



# The Sentinel

Vol. 6 No. 7

Vietnam Veterans of America – Chapter 1002 – Wallkill Valley  
P.O. box 463, Vernon, NJ 07462 - 973-271-2413

July 2019

Website: [www.VVA1002.org](http://www.VVA1002.org)

President: John Harrigan

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: John Brady

Secretary: Carl Ohlson

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Walt Hazelman

Chaplin: George Burns

Treasurer: Owen Martin

Sergeant at Arms: Ted Andrews

## **FROM THE MINEFIELD:**

*Submitted by John Harrigan*

The Can Shakes for the Scholarships is really not going according to plan as the weather is putting a damper on them. The one scheduled for Jumbo Land on 7/6 had to be canceled due to the rain storm we had, and then the one for last week 7/20 was canceled due to the 100 degree temperatures. Here's hoping that the rest of them come off like they're supposed to.

This is the last meeting to sign up for the Fair and so far we still need about 50 people. The way it works is there are 3 people on a shift so if someone does not show we can still do it with 2. The reason for this is so that at least one person will be there if someone wants to eat or go to the restroom. If we can't fill the slots we will have to cancel this year.

Our August meeting is usually our Chapter Picnic but as of now we still do not have enough interest in having one this year so if there are not enough people signing up to help out and attend we will just have our regular monthly meeting in August. The sheets for both events will be out at the meeting.

As happens every year the Summer months are pretty quiet so that's about it for now. See you at the meeting.

## **1<sup>st</sup> VICE PRESIDENT:**

*Submitted by John Brady*

Our 50/50 sales to support our scholarship awards is still ongoing. Recently we were at the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) for their Christmas in July and

the Newton Shop-Rite. The schedule for future 50/50 events is under **Calendar of Events** (see page 6). Many thanks to Teri, Jack and Sharon for doing this another year and to the veterans who attend to show their support, especially considering the past humid and hot days.

We have two more events coming up that need more hands on deck. The first is the Sussex County Fair being held Aug. 2 to Aug 11. We need many more to sign up to fill in to work our table selling hats, walking sticks, informing people of the chapter and selling 50/50's. Unfortunately, if we can't get enough people to sign up we will be unable to attend the Fair. The biggest loss will not only be there to make people aware of our chapter and what we do to help veterans but also the loss of 50/50 sales of which we do very well. Of course it's understood not all of us are capable of sitting there in the heat of the day or until later at night because of health or previous plans. However, it would be a great help if anyone could take a time slot for even one day.

The second event is our annual picnic in place of our August meeting. This is another time when we need people to sign up in advance so we can plan the amount of food we will need. We also have to let the people of St. Francis know so the picnic tables can be set out and the grass cut. If we don't get enough people to sign up ahead of time the picnic will be cancelled and we will have our regular meeting instead. The picnic is paid for by the chapter at no cost to members but we need to know if we will have enough people coming and if so how many.

It will be decided soon after our general meeting Sunday, July 28, whether these events will be scheduled or cancelled. So, I urge you to please sign up if you can.

*Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another!*

## **SERVICE OFFICER:**

*Submitted by Skip Kays*

No report.

## **WOMEN VETERANS:**

*Submitted by Walt Hazelman*

### **Congress introduces bills to increase veteran benefits, refund home loan fees, help women veterans.**



While the House was busy passing its defense spending bill last week, other members of Congress were introducing other legislation aimed at helping veterans.

#### **Cost of living adjustment**

Senators Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., and Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, introduced a bill, the "Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act" to increase veteran disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The bill, co-sponsored by all the members of the SVAC, increases the rate of VA disability compensation, dependent compensation for Gold Star families and the clothing allowance for veterans.

The cost-of-living adjustment for veterans matches the increases to Social Security recipients and is decided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index annually. The increase goes into effect Dec. 1, 2019, if the legislation passes the Senate and House and gains a presidential signature.

"My top priority is to ensure that veterans and their families receive the benefits they earned while serving our country," Isakson said. "I'm proud to introduce this legislation to increase benefits for disabled veterans in keeping with rising costs of living."

