A SNEAK PEAK AT WHAT’S INSIDE

First Veteran’s Day Parade in Lycoming County in Over 10 YEARS.

Donate a Picture

Show Your Appreciation To Our Vets

Cost-Of-Living Increase

New Updates

Trip to France? Oui, Oui!
Military Pictures Wanted......

Willing to Donate a picture or a copy of a picture to Veterans Affairs? We are doing a bulletin board for the months of March-May in the hallway of the Executive Plaza, and are looking for pictures of those you are or were in the service.

If you would like to give us a picture (copies are fine) we would greatly appreciate it. You can drop the picture off to us at 330 Pine Street or send it to us at 48 West Third Street, Williamsport PA 17701. **Please include name, branch of service, and dates of service (if known).** Please have pictures in by the end of February. **Thank you!**
A crowd gathered on Saturday, November 9, in the City of Williamsport starting at Campbell Street down to Market Street for “The 2013 Lycoming County Inaugural Veteran’s Day Parade”. We celebrated and welcomed home those who have given so much for our great Country, and honored all deceased Lycoming County Veterans. (Lycoming County has over 20,000 Veterans buried in over 260 cemeteries, with over 2,500 Veterans buried outside Lycoming County. Deceased Veterans served in Peace Time and 15 Wars from the Indian Wars, World War I, World War II, Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf War, War on Terror, Iraq, and Afghanistan.) Everyone showed their appreciation to the Veterans who have so faithfully served our country here and abroad. We recognize the sacrifices of those who have carried the torch of freedom throughout our history and reflect on the contributions of our Wounded, our Missing, our Fallen and their Families. We recognize and honor the men and women in uniform that have made the commitment to protect, serve, and defend our country in times of need ensuring our safety and domestic tranquility. A special thanks to the City of Williamsport and the local businesses and organizations that made the parade possible. Also, George W. Heiges Jr. (Director of Lycoming County Veterans Affairs) would like to give a big thank you out to everyone, he was honored to be the Grand Marshal of the 2013 Veteran’s Day Parade (Chauffeured by Fred Agnoni).

Thank you Veterans!
The Valentines for Vets program during the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week (Feb. 10-16) encourages Americans from all walks of life to deliver valentines to local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers and visit the veterans there.

The week has several purposes including to increase awareness of the local VA in the community. We will be collecting Valentine’s from now until February 6, 2013 to ensure delivery by February 14. This would be a great program for scouting groups, church groups and school activities to teach our young people (and of course grown-ups!) about the importance of recognizing our Veteran’s throughout the year. As in past years, you may address the cards to “A Veteran”, “A Hero” or leave them blank. You may also have participants sign the cards with a first name or simply sign with “A grateful American” or something similar. Store bought or homemade cards are appreciated. Your support will act as a method to inspire and encourage our Nation’s heroes.

Last year we were able to collect over 1,000 Valentine’s (probably closer to 2,000). They were sent to the Wilkes-Barre Veteran’s Affairs Hospital and the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC and they have always acknowledged the contribution with appreciation via letter. Last year, we were able to donate some Valentine’s to local nursing homes such as Valley View and Muncy Valley Skilled Nursing as we had such a response. We have had tremendous success the past couple of years and we are hoping to continue the tradition for 2014.

Thanks again for you Support!

Contact Information:

Sue A Jacobs, Enforcement Officer 570-327-2493 (direct line)
Lycoming County Domestic Relations 570-327-2299 (fax)
48 West Third Street  Williamsport, PA 17701
New Rates for Compensation and Pension Benefits in 2014

WASHINGTON – Veterans, their families and survivors receiving disability compensation and pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs will receive a 1.5 percent cost-of-living increase in their monthly payments beginning Jan. 1, 2014.

“We're pleased there will be another cost-of-living increase for Veterans, their families and their survivors,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The increase expresses in a tangible way our Nation’s gratitude for the sacrifices made by our service-disabled and wartime Veterans.”

For the first time, payments will not be rounded down to the nearest dollar. Until this year, that was required by law. Veterans and survivors will see additional cents included in their monthly compensation benefit payment.

For Veterans without dependents, the new compensation rates will range from $130.94 monthly for a disability rated at 10 percent to $2,858.24 monthly for 100 percent. The full rates are available on the Internet at www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp.

