

# **VETERAN SERVICE COMMISSION**

Veteran Service Office, Lake County, Ohio

## *2002 Newsletter*

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission of the Lake County Veterans Service Commission is to provide eligible veterans and their families with those benefits to which they may be entitled under federal, state and local law, in accordance with established policies and procedures.

The Lake County Veterans Service Commission shall take those steps necessary to ensure a well-trained staff is available to advise and assist veterans, their dependents and the widow and orphans of those veterans who, by virtue of their service in the military of the United States of America, may be entitled to benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs or any other benefit promulgated under federal, state or local law.

The Lake County Veterans Service Commission shall provide temporary financial assistance to those veterans or their dependents who have demonstrated a financial need due to illness, injury, lack of employment, or an unexpected hardship. Determination of financial need shall be made by the Veterans Service Commission in accordance with guidelines it alone shall establish and oversee, in accord with Title 59 of the Ohio Revised Code.

The Lake County Veterans Service Commission shall promulgate programs as required by Title 59 of the Ohio Revised Code for services not covered above, such as outreach & transportation of veterans to medical facilities.



## In Memoriam

With the coming of the New Year came the passing of an old friend to the Lake County Veteran Service Office and veterans of Lake County. Judge Fred V. Skok passed away.

There has been much written about Judge Skok and his many years of public service to Lake County. Many, however, may not realize the extent of his involvement with our veterans.

As the Presiding Judge for the Common Pleas Court, Judge Skok was responsible for the appointment of Veterans Service Commissioners. By law, he was also charged with the general oversight of this office, as he alone had the power to remove the persons he appointed. On many occasions his keen insight, great intelligence, and compassion would be sought by this office to resolve issues and differences of opinion. His caring devotion to our veterans was unwavering. Although he was to retire this February, his passing brings great sorrow to the staff of this office—he will be deeply missed.

**Rest in Peace Your Honor**



### Appointment of New Veterans' Commissioner

Due to the retirement of Frank Smolinski from the Veterans Service Commission, after 10 years as a Commissioner and many years as a Committee Member, we have a new Board member.

Charles (Chuck) Law was Judge Skok's last appointment to the Board. He is appointed as the representative to the Disabled American Veterans. Chuck is a recipient of the Purple Heart for wounds received while serving as a rifleman with G Co, 2nd Bn, 5th Mar 1st MarDiv, FMF in Vietnam. He was retired from service as a Sergeant.

Chuck is a life member of Western Reserve Chapter 42 of the DAV, Post 4441 of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Col. Justice M. Chambers Detachment 555 of the Marine Corps League, The AmVets and Military Order of the Cootie. Chuck lives in Mentor and is proud of his two grown children and five grandchildren.

**Welcome Aboard Chuck!!!**

## **Financial Assistance**

### 2002 Annual Statistics

During the entire 2002 fiscal year, the Veterans Service Commission expended **\$667,387.81** in financial assistance to 984 applicants.

Total Financial Relief Applicants:	1,057
Total Relief Applicants Approved:	984
Total Relief Applicants Denied:	73
Average grant:	\$678.24

### 2001 Annual Statistics

During the entire 2001 fiscal year, the Veterans Service Commission expended **\$591,007.03** in financial assistance to 906 applicants.

Total Financial Relief Applicants:	955
Total Relief Applicants Approved:	906
Total Relief Applicants Denied:	49
Average grant:	\$652.33

### Breakdown of 2002 Expenditures by Category

<u>Category</u>	<u>\$ Expended</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Household Expenses	\$378,780.18	56.76%
Utilities:	\$ 93,852.12	14.06%
Food:	\$ 73,342.00	10.99%
Clothing Related:	\$ 49,071.93	7.35%
Health Related:	\$ 30,029.03	4.50%
Vehicle Related:	\$ 28,995.38	4.34%
Miscellaneous:	\$ 13,317.17	2.00%
Soldiers' & Sailors' Relief:	<b><u>\$667,387.81</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>
Veteran Transports to Medical Facilities:		<b><u>1840</u></b>

### Service Office

In addition to those clients served for financial assistance, our staff completed the following work directly related to filing claims with the Department of Veterans' Affairs:

**Clients visited:** In excess of 1100; **New Files Created:** 675;  
**Forms Prepared:** In excess of 1200; **Cash distributions** made & value of services provided to Lake County's veterans or dependents from the VA (2001): **\$14,604,427** (WOW!!!)

Welcome to the new format of our Newsletter. This is the first newsletter published in a while due to a variety of factors, including technology upgrades and office reconfiguration. If you haven't stopped by our office lately, stop in and see the new digs: It's the same location as before, just larger.

After many years of working in conjunction with the Lake County Commissioners and Administrator Ken Gauntner, we were offered space next door that was vacated by the Board of Education. The additional space was greatly needed. We can now offer private interviews, do not sit on top of each other, and still have some room for future improvements, staff changes or other developments. It is our hope and desire to have an open house down the road. Stop by and say "Hi."

