
Inside this Issue:

- *Dates to Remember*
- *Have you Heard – WAC*
- *Camp LeJeune Water Contamination*
- *Revenue Payment Made To Iowa Veterans Fund*
- *Holiday mail for Heroes*
- *VA Hospital Co-pays*
- *New Law Authorizes Veterans' Salutes for National Anthem*
- *CRDP/CRSC Election*
- *Home Foreclosure Hotline*
- *Transforming our Armed Forces*
- *VA Updates: Gulf War illness – Travel reimbursements*
- *VA Office News article*
- *General Shinseki nomination*
- *In honor of Commissioner Carter*
- *NG MOU*
- *Digital Television Transition*
- *10 things to make you Happy*

LINKS OF INTEREST

Iowa Department of Veteran Affairs Veterans Needs Study
https://www.iowava.org/images/Veterans_Final_Report_2008.pdf

Department of Veteran Affairs
<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>

Des Moines VA Regional
<http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=375&dnum=All>

America Supports You
<http://www.americasupportsyou.com/>

Pottawattamie Commission of Veteran Affairs UPDATES



December 2008



DATES to REMEMBER:

1: World AIDS Day, 7: Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 8: Immaculate Conception (Christian), 9: Eid-al-Adha (Islamic), 17: Pan American Aviation Day, 17: Wright Brothers Day, 21: December Solstice, 22: First day of Chanukah (Jewish), 24: Christmas Eve (Christian), 25: Christmas Day (Christian), 26: Kwanzaa (until Jan 1), 29: Last day of Chanukah (Jewish), 29: Muharram/New Year (Islamic), 31: New Year's Eve

The 2008 Holiday Season

The holiday season is a time for gathering and celebrating with friends and family, gift-giving, reflection and thanks.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

This year marks the 30th anniversary of integration of women into the regular force of the U.S. Army – 30 years since the end of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1978. Gen. Douglas MacArthur called them "my best Soldiers," saying that the women serving in the Women's Army Corps worked harder, complained less and were better disciplined than many of his male soldiers. Created out of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1943 to enable women to take over more routine service and office jobs and free men for combat roles, the WAC, along with similar female components for other services and nurses, was the only way women could serve their country. WACs landed in France 38 days after D-Day and WACs served in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, although they had to remain far behind the front lines. While WACs worked long hours alongside their male counterparts, many WAC veterans remember being sort of second-class military citizens. Their training that was far different. Many expected to participate in low-crawls and difficult obstacle courses like the men during basic training, but found they were only expected to do modified push-ups, run either half a mile or in place and do a modified obstacle course called "run, dodge and jump," which involved running around fences and jumping over a small ditch. They even had make-up classes and were required to carry lipstick at all times. As the draft ended in 1978, the Army could not sustain an all-volunteer force with solely male recruits so women became more important to the Army. Change had been coming throughout the mid-1970s, as WACS were gradually allowed to participate in things like M-16 training, and attend branch schools with male soldiers.

Camp Lejeune Water Contamination

The Department of the Navy has recently initiated a mail campaign to notify veterans stationed at the "Camp Lejeune" Marine Corps Base in North Carolina of toxic chemicals in the drinking water between 1957 and 1987. The letter invites service members and their families to participate in a registry of who may have consumed contaminated drinking water during that period.

Contamination

The following solvents were found in the drinking water at Camp Lejeune Base:
Perchloroethylene or Tetrachloroethylene, from an off-base dry cleaning firm
Trichloroethylene, from leaking underground storage tanks

Impact

It is not clear, at this time, that any of the military service members or their families were exposed to chemicals in drinking water at levels that would cause health problems.

VA Benefits Associated With Exposure

There are currently no health screenings or health benefits associated with this potential exposure. However, veterans who may have been exposed are encouraged to apply for enrollment, and if enrolled, should discuss any specific concerns with their VA healthcare provider.

VA providers may direct concerned veterans to VHA Environmental Health program staff located at each medical center. These staff can offer informed discussions and answer health-related exposure questions.

Veterans are encouraged to file a claim for VA disability compensation for any injury/illness they feel is related to their military service.

