

# PUTNAM VETERAN'S REGISTER

*An E-mail Newsletter of the Putnam County Office of Veterans Services*

## **Veterans and Beneficiaries Receive 2012 Cost of Living Adjustment** *Information Available On-Line for E-Benefits Enrollees*

WASHINGTON – Veterans, their families, and survivors receiving benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs saw a 3.6 percent increase in their compensation and pension benefits beginning January 1.

"Veterans, their families and their survivors are entitled to benefits that keep pace with the cost of living," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is also using the latest technology to provide Veterans and their families with access to current information about their benefits."

The new compensation rates will range from \$127 monthly for a disability rated at 10 percent to \$2,769 monthly for 100 percent. The cost of living adjustments (COLAs) also apply to disability and death pension recipients, survivors receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, disabled Veterans receiving automobile and clothing allowances, and other benefits. The full rates are available on the Internet at [www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/#BM01](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/#BM01).

Under federal law, COLAs for VA's compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits. The last COLA for VA benefits was in 2008 when the last Social Security increase occurred.

"Veterans receiving VA disability and pension payments can now check their new 2012 COLA increase online," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "I encourage all Veterans, their dependents and survivors to

sign up for eBenefits, VA's popular website that recently crossed the one million mark in registrations."

In close collaboration, the Department of Defense (DoD) and VA jointly developed the eBenefits portal (<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>) as a single secure point of access for online benefit information and tools to perform multiple self-service functions, such as checking monthly benefit rates, filing a claim, or checking its status.

Veterans may enroll in eBenefits and obtain a Premium account by verifying their identity in-person at the nearest regional office or online depending on their status, or calling VA's toll free number at 1-800-827-1000.

Servicemembers may also enroll in eBenefits using their Common Access Card at any time during their military service, or before they leave during their Transition Assistance Program briefings.

VA is enhancing its online eBenefits services with newer features such as online selection of Veterans organizations or other advocates to represent applicants for benefits where representation is desired. Another new feature automates messages sent to Veterans and Servicemembers to notify them of benefits that they may be eligible to receive based on recent life events, such as military separation or marriage. The site also continues to consolidate access to other VA and DoD systems through the portal, recently incorporating a gateway to vocational rehabilitation benefits under VA's VetSuccess program. Web access to information and benefits management tools for Servicemembers, Veterans and their families is part of VA and DoD's lifetime engagement strategy from an individual's entry into the military through the twilight years in civilian life as a Veteran. VA provides non-taxable compensation and pension benefits to over four million Veterans, family members, and survivors. Disability compensation is a non-taxable monetary benefit paid to Veterans who are disabled as a result of an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service. For more information about VA benefits or new

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For more information about VA benefits or new



## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Marine Veterans Stationed at Camp Lejeune:** If you were stationed or worked at Camp Lejeune before 1987, you may have been exposed to contaminants in the drinking water supply. To register for water testing notifications and learn more, visit the Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water Web site. Studies are being conducted for the Department of Navy by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

The Marine Corps encourages individuals to contact their local or family physician regarding questions about their health, or they may also contact ATSDR's toll free line at (888) 422-8737 for further information. Former active duty service members seeking medical care or a disability rating for their own illness or injury they feel is the result of exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune while on active duty, please consult your local Department of Veterans Affairs facility or call (800) 827-1000. Claims filed with the Office of the Judge Advocate General are for monetary damages and not for medical care for former Marines or any other VA Benefits.



*2012 northern westchester/putnam county  
saint patrick's day parade*

**I  MY  
VETERAN**

Our parade is the third largest in New York state and takes place on Route 6 in Mahopac, New York. This year marks our 36th consecutive year. This parade is meant to recognize and celebrate Irish culture, heritage and pride, for those who have emigrated here from the Emerald Isle, the Irish-American community, as well as those who are Irish in spirit! We have numerous organizations, bands, clubs, patriotic groups, Irish dancers and a vast array of participants showing their support of the Irish community.

...and don't forget to put on your green and come join us this year for a wonderful day!