#### **Home loan fee refunds**

Tester and Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., introduced a bill to ensure VA repays the thousands of disabled veterans for home loan fees wrongfully charged.

An Inspector General report revealed that the VA wrongly charged nearly 73,000 disabled veterans \$286.4 million in home loan fees and the VA has known it owes those veterans the money since at least 2014.

The bill would require VA to:

- Report to Congress with a plan to ID all of the veterans wrongfully charged a fee, and a timeline to refund them.
- Develop an automated process for refunds to avoid the problem in the future.
- Restricts VA from requiring a veteran to need to request a refund.
- Develop a plan within three months to process the refunds, among other requirements.

"The (VA's) failure to uphold this responsibility has unduly burdened disabled veterans. This bill ends the VA's practice of unlawfully charging veterans who qualify for funding fee waivers. Ensuring the VA implements a process to reimburse veterans who weren't required to pay in the first place and prevent veterans from unfair penalties in the future must be a priority," Boozman said.

#### **Care for women veterans**

Rep. Lauren Underwood, D-Ill., introduced the Caring for Women Veterans Act, establishing an annual VA report to ensure that women veterans receive quality healthcare from VA hospitals.

The bill specifically directs the VA to submit an annual report to Congress on the gender-specific care available at VA facilities, to provide more information on the care women receive or don't.

The report will be required to include:

- Locations where women access VA care, including the number of women veterans in each state and how many have gotten care at each VA;
- How VA can model its care for women veterans based on private hospitals;
- Recommendations for hospital and clinic improvements and research on how to raise money for those improvements;
- The number of women's health centers, care teams, OBGYNs and women's health providers by facility;
- The number of doctors and other providers with qualifications to treat women's health conditions.

"By 2043, the population of women veterans is set to nearly double. As this number grows, the VA must modernize to ensure that all VA facilities are equipped to provide comprehensive services for all veterans,"



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Underwood said. “The Caring for Women Veterans Act will identify ways the VA can improve care for women veterans and provide the VA with guidance to address the unique barriers to care they face. By empowering the VA to fulfill its mission to provide exceptional care, we can help more veterans access the quality care they deserve.”

**Homeless women veterans are afraid to be separated from their children if they seek help, advocates say**



Homeless women veterans may not report their homelessness or seek help out of fear.

“They’re afraid,” said Jas Boothe, founder of Final Salute Inc., an Alexandria, Va.-based organization helping homeless women veterans. “They feel like ‘I can’t tell them I’m homeless because I’ll lose my child.’ So they’re afraid to come forward and have their children stripped from their arms.”

Boothe said changes need to be made so women veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless don’t live in fear “to have their children ripped away from them.”

Women veterans are the fastest growing group of homeless veterans, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

On a single night in January 2017, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimated that more than 40,000 veterans were homeless, and of those, about 9 percent -- or 3,600, were women. From 2016 to 2017, the number of homeless women veterans increased by 7 percent, compared to 1 percent of male veterans.

And those numbers may be even greater than current data shows, according to women veterans who testified at a Congressional hearing Wednesday.

The House Veterans Affairs Committee subpanel on economic opportunity held a hearing on the economic wellbeing of women veterans. Homelessness was one of the most common topics, with far-reaching effects.

Witnesses at that hearing, including Boothe, revealed a largely untold story of homeless women veterans.

Many women veterans who are homeless couch surf, Boothe and other witnesses said. Because they are more likely than their male counterparts to be single parents, women veterans find other people’s homes to stay in to avoid being on the street with their children, and avoid the risk of being separated by child services.

But the federal government does not track the number of homeless veterans couch surfing. And women veterans are more hesitant to come forward to seek help because of their children, or because many aid programs and shelters either don’t accept women, children, or place limits on the number and ages of children admitted.

The top factors that contribute to women veteran homelessness are unemployment, 80 percent of women veterans who do not get care at VA, domestic violence and single motherhood, Boothe told members of Congress -- and many of those issues are complicated by a lack of childcare.