Additional Information

Veterans who received the letter from the Department of the Navy may visit the following websites for the most current updates:

<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/index.html>
<https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clsurvey/index.html>

For more information, call the Department of Navy toll-free at (877) 261-9782.

Revenue Payment Made To Iowa Veterans Fund. The AP (10/30) reported, "State officials says the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund received nearly \$1 million in revenue Thursday." This is the "first such payment from special Iowa Lottery scratch games" which "were approved by lawmakers to aid veterans. All the profits are funneled into the veterans account," which lawmakers created in 2003, "and interest is used for college tuition assistance, job training and health benefits for Iowa veterans." The fund is "intended to create a \$50 million endowment to assist veterans."



If you want to send a care package go to <http://www.americasupportsyou.com/> and click under "Homefront Groups" to find out how to send care packages.

Copayment for Medication. *The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is hereby giving notice that there is no change in the medication copayment rate for calendar year 2009 and the rate will remain at \$8.00. The total amount of copayments in a calendar year for a veteran enrolled in one of the priority groups 2 through 6 shall not exceed the cap of \$960.00. These rates are based on the Prescription Drug component of the Medical Consumer Price Index as cited in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, part 17, section 17.110 gpo.gov*

Reasonable Charges for Medical Care or Services; 2009 Calendar Year Update. *Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Sec. 17.101 sets forth the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical regulations concerning "reasonable charges" for medical care or services provided or furnished by VA to a veteran for : (1) A non-service-connected disability for which the veteran is entitled to care or the payment of expenses for care under a health plan contract; (2) a non-service-connected disability incurred incident to the veteran's employment and covered under a worker's compensation law or plan that provides reimbursement or indemnification for such care and services; or (3) a non-service-connected disability incurred as a result of a motor vehicle accident in a State that requires automobile accident reparations insurance.*

Consistent with the VA's regulations, the updated data tables and supplementary tables containing the changes described in this notice will be posted on the Internet site of the Veterans Health Administration Chief Business Office, currently at <http://www.va.gov/cbo>, under "Charge Data (Rates)." The updated data tables and supplementary tables containing the changes described will be effective until changed by a subsequent Federal Register notice gpo.gov

New Law Authorizes Veterans' Salutes during National Anthem

Veterans and active duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month.

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem. Last year's provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head-gear.

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14.

The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect Jan. 28, 2008.

CRDP/CRSC Election - Open Season

If a military retiree is eligible for both CRDP and CRSC, you may elect to change which compensation you receive during the CRDP/CRSC Open Season. This annual Open Season election period is Jan. 1 to Jan. 31, 2009, and allows the retiree to choose which payment is preferred. You may receive one or the other but not both.

In late December, eligible retirees will be mailed a CRDP/CRSC Open Season Election Form. The retiree needs to return the form only if making a change from CRDP to CRSC or vice versa. If the retiree prefers to keep things the way they are, do nothing. The payments the retiree now receives will continue uninterrupted.

To help the retiree make a more informed decision, the form will include a comparison of the CRSC and CRDP entitlement amounts as well as information about the collection actions and taxes to which each type of payment is subject.

If the retiree wants to change from CRDP to CRSC or vice versa, the form must be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2009. If the form is dated after this date, it will not be processed and the current payments will continue uninterrupted.

The change in the payment will be effective with the first business day of February 2009. Due to a 30-day processing timeframe, the retiree may not receive their first payment until the first business day of March 2009, including a retroactive adjustment for the payment that would have been paid on the first business day of February.

Home Foreclosure Hotline

In recent months, many borrowers are finding themselves unable to meet new monthly payments as adjustable rate mortgages are reset to higher rates. A hotline has been set up that uses HUD-approved counselors to help work with homeowners and their banks for free to try to help them avoid foreclosure.

This toll-free hotline --1- 888-995-HOPE (4673)-- is available to consumers in all 50 States 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It offers counseling for borrowers in need from independent, non-profit counselors approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), who will work with borrowers and their lenders to find solutions for problem mortgage situations.



