



U.S. Senator Praises Potter County

U. S. Senator Pat Toomey came to Potter County to express his appreciation to the many people who have been working to serve military veterans. Among his stops was the new Potter County Veterans Center in the former Penn State Extension building at Mapleview. There, Dr. Felipe Diaz, chief of

staff for the Bath (N.Y.) Medical Center, took the occasion to announce that Bath will be expanding the VA Medical Clinic in Potter County, bringing tele-medicine services. Among others who discussed their ongoing services to veterans were Ed Fisher,

a founder of the LEEK Hunting and Mountain Preserve in Oswayo; Pete Ryan and David Saulter, organizers of the annual God's County Chapter/ Trout Unlimited Project Healing Waters; representatives of the American Eagles and Vietnam Vets/ Legacy Vets motorcycle clubs; officers of veterans' service organizations in Galeton, Coudersport and Ulysses; and other invited guests.

Toomey said that in his many years as a congressman, and now a senator, he has not seen a county as dedicated to caring for its veterans as Potter. Some of those attending requested the senator's support for measures to improve rural veterans' access to quality health care, and to suggest that the unique combination of services and opportunities in Potter County could be the foundation for deeper involvement with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sen. Pat Toomey stopped at the Military Wall of Honor in the Coudersport Arboretum, where he praised the efforts of American Legion Post 192. He spent several minutes discussing the wall and veterans' issues with Post 192 Adjutant Ted Parsell.

'In my years as a congressman, and now as a senator, I have not seen a county as dedicated to caring for its veterans as Potter County, Pennsylvania.'



National Honors For ‘No Veteran Left Behind’

Potter County has received a national excellence award for its services to military veterans, under the motto, “No Veteran Left Behind. “The honor was presented during the National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C. Potter was the only Pennsylvania county to be recognized. Entrants for the NACo Achievement Awards must meet rigid standards demonstrating innovative thinking, excellence in administration, demonstrated positive impacts and other criteria. This year’s honors are a first for Potter County.

An outline of Potter County’s “No Veteran Left Behind” initiative will now be circulated by NACo across the nation as a recommended model for county-based solutions.

Among the elements are:

- A partnership with the Bath (N.Y.) VA Medical Center for expanded services at the VA Clinic in Coudersport;
- An award-winning newsletter and related programs to honor veterans and inform them of available benefits and services;
- Successful veterans recognition programs that included a sold-out Korean War Veterans Recognition Dinner and several bridge dedications honoring war casualties;
- Services provided to individual veterans by Potter County Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington;
- Potter County Commissioner Paul Heimel’s advocacy for veterans and military families through leadership positions with both NACo and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.



Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington joined Commissioners (from left) Susan Kefover, Paul Heimel and Doug Morley in receiving the national excellence award.



NACo President Riki Hokama, left, welcomes U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter to the national conference in Charlotte, N.C., where the focus was on community partnerships to help veterans.

Among speakers at the NACo Annual Conference in Charlotte was U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, who called on counties to partner with the VA and other federal agencies to help veterans who are trying to transition back into their communities. Secretary Carter also met separately with members of NACo’s Veterans and Military Service Committee. Commissioner Heimel, who is the committee’s vice chairman, said the panel is now seeking a face-to-face meeting with U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald to support a platform that calls for: bringing veterans access to more timely and more convenient health care through partnerships with non-VA medical providers; reduced barriers to veterans’ civilian employment in both the public and private sectors through greater recognition of skills that are learned in military service; federal funding to help support county-level veterans’ service officers; and a crackdown on fraud that victimizes veterans, current service members and their families, or solicits on their behalf.

Potter County Veterans Discount Program

Businesses are invited to participate in a worthwhile initiative to honor those men and women from Potter County who have dedicated themselves to military service.