The COLA increase also applies to disability and death pension recipients, survivors receiving dependency and indemnity compensation, disabled Veterans receiving automobile and clothing allowances, and other benefits.

Under federal law, cost-of-living adjustments for VA’s compensation and pension must match those for Social Security benefits. The last adjustment was in January 2013 when the Social Security benefits rate increased 1.7 percent.

In fiscal year 2013, VA provided over $59 billion in compensation benefits to nearly 4 million Veterans and survivors, and over $5 billion in pension benefits to more than 515,000 Veterans and survivors.

For Veterans and separating Service members who plan to file an electronic disability claim, VA urges them to use the joint DoD/VA online portal, eBenefits. Registered eBenefits users with a premium account can file a claim online, track the status, and access a variety of other benefits, including pension, education, health care, home loan eligibility, and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

For more information about VA benefits, visit www.benefits.va.gov, or call 1-800-827-1000.
News From the VA:

⇒ Claims Inventory VA’s goal is to process all disability claims within 125 days, at a 98 percent accuracy level, and eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. We have made great strides, but we realize much work remains to be done; too many Veterans still wait too long. That's unacceptable, and that is why VA has begun implementing a paperless, digital disability claims system— a lasting solution that will transform how we operate and eliminate the claims backlog to more efficiently and better support the needs of Veterans, Service members, their families and survivors.

⇒ Claims Transformation Quick Facts Every year since 2009, VA has completed a record breaking 1 million claims representing over $59 billion in payments to Veterans and their families. VA is building a strong foundation for a paperless, digital disability claims system. By the end of 2012, this technology had already been deployed to 18 Regional Office locations. It will reach all 56 VA Regional Offices by the end of 2013. In pilot programs, the new system has cut the time to process claims nearly in half.

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs has made significant progress in reducing the backlog of disability compensation claims— from 611,000 to 400,835 or 34 percent— since peaking in March. Concurrently, VA improved the accuracy of disability ratings, and provided hundreds of thousands of claims decisions to Veterans who have waited the longest. “Veterans shouldn't have to wait for the benefits they've earned,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. “This has never been acceptable, but we are executing our plans and moving in the right direction to meet our 2015 goal of eliminating the backlog. We still have more work to do, but we are making clear progress and no one is more committed than our VBA employees, more than half of whom are Veterans themselves.”

Since the VA launched the initiative to eliminate the oldest claims first, claims processors at the 56 regional offices of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) have been focused on claims that had been waiting longer than one year. As of November 4, VBA has completed 93 percent of these older claims, resulting in over 476,000 decisions for Veterans since the initiative began on April 19. The proportion of claims decisions that resulted in benefits being granted remained on par with historical averages— between 65 and 70 percent.

At the same time, the accuracy of rating decisions has improved. The three-month average for decision accuracy when evaluating a complete claim file is 90 percent— a 5 percentage point improvement since 2011, and a 7 percentage point improvement since 2010. The three-month average accuracy for rating individual medical conditions inside each claim has climbed three points to 96.7 percent since December 2012.

VBA also directed 20 hours of mandatory overtime per month for claims processors, and worked with the Veterans Health Administration to place VA physicians in regional offices to review medical evidence to help speed decisions. Mandatory overtime was halted during the government shutdown in October, but has been re-established and will continue through November 23. VBA anticipates mandatory overtime to continue in 2014, based on available funding. Optional overtime for claims processors will remain in effect.

In the coming months, VBA will continue its effort on further reducing the backlog, focusing on those claims that have been pending the longest. VBA will also continue to prioritize disability claims for homeless Veterans, those experiencing extreme financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims (FDC). Filing an electronic FDC is the quickest way for Veterans to receive a decision on their compensation claim (http://www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/).
Looking for a trip that will be unforgettable?
Join Susquehanna Trailways on a Moving Tour to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Epic D-Day Landings, in FRANCE.

This tour will include a viewing of Paris through the eyes of those who served its occupation and liberation. The Normandy coast a chance to visit Rommel’s Castle headquarters and the Cean Memorial Peace Museum. Time will be set aside for the exploration of the landmarks of D-Day, including the Point Du Hoc Ranger Memorial and the parachute-shaped airborne museum in the town of St. Mere Eglise. Look out over the beaches whose code names echo through history– Sword, Juno, Gold, Omaha, and Utah. Discover the culture of Northern France and Chartres and come to know the stories of the men and women who gave so much in the name of freedom.