Fact Sheet: Transforming Our Armed Forces to Face the Threats of Today and Tomorrow

Over The Past Eight Years, America's Military Has Become Stronger, More Agile, And Better Prepared To Confront Threats To The American People

Today, President Bush visited the United States Military Academy and discussed the ways he and his Administration have retooled the U.S. military over the past eight years. Following the attacks of 9/11, President Bush strengthened and reshaped our approach to national security. To harden our defense, President Bush:

- Created the Department of Homeland Security;
- Provided national security professionals with vital new tools like the Patriot Act and a program to monitor terrorist communications;
- Reorganized the intelligence community to better meet the needs of the war on terror;
- Deployed aggressive financial measures to freeze terrorist assets; and
- Launched diplomatic initiatives to pressure adversaries and attract new partners to our cause.
- **The President made dramatic changes to both our national security strategy and the military itself.** President Bush concluded that we are engaged in an ideological struggle and launched an effort to discredit the hateful vision of the extremists and advance the hopeful alternative of freedom. In order to stay a step ahead of our enemies, the Administration transformed our military both to prevail on the battlefields of today and to meet the threats of tomorrow.

The President Has Transformed Our Military To Become Better Trained, Better Equipped, And Better Prepared For The Threats Of Today, Tomorrow, And Beyond

The United States is arming its troops with the intelligence, weapons, training, and support they need to face a different kind of enemy. The President has equipped our troops with real-time battlefield intelligence capabilities – unimaginable just a few years ago. In Iraq and Afghanistan, troops in the field have used advanced technologies like Global Positioning Systems to direct airstrikes that take out the enemy while sparing the innocent, and the Administration is arming Predator drones and using them to track down terrorists. When President Bush took office, the United States had fewer than 170 unmanned aerial vehicles. Today, that number has expanded to more than 6,000.

- **The Administration has expanded the U.S. Special Operations Forces.** President Bush has more than doubled funding for special operations and created the first-ever special operations command within the Marines. Additionally, he has given the Special Operations Command the lead role in the global war on terror.
- **Under the President's leadership, the United States has also placed a new focus on counterinsurgency.** General David Petraeus wrote a new counterinsurgency manual published by the Army, with central objectives to gain the support of the people and train local forces to take responsibility on their own. The counterinsurgency strategy also stresses the importance of following security gains with real benefits into the daily lives of citizens.
 - The Administration created Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which are helping local communities in Iraq and Afghanistan to create jobs, deliver basic services, and prevent terrorists from returning.
- **The President has transformed the education and training U.S. troops receive.** Every branch of the military now receives the counterinsurgency training that was once reserved for Special Operations Forces.

Additionally, the President has been transforming the military to confront the challenges ahead. This Administration began the most sweeping transformation of America's global force posture since the end of World War II. Troops are shifting from Cold War garrisons in Europe and Asia, in order to surge more rapidly to troubled spots around the world. President Bush established new military commands to meet challenges unique to Africa and protect the United States. This Administration has also invested more than a half trillion dollars in research and development, to build even more advanced capabilities to protect America. U.S. forces are becoming more joint and interoperable, in order to cooperate seamlessly across different services and with foreign partners. Additionally, the Federal Government is cooperating closely with the private sector to improve security in cyberspace to confront an emerging threat to the U.S. economy, defense systems, and citizens.

- **In 2001, President Bush withdrew the United States from the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty.** As a result, America has developed and deployed new defenses capable of protecting U.S. cities from ballistic missile attack. This system can now defend the United States against limited missile attacks from Northeast Asia. The United States has also concluded agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic to establish missile defense sites on their territories to help protect against ballistic missile attacks from the Middle East.
- **The President also worked with Russia to make historic reductions in offensive nuclear weapons.** Following these reductions, the total U.S. nuclear stockpile will be at the lowest level since the Eisenhower Administration. These reductions are part of a new approach to strategic deterrence that relies on both nuclear and conventional strike forces, as well as strong defenses.

Thanks To Our Military, Terrorists Have Suffered Defeats Across The World

Under President Bush, the United States went on the offense against the terrorists overseas, rather than wait for our country to be attacked again. Recognizing the need for strong partners, we helped strengthen the counterterrorism capabilities of our allies and made clear that hostile regimes sponsoring terror or pursuing weapons of mass destruction would be held to account. The United States and its allies have applied the full range of our military and intelligence assets to keep pressure on al Qaeda and its affiliates. They have:

- Severely weakened the terrorists;
- Disrupted plots to attack our homeland; and
- Captured or killed hundreds of al Qaeda leaders and operatives in more than two dozen countries, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks.