More than 2 million women have served in the U.S. military, subpanel Chairman Rep. Mike Levin, D-Calif., said. More than 18,000 women joined the Armed Forces each year. They’re the fastest growing group in the military -- expected to comprise 10 percent by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035, he said.

But while women veterans outpace their male counterparts, and female civilians, in many ways, the rate of women veteran homelessness has more than doubled since 2006.

“It’s heartbreaking to hear stories of women veterans, especially single mothers, fall into poverty and homelessness after separation (from the military),” ranking member Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., said. “No one

who has served this country should struggle ... to provide for their families.”

Women veterans take, on average, three months longer than male veterans to find employment after they leave the military and often earn less despite having the same skills enhanced by military service as men, witnesses said. They are more likely to have a lower median income, more likely to be below the poverty threshold and have higher rates of unemployment. All of those things contribute to financial instability and put women veterans at risk of homelessness.

In California, about 60 percent of women veterans said they had experienced some type of housing instability.

Boothe said it’s important to treat health conditions that could be a root cause of instability. But not all VA hospitals and facilities provide or are equipped to provide women-specific care. And many women veterans face “a gauntlet” of sexual harassment once they arrive at the VA that can be traumatizing, especially for survivors of military sexual trauma, domestic abuse or other issues.

“If you’re not mentally, emotionally and physically well” women veterans often have trouble finding and keeping jobs, Boothe said. “We have to work from the inside out and focus on root causes.”

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## **POW/MIA:**

*Submitted by Bob Gilbert*

No report.

## **AGENT ORANGE:**

*Submitted by Owen Martin*

Farmers Are Losing Everything After “Forever Chemicals” Turned Up In Their Food

“No farmer in his or her right mind would go looking for it, because it would ruin them,” said one farm manager.

By Nidhi Subbaraman, , BuzzFeed News Reporter

Posted on July 2, 2019

### **Fred Stone at his farm in Arundel, Maine.**

“Forever chemicals” linked to cancer are turning up in farm produce across the country, leading farms to lay off workers, incinerate cranberry harvests, kill cows, and dump thousands of gallons of dairy milk.

Such long-lived “fluorinated” compounds have been measured in the drinking water in over 600 locations in 43 states, near factories or military bases that use them in firefighting foams. Best known as PFAS chemicals (short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), they line numerous waterproof consumer goods, from hiking shoes to pizza boxes.

Now their emergence in farm produce has spurred state and federal agencies to ramp up efforts to test for the chemicals in a wider variety of foods, and to fund studies to track how the chemicals enter the food supply.

In June, the FDA announced the results of its first tests for PFAS compounds in supermarket staples, including cooked meat, fruit, and iced chocolate cake. The health agency said it did not see a “food safety risk” in its sampling and did not find PFAS chemicals in most foods. But it did report PFAS in milk and produce that had been farmed near polluted locations. While researchers at the National Institutes of Health and CDC are still studying the health effects of the chemicals, some are known to hinder growth and learning in children, lower chances of pregnancy, and increase the risk of cancer.

Farmers, meanwhile, are already reeling.

“They’ve ruined us,” Fred Stone, a Maine farmer who stopped selling milk after PFAS chemicals turned up in it in 2016, told BuzzFeed News. At his Stoneridge Farm in Arundel, the suspected source is PFAS-laced sludge that Stone had spread on his fields as fertilizer, a practice the state has permitted many farms to do. The milk tested at





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690 parts per trillion for PFAS, nearly 10 times the Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines for two of the chemicals. More than two years on, Stone and his wife still take care of their remaining 60 cows but can't sell their milk. Stone estimates he's spent some \$10,000 on tests and is losing over \$400 daily. "Our assets are our livestock and our farm, and ... we're nothing now. And this is an operation that goes back 100 years," Stone said.

## MAINE

Well beyond Stoneridge Farm, Maine state officials are grappling with contaminated sludge on farms. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection tested 44 samples from other farms and compost facilities, for example, the Intercept reported last month. The agency detected at least one PFAS compound in every sample.

