



# American Legion Post 1758 Newsletter

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American Legion Post 1758,  
www.4ever66/legionpost1758

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Our next meeting will be April 8, 2014 at 7:00 PM at the **Old East Fishkill Town Hall**, Rte. 52, next to the Police Station. Please try to attend.

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When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us.

**Helen Keller**



## Wanted/Offered

I'm adding a new item to our Newsletter. The new section will be a listing of serviceable items that you may longer need and are willing to pass on to a needy Veteran. This could be anything from clothes, dishes, lawn equipment, furniture, anything at all. Like a classified ad. But no money involved. You can also request an item if you or a Vet you know is in need of something. Open to any Veteran, they don't have to be a member of our Post. This is not a way to pick something up for free and resell it!

Simply provide me with a description of the item you have or want and I will post it in the newsletter. The transaction will take place between the offerer and the needer. The Post will not be collecting or storing items. examples:

Offered: walk behind lawn mower - contact Jim Smith@ 845-555-5555.

Needed: color TV any size - contact I.M. Needy @ 845-111-1111

## Good of the Legion:

**Michael Paul's** name was pulled for Pot Of Gold Drawing at our February meeting. Unfortunately Michael was not in attendance so the money gets added to "the pot".

## Social Security - Faster Benefit Decisions for Veterans

This month brought great news for veterans: beginning March 17, 2014, a new expedited disability process. Carolyn W. Colvin, Acting Commissioner of Social Security, along with Congressman John Sarbanes (D-MD) unveiled a new initiative to expedite disability applications from veterans with a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation rating of 100 percent Permanent and Total (P&T). Under the new process, Social Security will treat these veterans' applications as high priority and issue expedited decisions, similar to the way the agency currently handles disability claims from wounded warriors.

"Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country and it is only right that we ensure they have timely access to the disability benefits they may be eligible for and deserve," said Acting Commissioner Colvin.

### Castle Point Food Pantry

On Tuesday, March 11th, I dropped off about \$200.00 worth of non-perishable food that our Post had collected to the Castle point Food Pantry. The food was collected in "tote boxes" at Adams Fairacre Farms in Wappinger Falls and at the East Fishkill Town hall. The boxes remain in place for additional donations.

## Wake Break

We have obtained 3 dates for Wake Breaks at the Eastbound Stormville rest area on I-84. The dates are all Saturdays and need to be manned from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. These should be good fundraisers for the Post. We can offer coffee, hot tea, hot chocolate, and doughnuts/baked goods. Each item must be individually wrapped (sandwich bags. etc). The goods are available for donations, no fees or charges are permitted.

We cannot offer candy, soda, water, chips or anything that the vending machines offer.

If we break the days in to two shifts: 8:00-12:00N and 12:00N to 4:00 PM none of us should be overworked. The dates are:

- April 26
- May 10
- June 28

If you, your significant other, or children like to bake we would appreciate donations.

If anyone has a large percolator coffee pot we could borrow it would be appreciated. More information will follow.

## VA Debuts New ID Cards

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the phased roll out of newly designed, more secure Veteran Health Identification Cards. The new cards are distinguished by additional security features and will have a different look and feel. The new card will also be a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC) displaying the Veteran's Member ID, a new unique identifier, as well as a Plan ID, reflecting the Veteran's enrollment in VA health care. Enrolled Veterans can get more information about the VHIC by visiting their VA medical facility enrollment coordinator or at the VHIC webpage at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic), calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility. Veterans who are not enrolled in the VA health care system can apply for enrollment at any time by visiting the VA Enrollment webpage at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll), Calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility.



We will be soliciting donations for St. Jude's Children's Hospital on Saturday, March 15. We're scheduled to be at the Stewart's Shop on Lake Walton Road and the Convenient Mart on Rte. 52 near the Rte 82 intersection from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. This has been an annual event for us the last 10 years or so. We schedule it to coincide with WRWD's Radiothon and usually collect \$700-\$800 for the hospital. Please come and help out.