July 10-19, 2014  10 Days, 13 Meals
This tour requires a Valid US Passport

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS:
♦ Paris
♦ Vel d’Hiv Memorial
♦ Eiffel Tower Dinner
♦ Normandy
♦ Memorial Peace Museum
♦ D-Day Landing Beaches
♦ St. Mere Eglise
♦ Bayeux Tapestry
♦ Le Mont St. Michel
♦ Chartres Cathedral

For more information contact Susquehanna Trailways at 1-800-692-6314. Call early, as only a limited amount of seats are reserved for this tour!

Forms also located at Lycoming County Veterans Affairs
AMERICAN LEGIONS, VFW’s & OTHER COUNTY VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion Post 1 -
Garrett Cochran
10 E. 3rd St., Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-323-9409

American Legion Post 35 -
Glenn Sharrow
78 N. Main St., Hughesville, PA 17737
Phone: 570-584-2123

American Legion Post 36 -
George Webster Pepperman
P.O. Box 211, Jersey Shore, PA 17740
Phone: 570-398-4174

American Legion Post 104 -
Eugene Grafius
1312 Broad St., Montoursville, PA 17754
Phone: 570-368-9000

American Legion Post 251 -
Bower Decker
185 Broad St., Montgomery, PA 17752
Phone: 570-547-2039

American Legion Post 268 -
Roland Ritter
515 Legion Rd., Muncy, PA 17756
Phone: 570-546-5210

American Legion Post 617 -
Royal P. Steinbacher
901 Market Street, South Williamsport, PA 17702
Phone: 570-327-0255

American Legion Post 999 -
West Branch Service Post
Phone: 570-447-1572
2985 Four Mile Drive, Apt. 107
Montoursville, PA 17754
Meets at the Montoursville Presbyterian Church

Veterans of the Vietnam War – Post PA 51
P.O. Box 23, Hughesville, PA 17737
Phone: 570-547-2814

VFW Post 3428 -
Edward J. Smith Post
12 N Market St., Muncy, PA 17756
Phone: 570-546-3820

VFW Post 5859 -
Billy O. Brandt Post
201 N. Lincoln Ave., Jersey Shore, PA 17740
Phone: 570-398-2801

VFW Post 7863 -
Le Roy O. Buck Post
150 Shaffer St., South Williamsport, PA 17702
Phone: 570-323-1579

VFW Post 844 -
Howard W. Kahler Post
1260 West 3rd Street, Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-326-2752

Forty & Eight Voiture 382
345 Market Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-322-1670

Williamsport Detachment 388
Marine Corp League Inc.
P. O. Box 3245, Williamsport, PA 17701
Contact Robert Mosley Phone: 570-322-4727

Korean War Veterans of Lycoming County, Inc.
P. O. Box 3232
Williamsport, PA 17701
Contact Howard Wilt Phone: 570-745-3775
(to arrange military funerals)
Your Reps in Washington & Harrisburg

U.S. Representative Thomas Marino—10th Congressional District
Williamsport District Office
1020 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 1A
Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-322-3961
Fax: 570-322-3965
Office Hours: M-F 9-5
Website: http://marino.house.gov/

PA State Senator Gene Yaw—Senate District 23
330 Pine Street, Suite 204
Williamsport, PA
Phone: 570-322-6457
Fax: 570-327-3703
Toll-free: 1-800-443-5772
Website: http://senatorgeneyaw.com/

PA State Representative Garth D. Everett—84th Legislative District
Penn Hills Plaza, Halls Station
21 Kristi Road, Suite 2
Muncy, PA 17756
Phone: 570-546-2084
Fax: 570-546-5220
Office Hours: M-F 9-5
Website: http://www.repeverett.com/

PA State Representative Rick Mirabito—83rd Legislative District
800 West Fourth Street, Suite GO2
Williamsport, PA
Phone: 570-321-1270
Fax: 570-327-3719
Office Hours: M-W-F 8-5; T-TH 8-7
Website: http://www.pahouse.com/mirabito/

Not sure who your representative is? Find out at:
http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findeyourlegislator/county
list.cfm?CNTYLIST=LYCOMING
FROM THE LYCOMING COUNTY VA OFFICE:

Would you like to have a VA Benefit Seminar at a Nursing Home, Legion, VFW, or Other Organization? Have George come and speak to the Veterans and Widows about what they could be eligible for through the VA. Call our office at 570-327-2365 to set it up.

