

MARCH/APRIL 2016



VETERANS BENEFITS & BEYOND

VA Plans to Propose Expanded Disability Benefits Eligibility for Veterans Exposed to Contaminated Water at Camp Lejeune

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it plans to propose expanded disability compensation eligibility for Veterans exposed to contaminated drinking water while assigned to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.

From 1953 to 1987, water sources at the base were contaminated with industrial solvents that are correlated with certain health conditions. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald decided to propose presumptions of service connection for certain conditions associated with these chemical solvents following discussions between environmental health experts at the Veterans Health Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

"The water at Camp Lejeune was a hidden hazard, and it is only years later that we know how dangerous it was," said Secretary McDonald. "We thank ATSDR for the thorough review that provided much of the evidence we needed to fully compensate Veterans who develop one of the conditions known to be related to exposure to the compounds in the drinking water."

ATSDR determined that the drinking water at Camp Lejeune was contaminated with perchloroethylene, trichloroethylene, vinyl chloride, benzene and other petroleum contaminants from leaking storage tanks from 1953 to 1987. ATSDR also determined that prolonged exposure to these chemicals increases the risk of certain health conditions.

Based upon VA's review of current medical science and ATSDR's findings, Secretary McDonald intends to propose creation of a presumption of service connection for the following conditions:

Kidney Cancer	Liver Cancer
Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma	Leukemia
Multiple Myeloma	Scleroderma
Parkinson's Disease	Aplastic Anemia / Myelodysplastic Syndromes

The Secretary's proposal would also expand benefits eligibility to Reserve and National Guard personnel who served at Camp Lejeune for any length of time from August 1, 1953, through December 31, 1987. These personnel would be presumed to have been exposed to the contaminated water during their Reserve or National Guard service and, in appropriate circumstances, to have been

disabled by such exposure during service, thus allowing them to qualify for VA benefits under the statutory definition of "Veteran."

This would make them eligible for VA disability compensation and medical care for any of the presumptive conditions, and their surviving dependents would be eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation and burial benefits.

VA is working on regulations that would establish these presumptions, making it easier for affected Veterans to receive VA disability compensation for these conditions. While VA cannot grant any benefit claims based on the proposed presumption of service connection for these conditions until it issues its final regulations, it encourages Veterans who have a record of service at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, and develop a condition that they believe is related to exposure to the drinking water at the base, to file a disability compensation claim with VA.

VA will continue to grant claims for disabilities claimed to be associated with exposure to the contaminants that can be granted under current regulations and review of the evidence in each case. If a claim for service connection for one of the proposed presumptive conditions would be denied under current regulations, the denial will be stayed until VA issues its final regulations. VA will announce when the regulations are final and presumptive benefits can begin to be awarded. For more information on applying for these benefits, visit: www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-postservice-exposures-camp_lejeune_water.asp.

Veterans who served at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, are already eligible to receive VA healthcare for up to 15 health conditions. More information, including a full list of covered conditions, can be found online at www.publichealth.va.gov/PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp.

Veterans can establish eligibility for healthcare benefits by submitting VA Form 10-10EZ online at www.1010ez.med.va.gov/, downloading it at www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/1010EZ-fillable.pdf and returning it to any VA Medical Center or Clinic, or by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM (Eastern Time).

VA is reimbursing certain Veterans' family members for eligible out-of-pocket medical expenses related to the 15 covered conditions. More information can be found at www.cfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov

Source: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2743

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JAN'S LETTER

I am so excited to share our latest newsletter for Veterans benefits with you! This edition is packed with great news for Veterans and their families, as the Department of Veterans Affairs has recently made several new announcements. We have included an article on the proposed expansion of disability benefits eligibility for Veterans exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, which would make it easier for a greater number of Veterans to receive benefits. Be sure to read the entire article for more information on this important topic.

More good news is in store with VA's announcement of a partnership with the Bob Woodruff Foundation, aimed at better connecting Veterans with resources available to them close to home. And, VA has appointed new members to their Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

In addition to all of these welcome developments for our Veterans, we have included some news from the Jan Dils team, and a few items "just for fun", as well. I hope you enjoy reading our newest newsletter as much as we enjoyed putting it together. And, as always, we welcome your suggestions for topics you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

If you have any questions about the topics we have included here, or about applying for and receiving the Veterans benefits you deserve, feel free to give us a call or send an email. We are always happy to hear from you, and to share our experience and expertise with those who have served our country!

Sincerely,
Jan Dils



JAN DILS brings her expertise to issues that affect you and millions of other Americans every day. While her knowledge spans the critical areas pertaining to Veterans' benefits, disability benefits and related appeals and claims, her practice remains focused on people, making sure you get the right answers and, above all, results.