## Congratulations

to **Nicholas Russo** for celebrating 50 years as a member of the American Legion. I stopped by his office on February 27th to present him with his 50 year certificate and we had a nice chat. He continues to run his accounting practice and keeps real busy this time of the year.

## VA Claims Update

VA Claims backlog according to March 3, 2014 Monday Morning Workload Report:

- 647,943 claims pending (368,829 have been pending over 125 days)
- Average days a claim is pending: 164.5 days
- Accuracy of adjudications: 91% (3-month period)
- Total number of appeals: 273,721

Four years after the Obama administration agreed to establish a **national veterans cemetery** in Western New York, and 17 months after Sen. Charles Schumer revealed Veterans Affairs had selected a site, the federal government has yet to purchase the land.

The VA has an agreement to buy 132 acres in Genesee County for the cemetery, which would be located about halfway between Buffalo and Rochester and would serve the 180,000 veterans who live in those areas. But the extensive archaeological tests required because of Native American artifacts buried on the Town of Pembroke property, coming on the heels of the initial difficulties in finding a suitable site, have delayed the development of the cemetery.

VA officials told The Buffalo News the agency hopes to close on the purchase this spring. But they cautioned that design and construction of the cemetery will take an additional four or five years, and Congress still must appropriate the money for the project. “We’re doing everything that we can to make sure that the veterans in that area, Western New York, are taken care of and that we can provide them the final resting place that’s a national shrine and a lasting tribute to their service. But sometimes that takes time,” said Kristen Parker, a National Cemetery Administration spokeswoman.

Local veterans have waited years for a national cemetery in or near Erie County, arguing that the closest such site, in Steuben County, is too far away. The veterans are frustrated the cemetery is taking so long, but they look forward to the government’s building a cemetery worthy of the men and women who will be interred there. “It’s never too late to honor our veterans,” said Roger Woodworth, who heads the Veterans One-Stop Center in Buffalo. The national veterans cemetery in Bath, serving both Western and Central New York, is about 100 miles from downtown Buffalo. Area veterans have argued for years for a more conveniently located cemetery.

In 2010, the Obama administration agreed to a change that made the region eligible for one. The VA initially looked for 200-acre sites between Buffalo and Rochester but later broadened its search to accept smaller parcels. By 2012, the VA had narrowed its choice to a trio of sites – two in Pembroke and one in Lancaster – and Schumer that fall declared the VA had a site in mind. The VA itself has never confirmed which site it prefers, even after The News last March revealed that the agency’s choice was a parcel at Route 77 and Indian Falls Road.

The property is well-known in Pembroke and is described as pastoral by neighbors. “It is a beautiful, rolling hill, very much like an Arlington cemetery,” said Pembroke Assessor Deborah Conti, referring to the national cemetery in Virginia. The land for decades has been leased to a farming operation, most recently for winter wheat, but farming on the property ended last year, said Lee Veenendaal, whose late father, Leroy, bought the land. Lee Veenendaal told The News he has a contract in place with the VA and expects the sale to close within three months. The VA will pay the market rate for the property, which is assessed at \$160,000.

The VA said extensive archaeological digging at the site has held up the closing on the sale. The property previously was part of the Tonawanda Indian Reservation, Conti said. “That was all Indian land. No matter where you dig over there, you will find something. I find stuff in my yard,” she said. Officials with the Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians did not return phone messages. The state Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation oversaw the cultural-resource survey at the site. Now officials are waiting for the VA to send along a revised agreement.

“They’re doing a lot of due diligence to make sure everyone’s happy,” Veenendaal said.

The VA expects to close on the property in the next several months, though officials are ready to proceed with their second choice if the purchase falls through, said Jessica Kaplan, a VA real-property manager.

“It has been a long, bumpy road to get Western New York a national veterans cemetery, and we are finally coming close to a deal,” Schumer said in an email.