The United States has helped key partners and allies strengthen their capabilities in the fight against the terrorists. Intelligence sharing has increased with friends and allies around the world, and training and support has been provided to counterterrorism partners who have made substantial contributions to the war on terror, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

President Bush has made clear that governments that sponsor terror are as guilty as the terrorists and will be held to account. Following 9/11, the President applied this doctrine to Afghanistan and removed the Taliban from power, shut down al Qaeda training camps, and liberated more than 25 million Afghans. Today, the United States, its 25 NATO allies, and 17 partner nations are standing with the Afghan people as they defend their free society.

- **In Iraq, the United States acted with a coalition of nations to protect the American people and liberated more than 25 million Iraqis.** Just last week, Iraq approved two agreements that formalize diplomatic, economic, and security ties with America, and set a framework for the drawdown of American forces as the fight in Iraq nears a successful end.

Recognizing that the only way to defeat the terrorists in the long run is to present an alternative to their hateful ideology, the United States is helping democratic societies emerge as examples for people across the Middle East. President Bush is pressing nations around the world – including our friends – to allow their citizens to have greater freedom of speech, worship, and assembly. Additionally, the Administration is advancing a broader vision of reform that includes economic prosperity, quality health care and education, vibrant civil societies, and women's rights.



VA UPDATES

December 1, 2008

VA Sends Latest Gulf War Illness Report to IOM for Review

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has sent the October 2008 report from the VA Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses to the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) for review and recommendations.

The October report from the advisory committee identified potential causes for -- and asserted that research supports the existence of -- a multi-symptom condition resulting from service in the 1990 - 1991 Gulf War, which the committee identified as Gulf War Illness (GWI).

Because VA has traditionally and by law relied upon IOM for independent and credible reviews of the science behind these particular veterans' health issues, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake has asked IOM to review the advisory committee's report before VA officially responds to the report's conclusions.

"I appreciate the committee's work on this report, and I am eager to see the results of further independent study into their findings," Peake said. "Of course, VA will continue to provide the care and benefits our Gulf War veterans have earned through their service, as we have for more than a decade."

VA has long recognized conditions, granted benefits and provided health care to Gulf War veterans suffering from a broad range of symptoms, even though these conditions have not been scientifically recognized as a specific disease or injury or GWI.

These include chronic fatigue, persistent rashes, hair loss, headaches, muscle pain, joint pain, neurologic symptoms, neuropsychological symptoms (such as memory loss), respiratory system symptoms, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal symptoms, cardiovascular symptoms, abnormal weight loss and menstrual disorders.

VA Increases Travel Reimbursement Rate, Effective Nov. 17

On Monday, the VA announced that Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake would use his authority to raise the mileage reimbursement from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile for all eligible veterans to receive for travel to VA facilities for medical care.

Congress, which mandates such increases, recently provided funding to VA to increase the reimbursement rate, which went into effect on Nov. 17, 2008. Service connected veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions, and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement.

While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain frozen at \$7.77 for a one-way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On Jan. 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one-way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

Monthly Service Organization

Meetings:

1st Tuesday – CB Disabled

American Veterans Chapter No. 5

7:30 p.m.

- Avoca American Legion

1st Wednesday -Hancock

American Legion and Auxiliary

1st Thursday – CB AMVETS Post

2nd Tuesday –Treynor American

Legion

AMVETS – Walnut

2nd Wednesday - CB AL Auxiliary

2nd Thursday – Carter Lake VFW

Auxiliary

3rd Monday – CB VFW

3rd Wednesday – CB VVA Post 798

LOCAL PHONE NUMBERS

- **Omaha VAH** – 346-8800
- **DAV VAH Transportation-**
402-449-0659
- **West Central Community Action -**
322-5966
- **Workforce Development Center** –
242-2136
- **Department of Human Services** – 328-5661
- **Vet Center** – 402-346-6735
- **Department of Veteran Affairs** – 1-800-827-1000
- **Legal Aid** – 328-3982
- **Family Housing Advisory Service** – 322-4436
- **Red Cross** – 322-4017
- **Salvation Army** – 328-2088

Veterans Affairs seek increase in budget

Chad Nation, Staff Writer, cnation@nonpareilonline.com

12/05/2008

The Veterans Affairs Department asked for a 2.5 percent increase in spending for fiscal year 2009-10, up from \$306,066 to \$313,766.