Here's how the program works:

- Eligible Potter County veterans will obtain an official Potter County Veterans Discount Program ID card from the County Office of Veterans Affairs.
- Participating business will agree to honor the card by providing a discount on purchases or services.
- Merchants will be provided with window posters identifying them as participants.
- A listing of business participants will be provided to each veteran who receives an ID Card.



Those businesses who would like to participate can register or learn more about the program by contacting Dawn Wooster, executive secretary for the Potter County Commissioners, at 814-274-8290, extension 207.

Thank you for your willingness to support those men and women who answered their nation's call to service!

Honoring County's Vietnam War Casualties



Potter County has signed on to a nationwide campaign to assure that all of the country's Vietnam War casualties are properly memorialized at the "Education Center at the Wall." A collaborative effort between the National Park Service and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the center is planned for the National Mall site adjacent to the Vietnam Memorial. It will be a two-story underground learning facility designed to inform future generations of the honor and sacrifices made by those who served their country in war.

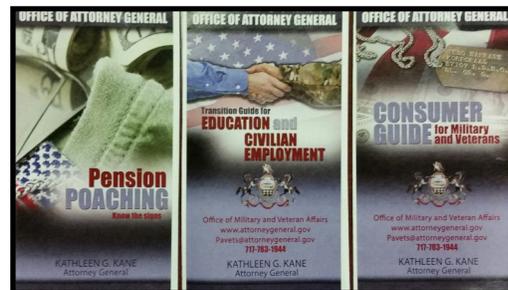
A prominent feature will be the larger-than-life pictures of service members whose names adorn the polished black panels of The Wall. The pictures will be displayed on service members' birthdays and will add faces to the more than 58,000 names on The Wall and tell the stories of those who served. More information is available at the website, buildthecenter.org.

A prominent feature will be the larger-than-life pictures of service members whose names adorn the polished black panels of The Wall. The pictures will be displayed on service members' birthdays and will add faces to the more than 58,000 names on The Wall and tell the stories of those who served. More information is available at the website, buildthecenter.org.

The Potter County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution in support of the Education Center. Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington is collecting photographs and information about Potter County's Vietnam War casualties: Capt. Edgar Nuschke, PFC Edward Ritsick, Sgt. Bruce Maynard, Sp/4 Donald L. Stiles, Staff Sgt. Garreth L. Kibbe, Sp/4 Gerald Stonemetz, Pvt. Edwin Franklin Tubbs and Spc/4 Clark Douglas. For more information, call Director Worthington at 814-274-8290, extension 210.

So You Need A Job...

An Office of Military and Veteran Affairs in the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Departments is offering a number of services. Details are available by calling 717-783-1944. Among the services is a Transition Guide for Education and Civilian Employment that can help veterans avoid the shady operators who are trying to take advantage of vets seeking to enter the civilian workforce or attend college. Separate guides offer tips for avoiding "pension poachers" who exploit veterans seeking their rightful benefits and services, offer advice on credit options, mortgages and other financial topics.



Helping Hand



Veterans facing difficult financial challenges may be able to qualify for help through the Emergency Solutions Initiative. A \$200,000 federal grant was recently received to help veterans from Potter, Cameron and Elk counties who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Help is available for veterans, regardless of discharge status, for overdue rent, security deposits, temporary rental assistance and case management. More information is available from Lisa Harris at 814-389-5065.

OneSource Helps Vets

The Defense Department has revitalized the Military OneSource website to better assist service members and their families. It's part of a broader effort toward an overall reduction of government websites. Military OneSource (militaryonesource.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.



Transition Support



Two organizations are reaching out to veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. *National Veterans Foundation* operates a toll-free hotline for veterans facing transition issues. The line at 1-888-777-4443 is staffed from noon to midnight daily. Veterans can also make queries via the website, www.nvf.org. *Vets4Vets* is a support group for local chapters. Veterans can tell their stories and express their feelings, thoughts and concerns. For more information, visit www.vets4vets.us or call 520-319-5500.

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.