This past year was an extremely busy year for the office staff and our Veterans Service Commissioners. The economic downturn caused quite an increase in emergency relief, and this has continued. We began a wonderful working relationship with Bill Flaisig and Michele Caya from the Department of Job and Family Services. In June, Ohio's veterans received the sting of politics when veterans' law in Ohio was changed. In August we had another extended presence at the Lake County Fair and many veterans discovered that they may be entitled to benefits from the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs.

A major change in our office structure became effective in September. Two of our staff became Service Officers (IT). Upon successful completion of their training they will become accredited Service Officers with the State of Ohio. That will boost Lake County's Service Officers to four. This decision was made to provide more service to our veterans.

In 2001, the Department of Veterans' Affairs paid almost \$15,000,000.00 to Lake County's veterans and dependents. This is a return on the less than one million dollar investment the citizens of Lake County made to this office of almost 15:1.

Thank you, Lake County, for your continued support.

## **LAKE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION**

105 Main Street, Box 490, Painesville, OH 44077

Phone (440) 350-2567 Fax (440) 350-5980

Email: [veterans@lakecountyohio.org](mailto:veterans@lakecountyohio.org)

Located in the Lake County Administration Building

### **VETERANS SERVING VETERANS**

Providing assistance to the men and women who have honorably served

**Office Hours:** Monday thru Friday, 8 am to 12:00 & 1 to 4:30 pm

**Visit our Website:** [www.lakecountyohio.org/veterans/index.htm](http://www.lakecountyohio.org/veterans/index.htm)

#### **Directions to our office:**

Rt. 2 to Painesville/Fairport Harbor/ Richmond St. exit. South on Richmond St. to Rt. 20, turn left to St. Clair St., turn right. We are located on the corner of St. Clair & Main Streets in the Lake County Administration Bldg, 2nd floor. There is parking in back. Do not use numbered spots!

### **COMMISSIONERS**

William F. Barrett, Sr., American Legion, Secretary  
 Richard A. Bishop, Veterans of Foreign Wars, President  
 Neal Huelsman, American Veterans  
 Chuck Law, Disabled American Veterans  
 Thomas J. Zmecek, Marine Corps League, Vice President

### **Executive Director/ Veteran Service Officer**

Jonathan R. Warmeling

Janet Banar, Administrative Assistant  
 Raymond Reiblein, CVSO(IT) Luci O'Neill, CVSO(IT)  
 Gini Geffert, CVSO(IT) Jami Abel, CW/I



Cut-n-Save!!

Cut-n-Post!!

## School Clothes Program

This year's School Clothes Program was again a huge success. We are fortunate to have corporations within our community that participate in helping us help the children of veterans. Great thanks are properly due **Wal-Mart**, **K-Mart** and **Target** for their assistance. The following is a breakdown of the benefits received from these fine organizations:

	<u>Target</u>	<u>K-Mart</u>	<u>Wal-Mart</u>
\$\$ spent on clothing:	\$11,821	\$10,955	\$21,299
# of children benefited:	62	56	109
<b>Tax dollars saved:</b>	\$680	\$640	\$1,225

This program, while allowing 227 children from 114 families a chance to have proper winter clothing, provided a total savings of \$2,545! Once again, thanks! We look forward to maintaining this program next year.

### While on the subject...

Recently, there was a story about **Target** stores not supporting our nation's veterans. It was stated that **Target** had refused to support a veterans' organization during a fundraiser. Target recently replied with more information. Apparently a veteran had walked into a store and requested a donation. He was advised as to the proper procedure for doing so, but didn't follow through. **Target** has advised that no store is permitted to make cash donations, but rather provides grant application forms to anyone that requests one. **Target Corporation** owns Target, Marshall Field's and Mervyn's stores. Through the grant program, it has provided an average of \$2,000,000 per week to community organizations that used proper channels, including a moving Vietnam Wall display.

Please do not allow incomplete information regarding this story or any other to provide a basis to make a decision that may not be well-grounded!!!

**RUMORS ARE JUST THAT; RUMORS**

## Legal Issues Concerning Ohio's Veterans

In 2002 we saw passage of Amended Substitute Senate Bill 261 that amended veterans' law in Ohio. Many of you joined the fight to right this injustice; we thank you deeply for your support. Lake County residents accounted for approximately 40% of the total petitions filed in Columbus four days before elections!!!

The fight continues. There have been many lawsuits filed in an attempt to find those changes made to veterans' law in Am.Sub. S.B. 261 unconstitutional. If this is successful, it will have the effect of repealing the changes made. It is expected that these cases will resolve between February and November of 2003.

The next legal challenge in the coming year is a desire by certain people and organizations to completely re-write our current veterans' law. Title 59 contains thirteen separate chapters dealing with a variety of military and veteran issues. There is some agreement that certain sections do in fact need modified. For example, the law must be modified to allow the inclusion for the Southern Ohio Veterans' Home, and there are issues surrounding indigent burials that need addressed. However, there is extreme disagreement surrounding changes to those sections that might modify laws dealing with the funding and operation of the Veterans Service Commission.

Although many organizations have voiced support for the 88 Veteran Service Offices in Ohio, including the VFW and American Legion, the Governor's Office on Veterans' Affairs Advisory Board voted to propose a total re-write. What these changes are, what they might propose, how they will effect this office and who proposes them is yet to be seen! We will keep you posted to ensure **YOUR** input is considered.