Veterans Affairs administrator Darlene McMartin requested funding for the veterans affairs board to be doubled from \$3,000 to \$6,000 for educational training. In addition, McMartin recommended a 75 percent increase in staff training, up from \$4,000 to \$7,000.

"There will be new code changes on July 1, with national training mandated," she said. "The state is expected to give us \$10,000 to meet the code changes, so if we receive those funds at the end of the year we will have additional money to work with."

Anticipated changes in code to help veterans between 1975-82 also forced McMartin to ask for a 12.5 percent increase in rent payments for veterans, up to \$9,000 from \$8,000.

"The veteran's commission in the house and senate has said their number one priority is to help veterans regardless of when they served, and we need to do that," McMartin said. "Rent is not getting any easier or better."

WHY VETERANS REUNITE

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades....such good men."

Author unknown



General Eric Shinseki nominated as United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Sunday, December 7, 2008 02:55pm EST / Posted by [Dan McSwain](#)

President-elect Barack Obama today announced General Eric Shinseki as his selection to be United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

During the press conference, President-elect Obama praised General Shinseki's service to his country, and reinforced the importance of the sacred trust between America and her troops.

General Shinseki is the first Asian American to reach the rank of four-star general. He served two combat tours in Vietnam, where he was wounded in action.

On the anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941, President-elect Obama stressed the importance of the post General Shinseki would hold.

"We owe it to all our veterans to honor them as we honored our Greatest Generation," the President-elect said. "Not just with words, but with deeds."

General Shinseki's appointment has garnered the support and praise of veterans' organizations.

National President of Vietnam Veterans of America John Rowan called the selection "a promising choice."

Veterans for Common Sense released a statement in "strong" support of Shinseki.

The statement read: "In February 2003, General Shinseki honestly and correctly assessed our nation's military needs before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. This same level of candor and honesty will serve President-elect Obama well so he can quickly and accurately identify VA's many challenges and then implement responsible solutions that take into consideration our veterans' needs and concerns."

Bipartisan members of Congress have weighed in positively on the selection. On the "Fox News Sunday" program, Republican Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama called Shinseki "a great soldier, a great leader." Referring to Shinseki's recommendations to former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in a 2003 assessment of the American military involvement in Iraq, Sen. Shelby said, "we should have listened to [Gen. Shinseki]... We didn't and look where we are today."

On the same program, Democratic Senator Carl Levin said that the selection shows that the President-elect "will welcome people who disagree with him to express those views to him."

In a release from his office, Sen. Patrick Leahy praised the selection, saying, "throughout a stellar career, especially in his time as the Army's Chief of Staff, [Shinseki's] words and deeds reflected an overwhelming care about soldiers and all of our military service members."

In honor of Commissioner Michael G. Carter

Michael G. Carter, age 70 of Avoca, Iowa, passed away November 20, 2008, in Omaha. Michael was born in San Diego on September 3, 1938, to Harold G. and Heisel McNeil Carter. After graduating from high school, Michael received his B.S. Degree and spent 20 years in the United States Air Force retiring with the rank of Major. During his career, Michael flew in a B52 and had flown over 150 missions. After retiring from the military, Michael worked computer security for Digital Equipment and Fidelity Investments in Massachusetts. Michael and wife Pamela moved to Avoca in 1991. His memberships included the Masonic Lodge, lifetime member of American Legion Post 227, lifetime member of VFW, and he also served as a Commissioner of Veterans Affairs. Michael was a strong advocate for his fellow veterans. His hobbies included Nascar and woodworking. His remains will be interned at a later date in the Iowa Veterans Cemetery located at Van Meter Iowa.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother, Clark Carter; and brother-in-law, Larry Lavalle. Survivors include his wife of 47 years, Pamela (Barnhart) Carter; son, Patrick Carter and his wife Jennifer and their daughter Brittney; daughter, Diana Symanowicz and her husband Bruce and their children Carter, Spencer, and Katherine all Avoca; mother-in-law, Faye Wallenmeyer and friend Jim Golday of Indiana; sisters, Anne Allison and Al, Mary Lavalle; brother, Steve Carter and Candy all of Florida; and sister-in-law, Gail Deal and Roy of Indiana; numerous nieces and nephews.