**I  MY  
SOLDIER**

**I  MY  
MARINE**

**I  MY  
SAILOR**

**I  MY  
AIRMAN**

**I  MY  
COASTIE**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 2012  
ROUTE 6  
MAHOPAC, NEW YORK  
STEP OFF TIME: 2 PM**

**THE WEARING OF THE GREEN  
WILL BE EXTRA SPECIAL THIS  
YEAR  
THE ORGANIZERS OF THE PARADE  
ARE DEDICATING THE PARADE TO  
ALL THOSE WHO ARE SERVING IN  
THE MILITARY  
AND  
TO OUR VETERANS**

**PLEASE ALL MILITARY MEMBERS  
WHO ARE HOME AND ALL VETER-  
ANS PLEASE COME AND MARCH  
THIS IS TO HONOR THOSE WHO  
SERVE AND WHO HAVE SERVED**

**WEAR CAMO AS YOUR GREEN!!!**



**PUTNAM COUNTY  
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

This is the first issue of the "Putnam Veterans Register". While most E-mails go out with a request not to print the e-mail I am asking you to print this and give it to a veteran in our community or resend it to a veteran you may know. Information is a vital part of helping our service members as they reintegrate themselves into non-military society. It is also valuable to veterans who may not have availed themselves to veterans entitlements or benefits. So feel free to pass this newsletter around.

**KISS ME  
I'M A VETERAN!**

February 14th will be Valentines Day and while I hope you will try to send a card or gift to a service member I hope many of you take to heart the graphic in the center of this article. What better way to thank the veterans of our community on Valentines Day!

meeting of the Mahopac Italian American Club. At that time they donated \$2,500 to Wounded Warriors via the New York State VFW Ladies Auxiliary. We hope local service organizations will continue to donate to veteran oriented causes. To put in a plug we do need donations for the Putnam County Veterans Residence.

*Harold Rhode*

Recently it was my pleasure to attend a



Brennan Mahoney  
 Putnam Veterans Service Agency (M & F)  
 110 Old Route 6, Bldg 3  
 Carmel, NY 10512  
 845-808-1620

In this first edition for the New Year, I will discuss medical conditions, which are considered “presumptive” for in-country serving Vietnam Veterans. An in-country Vietnam veteran, is one who served “boots on the ground” in South Vietnam and does not include Navy personnel in the waters around Vietnam unless they can prove inland waterway service or “on the ground service.” Nor does it include Air Force Veterans that may have flown missions over Vietnam, but never landed in country.

After much study the National Academy of Science determined that there were a variety of conditions that occurred more often in Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides sprayed in Vietnam before and during the war, than the general population. VA now has a list of conditions that are considered “presumptive” or having been caused by Agent

Orange exposure, meaning if diagnosed, the VA considers these conditions to have been caused by your military service in Vietnam. A diagnosis of one or more of these conditions can be used to file and win a disability compensation claim through the VA.

As of the Fall of 2010, the VA recognizes the following conditions as presumptive Agent Orange Claims: AL amyloidosis, Chloracne, Porphyria Cutanea Tarda, Soft Tissue Sarcomas (but not all varieties), Hodgkin’s Disease, Multiple Myeloma, Respiratory Cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx, trachea), Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, Prostate Cancer, Acute and Sub-Acute Peripheral Neuropathy, Type 2 Diabetes and three new conditions including Parkinson’s Disease, B Cell Leukemia’s and Ischemic Heart Disease. More details on these new conditions will be in future editions of this newsletter.

To file a claim, a Veteran should collect his medical diagnosis, his military discharge or DD 214 and any dependent information (marriage, divorce, children, etc.) and make an appointment with this office in order to discuss and develop a strong claim with the VA.

By way of reintroduction I am Brennan Mahoney, a Veterans’ Service Officer (VSO) working out of the Putnam County Veterans’ Service Agency, Bldg 3, Old Route 6, Carmel (T: 845-808-1620). The office is here to assist Veterans and their families with any Veterans benefits they may be eligible for. Feel free to contact us to discuss any Veterans issues or to apply for VA benefits.

## VA Providing Credit Monitoring to Misidentified Veterans

WASHINGTON (Jan. 20, 2012) – The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering free credit monitoring to more than 2,200 Veterans whose personal information, including social security numbers, was posted on Ancestry.com following the mistaken release of data through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

“VA places the highest priority upon safeguarding the personal information of our Veterans,” said Jerry L. Davis, VA’s chief information security officer. “When lapses occur, we will immediately take prompt remedial action, such as notification.”

The family history website, which provides access to genealogical and historical information, had requested information from VA about deceased Veterans. Under FOIA, VA is obligated to release requested records upon written request unless they may be withheld. Therefore, VA provided the website with the data on March 18, 2011.

On Dec. 13, 2011, after the information had been posted on the history website, VA learned that it included data about some living Veterans because some of the death reports provided to the website were inaccurate.

“Fortunately, no personal health information was

included in this data release,” Davis said.

“Ancestry.com has worked with us and immediately removed all the information that we had supplied them.”

There is no indication personally identifiable information of any Veteran has been misused. However, VA is still notifying all potentially affected Veterans so they can be vigilant and take steps to protect against identity theft. VA is also offering credit monitoring for one year at no charge to every Veteran whose name was mistakenly released and posted on the history website.