New Members Appointed to VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the appointment of four new members to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. The committee was chartered on November 2, 1994, and advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the needs of the nation's 4.7 million minority Veterans on compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach and other benefits and programs administered by the VA. The committee assesses the needs of Veterans who are minority group members and recommends program improvements designed to meet their needs. The committee members are appointed to two or three-year terms. Minority Veterans comprise nearly 21 percent of the total Veteran population in the United States and its territories.

The new committee members are:

Melissa Castillo: Navy Veteran of San Antonio, Texas. Served as the Assistant Regional Director for San Antonio Region, Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas; Assistant Women Veterans Coordinator; Advisor to the US Army Survivor Outreach Services Program; and Advisor to the Alamo Community College District Veterans Affairs Committee. Currently serves as the Assistant Veterans Service Officer at the Bexar County Veterans Service Office in San Antonio, Texas, and is an accredited Veterans Service Officer.

Benno Cleveland: Army Veteran of Fairbanks, Alaska. Served two tours in Dong Tam, Vietnam where he earned a Purple Heart. He also served as Senior Vice Commander and Department Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. In recognition of his distinguished military service, the Alaska Federation of Natives bestowed him with their "Veteran of the Year" honors in 2014 at their Annual Convention in Anchorage. Mr. Cleveland also founded the Alaska Native Veterans Association and is currently serving as President.

Ginger Miller: Navy Veteran of Accokeek, Maryland, and former homeless disabled Veteran. Ms. Miller became Founder and CEO of two nonprofit organizations that serve Veterans and their families: John 14:2, Inc. and Women Veterans Interactive. She served as Chairwoman of the Prince George's County Veterans Commission; Commissioner, Maryland Commission for Women; member of the Maryland Veterans Resilience Advisory Council; and a member of the Maryland Caregivers Support Coordinating Council. She is currently a member of Disabled American Veterans.

Xiomara Sosa: Army Veteran of Summerville, South Carolina. Ms. Sosa is the Founder and Principal of XAS Consulting, LLC, an integrative mental healthcare and holistic wellness consulting firm. She served on the Women Veteran Social Justice board of directors; Military Partners and Families Veteran Initiative; the Semper Fidelis Health and Wellness Advisory Board; and a current member of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

The new members join current members:

Marvin Trujillo, Jr., Committee Chairman, Marine Corps Veteran

Many-Bears Grinder, Col. (USA-Ret)

Patricia Jackson-Kelley, Lt. Col. (USA-Ret)

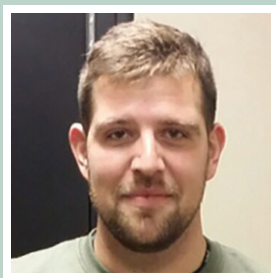
Librado Rivas, Command Sgt. Maj. (USA-Ret)

Teresita Smith, Sgt. First Class (USA-Ret)

Rebecca Stone, Staff Sgt. (USA-Ret)

Cornell Wilson, Jr., Maj. Gen. (USMC-Ret)

Anthony Woods, Army Veteran



SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE

Jon Hicks

Jan Dils team member Jon Hicks enjoys his position as a C-File Reviewer for many reasons. "As a Veteran myself, anything I can do to help another Veteran is a big positive to me," said Jon. "Also, being interested in people, it is exciting to explore their life stories."

He added, "I'm a U.S. Army veteran, which is where I spent most of my adult life, and my personal proudest achievement was rescuing 10 other soldiers trapped in a Stryker after an IED blast, for which I actually have a plaque hanging in the 2nd Cavalry Regiment Museum."

Jon says he was blessed to meet his wife, Ashley, in the military as well. They met on a deployment to Afghanistan and were married 5 months after returning home. Approximately 11 months after they were married, their daughter, Emma, joined their family. When Jon isn't busy helping his fellow Veterans fight for the benefits they deserve, he enjoys going to the gym, reading and "rough-housing" with his little girl. Please join us in recognizing Jon's hard work, and thanking him for all he does to help our Veterans!

BRAIN GAME

A wuzzle is a saying/phrase that is made up of a display of words, in an interesting way. The object is to try to figure out the well-known saying, person, place, or thing that each wuzzle is meant to represent.

LA DD ER	EARTH EARTH
THOdeepUGHT	bubble bubble bubble

ANSWERS: 1. Step Ladder 2. Worlds Apart 3. Deep in Thought 4. Tiny Bubbles

OFFICE INBOX

STAY PLUGGED INTO THE PRACTICE

Want the scoop on what's new with our business and the team? You can find it right here, so stay plugged into the practice.