### Fred Stone checks on his cows in March.

Last week, the state reported the first results of statewide milk testing: Three farms that had also used possibly contaminated sludge did not show detectable levels of PFAS in the milk. Also, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry tested 26 samples from retail milk bottled or sold in Maine, including Horizon Organic, HP Hood, Cumberland Farms and Dairy Pure brands, and announced that all fell below the state's detection limit.

"We estimate that this sample effort captures 75% of all milk sold in Maine and all Maine-produced fluid pasteurized milk sold in the state," agency spokesperson Jim Britt wrote to BuzzFeed News in an email.

But Patrick MacRoy of the Maine-based nonprofit Environmental Health Strategy Center told BuzzFeed News that the state's results were wanting: First, he said the state's detection limit of 50 parts per trillion was too high. Second, the state needed to test many more farms that used PFAS-laden sludge. And finally, retail milk is typically a mix of milk from many dairies, so problematic milk would be diluted and might escape detection.

"The state needs to actually go out and test all the farms that have a history of sludge use," MacRoy said. "That's the only way we're going to understand where the hot spots are and where the farms are unknowingly producing contaminated milk."

## NEW MEXICO

Across the country, a New Mexico farm with heavily contaminated milk now has the attention of the FDA and the USDA. Without naming the farm, the FDA's June announcement included tests near a site in Clovis — and the agency reported that it found the chemicals in the milk, as well as in the cheese.

KCBD / Via [kcbd.com](http://kcbd.com)

Art Schaap's farm is close to an Air Force base in New Mexico.

Around the time of those tests, dairy owner Art Schaap of Clovis told Search Light New Mexico that he was dumping 15,000 gallons of milk daily and was looking to euthanize 4,000 cows after the Air Force found sky-high levels of PFAS in his water last year, some 171 times the EPA's health advisory level of 70 parts per trillion. Cannon Air Force Base is a short drive from the dairy farm.

In March, the USDA began two studies of PFAS in cows from Schaap's herd; the agency will analyze blood, plasma, and tissue samples from some 120 cows, to calculate how PFAS levels in water translate to PFAS levels in milk and meat.

"Right now we can sample the blood, but we don't know how that correlates to levels in the meat at all," Shanna Ivey, professor of animal science at New Mexico State University, who is working with the USDA, told BuzzFeed News. The university is working with 10 live cows from Schaap's farm to study how long it takes for PFAS to leave the animals once they start drinking water without PFAS compounds in it.

Ivey said the results will be shared with the FDA and the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service and its Agricultural Research Service. "Any area that has an Air Force base which has agriculture co-located is going to be facing similar problem," she said.

## MASSACHUSETTS

So far, no federal agency has put a legal limit on PFAS compounds in food — the EPA's levels are merely guidelines, Ivey pointed out. But that hasn't stopped businesses from rejecting Schaap's dairy products or food from contaminated sites elsewhere.

In Massachusetts, for example, Ocean Spray rejected cranberries from a PFAS-contaminated bog on Cape Cod for two years running, despite state and FDA tests that failed to detect PFAS in the fruit, according to meeting minutes from a local PFAS remediation group that included local government and military officials. The cranberry crop was incinerated. (Massachusetts is the number two producer of cranberries in the US after Wisconsin.)

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection tested affected cranberry bogs in 2016, 2017, and 2018, and almost no cranberry samples had detectable levels of PFAS.

### **COLORADO**

In an early sign of the economic effects of PFAS, Venetucci Farm near Colorado Springs stopped all agricultural production and let go of staff after PFAS chemicals were discovered in 2016 in the water used by the property, linked to firefighting foams used at Peterson Air Force Base.

Susan Gordon, a former manager at Venetucci, struggled to make a case for keeping the farm and produce, but had trouble finding government safety data for food, she told BuzzFeed News. Erring on the side of “extreme caution,” Gordon said, the owners shut the farm down.

