to:

Charlie Company Welcome Home Fund  
c/o Nittany Bank  
125 North Allegheny Street  
Bellefonte, PA 16823

The Charlie Company Welcome Home Planning Committee includes representatives of: the Charlie Company Family Readiness Group, soldier family members, the American Legion, The Centre County Veterans Affairs Office, the Nittany Leathernecks Detachment of the Marine Corps League, The Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Bellefonte Intervalley Area Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you for your support,

*The Charlie Company Welcome Home  
Planning Committee*