The Pottawattamie County Veteran Affairs office will miss his dedication to the veterans, his humor, his insight as a retiree and most of all his contributions he provided during his tenure as the Chairman of the Pottawattamie County Veterans Affairs Commission.

Memo of Understanding

On Veteran's Day, Governor Culver signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will help Iowa's soldiers' transition back into civilian life after completion of their commitments to the military. This MOU will ensure that members of the Guard and Reserve will receive the same assistance in transitioning to civilian life as their active military counterparts.

The MOU establishes mutually agreed upon expectations and will foster a good working relationship between those who signed the document. This MOU, along with Governor Culver, was signed by IDVA, the Iowa National Guard, Iowa Workforce Development, Veterans Employment Training Services, VA Medical

Centers, VA Regional Office, the Iowa Association of County Veteran Affairs, and Employer Support of Guard Reserve. ~

Preparing for the Digital Television Transition

On **February 17, 2009**, the transition from analog to digital television will take place across the country. Importantly, as of that date, analog televisions *not connected to a converter box, cable, or satellite* will stop working.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is managing a program to help consumers with the transition. The NTIA is offering consumers the opportunity to obtain converter boxes -- devices that will receive the new digital signal and "translate" it for analog televisions. Each household is eligible for two \$40 coupons, each of which can be applied toward the cost of one converter box.

For more information, please click on the link to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) website for "[The Digital Television Transition, what you need to know about DTV](http://www.dtv.gov/)".

<http://www.dtv.gov/>

10 Things Science Says Will Make You Happy

by Jen Angel **Scientists can tell us how to be happy. Really. Here are 10 ways, with the research to prove it.**

In the last few years, psychologists and researchers have been digging up hard data on a question previously left to philosophers: What makes us happy? Researchers like the father-son team Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, Stanford psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky, and ethicist Stephen Post have studied people all over the world to find out how things like money, attitude, culture, memory, health, altruism, and our day-to-day habits affect our well-being. The emerging field of positive psychology is bursting with new findings that suggest your actions can have a significant effect on your happiness and satisfaction with life. Here are 10 scientifically proven strategies for getting happy.



1

Savor Everyday Moments Pause now and then to smell a rose or watch children at play. Study participants who took time to “savor” ordinary events that they normally hurried through, or to think back on pleasant moments from their day, “showed significant increases in happiness and reductions in depression,” says psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky.



2

Avoid Comparisons While keeping up with the Joneses is part of American culture, comparing ourselves with others can be damaging to happiness and self-esteem. Instead of comparing ourselves to others, focusing on our own personal achievement leads to greater satisfaction, according to Lyubomirsky.



3

Put Money Low on the List People who put money high on their priority list are more at risk for depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, according to researchers Tim Kasser and Richard Ryan. Their findings hold true across nations and cultures. “The more we seek satisfactions in material goods, the less we find them there,” Ryan says. “The satisfaction has a short half-life—it’s very fleeting.” Money-seekers also score lower on tests of vitality and self-actualization.



4

Have Meaningful Goals “People who strive for something significant, whether it’s learning a new craft or raising moral children, are far happier than those who don’t have strong dreams or aspirations,” say Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener. “As humans, we actually require a sense of meaning to thrive.” Harvard’s resident happiness professor, Tal Ben-Shahar, agrees, “Happiness lies at the intersection between pleasure and meaning. Whether at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable.”



5

Take Initiative at Work How happy you are at work depends in part on how much initiative you take. Researcher Amy Wrzesniewski says that when we express creativity, help others, suggest improvements, or do additional tasks on the job, we make our work more rewarding and feel more in control.