Private tests of the farm’s produce shared with BuzzFeed News showed that the compounds had infiltrated almost every type of food tested, including spinach, garlic, and carrots, as well as eggs, pork, and beef from cows raised on the property.

Ultimately, any potential health risks from consuming the tainted food would depend on how much a person ate and how frequently, Christopher Higgins, a civil engineering professor at the Colorado School of Mines, told BuzzFeed News by email.

“The primary takeaway from the Venetucci data is that it is not far-fetched for these chemicals to end up in a wide variety of foods at measurable amounts at PFAS-impacted sites,” Higgins said. He is part of a research team that won an EPA grant to study the extent to which PFAS compounds accumulate in food. “It’s one thing to show it in a greenhouse or even in a controlled experimental plot (as we did), it is another to see some chemicals show up in food that people are actually eating,” he said.

It’s possible other farms in the area are affected, but owners in every state are now wary of testing for the chemicals.

“No farmer in his or her right mind would go looking for it, because it would ruin them,” Gordon said.

## **COMMUNITY/PUBLIC AFFAIRS:**

*Submitted by Lou Storms*

On July 9th, myself, Bob Lewis, Carl Ohlson, John Fedynich, Bob Cubby and John Drinkard visited Lyons VA Hospital to bring dinner to the PTSD In-Patient Unit and the 3rd floor Ladies Unit. The food, supplied by Inserra Supermarket's ShopRite of West Milford, was devoured by a grateful group of vets and we had a very nice social hour with them, including several vets we had seen on previous visits.

We have sent our request for continuation of their sponsorship, to Inserra and are awaiting their response. Should they continue the program our next scheduled visit will be September 10th. Since their donation request format has changed to a totally on-line application, which is quite a bit more detailed than in the past, we will not have an answer for about 4 weeks, but will let you know the outcome. Going on the premise that it will be renewed, should anyone want to join us, please sign the sheet up front or contact me.

### **Scheduled Meetings:**

Meetings are held at 2:00 p.m. the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month unless otherwise **noted**.

#### 2019

28<sup>th</sup> July (**Correction from 29<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>**)

25<sup>th</sup> August (Picnic)

22<sup>nd</sup> September

27<sup>th</sup> October

24<sup>th</sup> November

**December – TBD – Christmas Party**

### **Calendar of Events:**

Visit [www.VVA1002.org](http://www.VVA1002.org) for information on upcoming events.

#### **50/50 Scholarship Can Shake Schedule for 2019**

8/3 Walmart – Newton 9-2

8/2 thru 8/11 Sussex County Fair (If we can get enough coverage)

8/17 Shop Rite – Newton 9-2

8/24 Jumbo Land – Branchville 4-?

9/7 Mac & Lindys – Vernon 9-2

9/21 Jumbo Land – Branchville 4-?

10/5 Mac & Lindys – Vernon 9-2



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10/19 Walmart – Franklin 9-2

Any and all questions please direct them to the can shake coordinator, **Teri Deaver**.

## NEW MEMBERS:

“WELCOME HOME”

Asher E. Snook

## PASSINGS:

Rosemary Johnson

## Homeless Committee (new):

*Submitted by John Drinkard*

### VETERAN’S HAVEN NORTH

#### MISSION STATEMENT

"Under the direction of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs, Veteran's Haven North will ensure that homeless veterans are treated and cared for in a dignified, compassionate, and professional manner so as to reach an optimal level of independence and aid them in re-acquiring the life skills and ability to live in the community while maintaining their self-sufficiency, dignity, and honor."

#### OUR TEAM

Veteran’s Haven North is comprised of a diverse team of professionals specializing in psychosocial rehabilitation, social services, addictions, vocational rehabilitation, and nursing. All treatment is individualized with the purpose of attaining realistic life goals and instilling hope and wellness to maximize community reintegration.

Our vision is to provide services to the veterans guided by principles of excellence and quality. In addition to our specialized team, there is a Veterans’ Service Officer on premises to assist veterans in obtaining entitlements.