Home Loans? Contact Bob Brown, Sr. Loan Officer at Allentown Mortgage Corp. VA Loan Specialist/Residential Financing.

Phone: 610-883-7601 or 484-494-6593
Email: bobbrown@worldlynx.net
Web: www.allentownmortgage.com
*Licensed by the PA Dept. of Banking*

FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

Are you rated 100% disabled by the VA? Then you may be eligible for real estate tax exemption and free hunting and fishing licenses. Call 570-327-2365 for more information.

If you or anyone you know are interested in being trained for an Honor Guard position please contact the VA office at 570-327-2365.

Important information to Know when Transitioning from TRICARE Prime to Standard.

- You can still see your same doctor.
- Costs for care will change.
- Your health care prior authorizations are still valid.

Be aware that your out-of-pocket costs for existing care will change from TRICARE Prime copayments to TRICARE Standard (Extra) cost-shares and deductibles on October 1, 2013.

If you have any other questions or concerns please contact us at 570-327-2365
### Vet Center

The Vet Center is located at Suite 104, 49 East Fourth Street, Williamsport, next to the James V. Brown Library. Phone 327-5281. Open: Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:30pm. All services provided by the Vet Center are FREE OF CHARGE. These include readjustment counseling and outreach services to all veterans who served in any combat zone. Services are also available for their family members. These include:

- individual and group counseling: women, spouses, WWII, Korean, Vietnam, OEF/OIF, and other combat veterans.
- group counseling
- marital and family counseling
- bereavement counseling

### VA Outpatient Clinic

The VA Outpatient Clinic was established July 1997 on the Campus of Divine Providence Hospital in the Wenner Building, 1705 Warren Avenue, Suite 304, Williamsport, PA. **Phone:** 570-322-4791  **Fax:** 570-322-5170

Open: Monday—Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Scheduled appointments only.

**Services Include:**
- Primary Care, Enrollment/Eligibility forms, Psychiatry, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Social Services, Counseling, Lab, Nutrition services, and Immunizations.
- The VA Clinic has a social worker at the clinic on Tuesday and Thursday. Her name is Chris Veach; please call the clinic at (570) 322-4791 to schedule an appointment.

- substance abuse information and referral
- referral in applying for VA Benefits, job counseling and educational VA benefits
- referral for homeless vets
- military sexual trauma (male and female) counseling & referral
- outreach and community education

### Pennsylvania CareerLink

The PA Career Link—Lycoming County office is located at 329 Pine Street in Williamsport and is open Monday through Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays.

**Contact:** Timothy French  
**Phone:** 570-601-5934  
**E-mail:** tifrench@state.pa.us  
**Online:** [www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us](http://www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us)
We are here to help you . . .

MSGT George W. Heiges (Ret.)
Lycoming County Director of Veterans Affairs
gheiges@lyco.org
- Fully accredited as a Veterans Service Officer by the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Twenty-one years USAF

David A. Keene
Assistant Director of Veterans Affairs
dkeene@lyco.org
- Fully accredited as a Veterans Service Officer by the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Four years USMC

To make an appointment, please contact
Natalie Miller at: 570-320-2101

Office Hours
Monday through Friday 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
Monday–Thursday: Scheduled Appointments Only
Friday: Walk-Ins 9:00 AM–4:30 PM
Closed weekends and major holidays.

The Lycoming County VA
Office Will Be Closed:
New Years Day–Wednesday, January 1, 2014
Martin Luther King Jr. Day–Monday, January 20, 2014
President’s Day–Monday, February 17, 2014

Do you have announcements or information to share???
The Lycoming County Office of Veterans Affairs invites you to submit articles and items of interest to be published in the next edition of The Lycoming Vet.

For questions or to make submissions, please contact Natalie Miller at the Veterans Affairs Office.