6

Make Friends, Treasure Family Happier people tend to have good families, friends, and supportive relationships, say Diener and Biswas-Diener. But it’s not enough to be the life of the party if you’re surrounded by shallow acquaintances. “We don’t just need relationships, we need close ones” that involve understanding and caring.



7

Smile Even When You Don’t Feel Like It It sounds simple, but it works. “Happy people...see possibilities, opportunities, and success. When they think of the future, they are optimistic, and when they review the past, they tend to savor the high points,” say Diener and Biswas-Diener. Even if you weren’t born looking at the glass as half-full, with practice, a positive outlook can become a habit.



8

Say Thank You Like You Mean It People who keep gratitude journals on a weekly basis are healthier, more optimistic, and more likely to make progress toward achieving personal goals, according to author Robert Emmons. Research by Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, revealed that people who write “gratitude letters” to someone who made a difference in their lives score higher on happiness, and lower on depression—and the effect lasts for weeks.



9

Get Out and Exercise A Duke University study shows that exercise may be just as effective as drugs in treating depression, without all the side effects and expense. Other research shows that in addition to health benefits, regular exercise offers a sense of accomplishment and opportunity for social interaction, releases feel-good endorphins, and boosts self-esteem.



10

Give It Away, Give It Away Now! Make altruism and giving part of your life, and be purposeful about it. Researcher Stephen Post says helping a neighbor, volunteering, or donating goods and services results in a “helper’s high,” and you get more health benefits than you would from exercise or quitting smoking. Listening to a friend, passing on your skills, celebrating others’ successes, and forgiveness also contribute to happiness, he says. Researcher Elizabeth Dunn found that those who spend money on others reported much greater happiness than those who spend it on themselves.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Filing for VA benefits is a “FREE” benefit to the veteran and his or her dependents. If you are paying for these services; STOP!
- Do you require quality nursing home assistance? Are you an Honorable Discharge Veteran or the widow of an honorably discharged veteran? You may meet the requirements to stay at the Iowa Veteran Home.
- A 0% Service-Connected hearing disability can entitle the veteran to hearing aids through the VA Medical Center.
- A 10% Service-Connected rating can entitle the veteran to hearing aids and or eye glasses through the VA Medical Center.
- Purple Heart Recipients are automatically qualified for medical care Priority Group 3.
- A service-connected disability can be increased when the disability worsens and medical documentation is available as proof.
- Pharmacy co-pays through the VA are \$8.00 per 30 day supply, and are refillable by phone.
- VA Pension is designed to assist veterans with non-service-connected disabilities who meet a minimal income threshold
When you apply for a rating increase three things could possibly happen to your rating:
 1. Rating is Increased
 2. Rating is Decreased
 3. Rating remains unchanged

Office Locations And Hours

Pottawattamie County Commission of Veterans Affairs
223 South 6th Street, Court House Annex
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501
712-328-5797 FAX 712-328-5726

e-mail: veterans@pottcounty.com

Monday –Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 pm closed 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Assistance can be provided by appointment during
nontraditional hours

Avoca Court House Tuesdays 8:00 am – 4:00pm
712-328-5021

Commissioners:

Phillip Jacobs, Chairman
Philip Killion, Member

Staff:

Darlene McMartin, B. S.W., Administrator
Peggy Becker, Case Worker III
Lori Swisher, Case Worker II
Michael Grap, Case Worker II
Pamela Wilke, Receptionist

**The staff of the Veterans Service Office
can assist you in the following areas:**

- **Compensation or Pension**
- **Disability Retirement**
- **Death Indemnity Compensation**
- **Appeal to Board of Veterans Appeal**
- **Hospital and Outpatient Benefits**
- **State of Iowa Benefits**
- **Educational Benefits**
- **Vocational Benefits**
- **Debt Waivers**
- **Obtaining Lost Military Records**
- **Review of Military Discharge**
- **Claims for Insurance Payments**
- **Burial Allowance**
- **SBP/ChampVA**
- **CRSC/CRDP**
- **Iowa Trust Fund Application**
- **Iowa Veterans Home Application**
- **Military Tax Exemption**

Special Notice: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call this toll-free number **1-800-273-8255**, available 24/7, and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.