

Potter County Veterans News

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Potter County Veterans Affairs Dept.

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Potter County Partners With VA To Expand Services



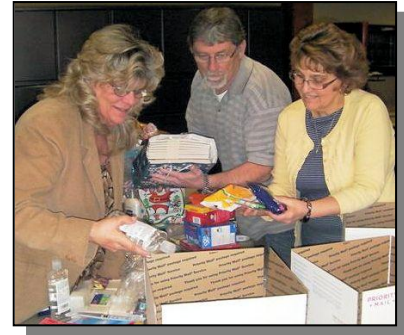
Service members, veterans, and their families who reside in rural communities have unique needs and face a variety of challenges accessing quality health care. In response, the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) has encouraged public officials in rural areas to develop partnerships that will allow the VA to extend its reach. The Potter County Board of Commissioners accepted the challenge, developing a collaborative arrangement with the Bath (N.Y.) VA Medical Center that continues to pay dividends in improving local veterans' access to care. Bath VA has expanded operation hours at its medical clinic, located in a county-owned building at Mapleview, just off Rt. 872 in Coudersport. Services are now available Mondays and Thursdays, from 8 am to 4 pm. The clinic is staffed by personnel trained to process new enrollments; update patient information; conduct screenings; provide medication, prescription renewals and lab work; and deliver primary care and/or referrals, depending on each veteran's needs. Most recently, Bath VA and the commissioners have been working on an expansion of services beyond the traditional primary care model, to include "telemedicine" and "telepsychiatry" through advanced video technology. Details will be announced. Veterans interested in being seen at the Coudersport office should call 814-260-9342.

Meanwhile, Potter County Commissioner Paul Heimel is advocating for rural veterans' services as vice chairman of the National Veterans and Military Service Committee, a branch of the National Association of Counties. He was part of a study group making the case for additional federal support for rural veterans with research findings, such as:

- A higher proportion of rural veterans than urban or suburban vets report disorders; 26% report experiencing PTSD; 18% report depression; rates of alcoholism and suicide ideation are also higher among rural veterans.
- Rural veterans have more barriers to care – transportation, geographic distance from qualified providers (due in part to rising difficulties rural health care providers are facing in recruiting qualified professionals);
- Rural veterans are less likely to seek care due to cultural pressures.
- A large proportion of rural veterans are not well informed of VA services. Just 41% percent show a basic knowledge of benefits and services to which they are entitled. Of those, 26% do not have clear knowledge of how to apply.

County Office Spearheads 'Support Our Troops'

Filling of care packages for soldiers began recently through a project being spearheaded by the Potter County Office of Veterans Affairs. Family members or friends of service members who would appreciate packages are encouraged to provide names and mailing addresses. Donations of cash and package items are being accepted. Among the items being packed are snacks, personal care items, reading materials, writing supplies, playing cards, DVDs, video games, compact discs and games. Personal cards and letters are also being accepted. More information is available from Will Worthington at 274-8290, extension 210, or Charlotte Dietrich at 274-8254. Worthington and Dietrich joined Deb Ostrom (right) in filling the first round of care packages.



Documenting Local Revolutionary War Veterans



An effort to verify the connection of local men to the Revolutionary War will be the subject of a special program to be held at 7 pm on July 25 at the Potter County Historical Society Museum in Coudersport. Members of the local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter have spearheaded the research to memorialize the soldiers who are buried in Potter County. DAR officers Ilene Altenhein (left) and Nancy Glover recently met at the museum to review the most recent findings.

Patriot Weekend Will Return Over Independence Day

Patriot Weekend, a charity fundraiser and military recognition event that debuted in 2013 at Coudersport's Millstream Inn, will move to the courthouse square and be held July 4-5. Food booths, educational exhibits and vendors will line the square. Military veterans will be recognized. Several area charitable organizations will participate. Additional details will be announced. (Photo: *Potter County World War II veteran Ernest Matteson at last year's inaugural Patriot Weekend.*)



Helping Vets File Electronic Benefits Claims



Potter County Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington has registered for training to help local veterans use electronic filing to apply for medical benefits and other services. The VA reports that wait time for claim processing is reduced by about 50% if a claim is filed by computer rather than on paper.