Education is a hot topic with the Jan Dils team this Spring! Work Up Specialist **Jeremy Bungard** will be graduating from West Virginia University at Parkersburg with his RBA, Training Manager **Lauren Ward** is learning to become a yoga instructor in March, and several team members have children graduating from High School this May and they are all very proud! Join us in congratulating these great accomplishments!

Jan Dils team member Cheryl Wingrove was on hand at Vienna Elementary School to personally present December's Golden Apple Award to **Don Snider**. A fourth grade teacher, Mr. Snider has been shaping young minds for 33 years. He was nominated by his daughter who says her dad is always willing to go the extra mile, forming a special bond with his students and making sure they receive the best education possible, in and out of the classroom. He encourages students to be actively involved in the classroom as well as in sports and the arts.

Mr. Snider, who likes to keep track of his students to make sure they are doing well long after they leave his classroom, said, "The neat thing probably about teaching is that when you come to school everyday you have 18 to 20 different personalities and they change every day. That's probably the biggest difference to going to any regular job. They're coming different, everybody's different every day, so every day is a different experience. That makes it a lot of fun."



Spice up your next party
or family dinner with delicious
Sausage Stuffed Jalapenos, courtesy of
Operations Manager Bev Geiger

INGREDIENTS

1 pound bulk medium sausage
1 package (8 ounces) cream
cheese, softened
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded
Parmesan cheese

22 large jalapeno peppers,
halved lengthwise and seeded
Ranch or bleu cheese salad
dressing for dipping (optional)

Directions: In a large skillet, cook the sausage over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. In a small bowl, combine the cream cheese and Parmesan cheese; fold in sausage. Spoon about 1 tablespoonful into each jalapeno half. Place in two ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. baking dishes. Bake, uncovered, at 425° for 15-20 minutes or until filling is lightly browned and bubbly. Serve with ranch dressing if desired. Makes 44 appetizers.
Note: Wear disposable gloves when cutting hot peppers; the oils can burn skin. Avoid touching your face



IT'S TIME TO...

- ... Skip the bacon for a day. **March 1st is National Pig Day.**
- ... Open wide. **March 6th is Dentist's Day.**
- ... Go cold turkey. **March 12th is Stop Smoking Day.**
- ... Wear green or find yourself in a pinch. **March 17th is St. Patrick's Day.**
- ... Don't forget where you hid the eggs. **March 27th is Easter.**
- ... March 27th is Easter. **April 1st is April Fool's Day.**
- ... Check in with the Cat in the Hat. **April 2nd is Children's Book Day.**
- ... Relax! **April 7th is No Housework Day.**
- ... Don't forget Uncle Sam. **Tax Day is April 15th.**
- ... Plant a tree. **April 29th is Arbor Day.**

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VA Secretary to Announce VA-Bob Woodruff Foundation Partnership

Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Secretary Robert A. McDonald recently announced a partnership with the Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) to further advance VA's outreach to Veterans through deeper and more innovative local and community partnerships. VA will capitalize on BWF's strength and contacts to find unique ways to connect Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their families with resources right where they live. The partnership with BWF is one of many strategic alliances VA is forming and is an integral goal of the MyVA initiative, the largest reorganization in VA's history, which reorients VA around the needs of Veterans.

"We believe that by working together we can create a 'single front door,' or a convenient community point of entry, to help Veterans gain access to the benefits they have earned in addition to the resources unique to their local communities," said Secretary McDonald. "This partnership creates a more robust integration of federal, state and local governments, non-profit organizations, businesses and other local partners at the community level. By combining and sharing our efforts and expertise, I believe this partnership can help us better serve our nation's Veterans – together."

"Our nation's transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans and their families each have unique needs, making the resources and services dedicated to overcoming their challenges all the more necessary," said BWF Executive Director Anne Marie Dougherty. "We are excited by this opportunity to work in partnership with VA to reach Veterans and their families where

they live and to deliver high-impact programs to support sustainable success."

The Bob Woodruff Foundation is a nonprofit organization working on behalf of injured Servicemembers, Veterans and their families. Since 2006, BWF has invested nearly \$30 million in programs reaching more than 2 million injured Servicemembers, Veterans and their families in three key areas: Education and Employment, Rehabilitation and Recovery, and Quality of Life.

For more information about the Foundation, visit www.bobwoodrufffoundation.org. For more information about VA including the MyVA initiative,

please visit www.va.gov.

Source: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2740