FOIA requires federal agencies to disclose requested records unless they may be withheld under specific statutory exemptions. Under FOIA, VA was obligated to provide the website with the name, social security number, date of birth, date of death, military branch assignments, and the dates of entry on active duty and release from active duty for deceased Veterans.

VA has launched an effort to determine why information about living Veterans was included in a database about deceased Veterans. The error did not affect the VA benefits of any Veteran. VA is committed to protect-

ing Veterans’ personal information and to improving information processing to avoid erroneous data.

Veterans who believe they may have been affected by this incident who have not been notified by VA may verify whether their information was involved by writing to: Department of Veterans Affairs, OIT Privacy Officer (005R1A),

**DETER-DETECT-DEFEND**  
**AVOID THE ID**

810 Vermont Ave., NW  
 Washington DC 20420,  
 (Attn: Garnett Best).

Affected Veterans can request a free credit report for one year from one or more of the three national credit bureaus by calling 1-877-322-8228 or by visiting <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>.

Information about this and other protections, including placing a “fraud alert” on credit accounts, is available by calling the Federal Trade Commission at its toll free number, 1-877-438-4338, or by visiting its website, <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/index.html>

# Financial Education Day

Sponsored by the Westchester Community College  
Alumni Association

**Mission Statement: To create a 'no strings attached'**

**Financial Education Event at the Gateway Center on the campus of Westchester Community College.**

Event Date and location: Saturday March 10th 2012 at the Gateway Center on the campus of Westchester Community College

Target audience: This free event is open to anyone wishing to learn more about their finances.

Project Leader: Suzanne Mathews, Director of Center for Financial and Economic Education  
Suzanne.Matthews@sunywcc.edu 914-606-5627

Project Coordinator: Sandford (Sandy) Wollman, Director of Pro Bono FPA/Greater Hudson Valley  
Sandy@ChannelFP.com 914-481-1665

WCC Alliance Members: United Way-Mary Ann Luna, VP for Community Alliances

WCC Alumni Association-John Fellas, Director of Alumni Relations

GreenPath Debt Solutions-Chris Dlugozima, Community Relations Coordinator

Financial Planning Association-Greater Hudson Valley-Mark Brownstein, President

Discussion: The event will consist of an introduction from a 'high profile' speaker, presentations on over 10 different financial planning topics (from retirement plans, credit scores, estate planning, insurance and more) as well as personal one on one consultations. *This event will not be sales oriented but will be strictly educational in nature. Event attendees will be able to learn about many financial topics without worrying about annoying sales pitches.* Planned workshops include:

1. Financial Planning Basics
2. Retirement Planning
3. Retirement
4. Investing I
5. Elder Care
6. Estate Planning
7. Information Security
8. College Savings
9. Business
10. Taxes-
11. Debt Control
12. Credit Scores
13. Insurance
14. Reverse Mortgages

- Why Do You Need a Financial Plan and a Financial Planner?
- Planning for a Confident Retirement
- Preserving Your Income in Retirement
- Investing Your Money in Times of Economic Turmoil
- Who will pay for Mom and Dad's Care?
- Why your will isn't enough
- Beware of Scammers, What You NEED to Know.
- All You Need To Know About Paying For College.
- Opening a business from home - Things you NEED to know.
- Tips to Save on Your 2011 Taxes.
- Kick Debt to the Curb
- Give Yourself Some Credit



## 15. PRESENTATION FOR VETERANS

**VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION ON VA BENEFITS**



VA Hudson Valley HCS

VETERANS IDENTIFICATION CARD  
(VIC) Initiative

For more information call:  
845-831-2000, Ext. 5136



Your new VIC card does not have your social security number on it which reduces vulnerability to identity theft, promotes privacy and provides positive identification.

If your Veteran's Identification Card does not have a Social Security Number on it—it's current and you do not need a new card.

Registrations **must** be updated and if eligible, you will receive your card in the mail.

**FEBRUARY 9TH, 2012**

**1875 ROUTE 6 PROVIDENT SAVINGS BANK (2ND FLOOR)  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| February 15th, 2012 | Monticello 5-7 pm  |
| February 16th, 2012 | Pine Plains 5-7 pm |
| February 22nd, 2012 | Goshen 5-7 pm      |
| February 28th, 2012 | New City 5-7 pm    |
| February 29th, 2012 | Port Jervis 5-7 pm |

Putnam-Northern  
Westchester Fire Police

**Move over  
or slow down  
to protect our**

Police Officers  
EMS Personnel  
Firefighters  
Fire Police Officers

**REMEMBER: IT'S THE LAW**