Veterans Designation Now On Driver's Licenses

A new law allows for a designation on a Pennsylvania Driver's License or Identification Card that clearly indicates the bearer is a veteran of the United States Armed Forces. Qualified applicants include those who have received a certificate of release or discharge from active duty (DD214) or equivalent for service in the Armed Forces, including a reserve component or the National Guard – as long as they were discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable. The designation includes an American flag. It can be helpful to veterans seeking discounts from retailers and to those who view the license or ID card while delivering certain services.



More Support For Potter County's LEEK Preserve



Coudersport Area Lions Club recently donated \$300 to the LEEK Foundation. Here, LEEK Foundation representatives Tony Mingo (left) and Ken Martin accept the ceremonial check from Lions Club president Cathy Flook. For the last five years, LEEK Hunting and Mountain Preserve in Oswayo has provided an environment for wounded and injured service members to re-engage with outdoor activities, re-establish confidence, enjoy fellowship, receive counseling, and avail themselves of time for spiritual

reflection. LEEK is owned by brothers Ed and Lew Fisher and their wives Kate and Elaine. Volunteers and supporters are always welcome. More information is available online at leekpreserve.org.

'Healing Waters' Veterans Coming May 20-23

*By Peter C. Ryan, DMD
President, God's Country Chapter/Trout Unlimited*

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing serves military personnel who have been wounded, injured, or disabled to aid in their physical and emotional recovery. The program provides basic fly fishing, fly casting and fly tying classes and clinics. All activities and services are provided at no cost. God's Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited will host its seventh



annual Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing event, in cooperation with the Big Moore's Run Fish and Game Preserve, Tuesday through Friday, May 20-23. While our chapter has enough volunteer members to provide the instruction, equipment and guide services for the 15 individuals from the Erie, Bath and Buffalo VA hospitals, we are soliciting donations to offset the cost of food, lodging and materials. We are proud to dedicate this year's event in honor of all Korean War veterans and are working with the local American Legion and VFW posts to invite all local Korean War veterans to participate in our guests' 40-mile motorcycle escort/ parade through Potter County.

If you consider this event worthy of your support, please forward your tax-deductible contribution to God's Country Chapter TU, Project Healing Waters, Box 702, Coudersport PA 16915.

News You Can Use



Shyster Alert! A marketing company acquired two phone numbers which are similar to Veterans Benefits Administration numbers. The marketer seeks personal information, including credit card numbers. The numbers are: 1-800-872-1000 (VBA main number is 1-800-827-1000); and 1-888-442-4511 (GI Bill number is 1-888-442-4551).

Show Your Support. An “Honoring Our Veterans” license plate is available to all Pennsylvania motor vehicle owners from PennDOT. The plate features an American flag and an eagle with the words “Honoring Our Veterans.” Cost is \$35, with \$15 from each sale going to a Veterans Trust Fund to provide grants to veterans’ service organizations and other veterans’ causes.



Academic Credits. Media reports have generated confusion over new policies granting academic credits that recognize the intense training and experience gained by veterans and active military members. Some academic counselors suggest that service members should use credit-by-exam programs, such as College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests. Only a portion of credits are usable toward a degree. Others end up on a transcript as “general education.” Colleges are adapting, relying in part on the new Joint Services Transcript.

Dental Insurance Program. VA is partnering with two providers to allow eligible veterans and family members to purchase affordable dental insurance. This benefit is designed for veterans with no dental coverage, or those eligible for VA dental care who would like to purchase additional coverage. People may apply online through either Delta Dental, deltadentalvadip.org, or MetLife, metlife.com/vadip. For more information, visit va.gov/healthbenefits/vadip or contact Delta Dental at 1-855-370-3303 or MetLife at 1-888-310-1681. Vets not enrolled in the VA health care system may call 1-877-222-8387.



Help Available 24/7. The Defense Department has revitalized the Military OneSource website to better assist service members and their families. Military OneSource (militaryonecourse.com, or 1-800-342-9647) provides round-the-clock consultants to assist with topics such as non-medical counseling, anger management and communication skills at no cost.

Potter County Veterans News is a publication of the Potter County Veterans Affairs Department. Copies are available for download from the county's website, pottercountypa.net. For more information, contact Paul Heimel at 814-274-8290, Ext. 203.