#### THE FACILITY

Veteran’s Haven North is located on top of a scenic mountain in Glen Gardner, New Jersey. With its tranquil surroundings, state of the art facility, and specialized staff, Veteran’s Haven North boasts the perfect combination for a highly effective and efficient transitional housing program for homeless veterans.

#### OUR PROGRAM

Veteran’s Haven North operates a two-year transitional housing program. The ultimate goal is to support veterans in developing a permanent solution to their homelessness.

#### ADMISSION CRITERIA

- Veteran must be homeless.
- Individual must be a veteran under USDVA guidelines.
- Veteran must be eligible for VA healthcare benefits to qualify for admission
- Applicant must be drug and alcohol free at time of admission.

**200 Sanatorium Road  
Suite 101**

**Glen Gardner, NJ 08826**

**Telephone: 908-537-1999**

**Toll Free: 877-648-0091**

## CONGRATULATIONS/CONCERNS:

United States Coast Guard, August 4, 1790 "SEMPER PARATUS"

Happy August Anniversaries:

Kathy & Tony Alia

Happy August Birthday’s:

Tony Alia

Last month’s birthdays were noted as June instead of July. Sorry about that.

## **MEMBERS CORNER:**

*Submitted by* Walt Hazelman

### **The Chapter Picnic**

The annual Chapter Picnic will be held on August 25<sup>th</sup>. However, it will be **canceled** unless we have more people sign up. Remember if you want to attend it is at no cost to you.

That being said we also need volunteers to do the cooking, set up the tables and cleanup.

Please email John Harrigan at

[harryo19@hotmail.com](mailto:harryo19@hotmail.com)

if you wish to attend or can help out.

### **Sussex County Fair**

We need to fill approx. 60 positions, or this event will be **canceled**. There must be at least 2 people per shift, the shifts are: 10:00am-2:00pm, 2:00pm-6:00pm, and 6:00pm-10:00pm. Last year we were able to sell a lot of the 50/50 raffle tickets for the scholarships from which we were able to present 5 students with \$1,000.00 scholarships. And we were able to raise money for the chapter from sales of hats, thanks to our haberdasher, and walking sticks, thank you Matt Fredericks. And were able to talk to a lot of veterans that were visiting the fair.

Opening date is August 2, 2019 and closes August 11, 2019.

The same people that always help need your help, now, to make these events successful

If you can help, please email John Harrigan at

[harryo19@hotmail.com](mailto:harryo19@hotmail.com)

**Thank You in advance for your support!!**

**Your Chapter #1002**

## **MISCELLANEOUS:**

1. **Special Note: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call (toll free 24/7) 1-800-273-8255 and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.**
2. Jackets (\$60 (summer) & \$70 (winter)); t-shirts (\$15); hats (\$10); golf shirts (short sleeve \$28; long sleeve \$33) are still available. See Owen Martin for purchases or to place an order (pre-payment for orders are appreciated)
3. Important note to families of deceased veterans, and/or requestors: *Submitted by* Bob Caggiano  
It is the right of every deceased Veteran to have a Military honors team attend the graveside service, to present the Flag at no charge to the family.

Honors Teams are sent out, at the expense of the US Government.

In January 2000, Congress passed legislation guaranteeing Veterans the right to at least two uniformed servicemen, a flag ceremony, and the playing of TAPS at their funeral. Unfortunately, there are not enough buglers to play TAPS, so the historic melody has been played on a CD player at many Veterans' last ceremony, or more currently on a bugle that plays Taps using an electronic insert. The volunteer organization "Bugles Across America" (a.k.a. BAA) was created to honor the service of veterans by providing Taps live by a bugler using a real instrument (such as a bugle, trumpet, cornet, or flugelhorn) at funerals or any other ceremony requiring a bugler. There are currently over 7500 volunteer buglers nationwide in all 50 states, and some overseas who stand ready to serve. BAA volunteers perform Taps as a free service.

As a Vietnam era veteran member of VVA Chapter 1002 and a BAA volunteer bugler, I am available to play for anyone who needs a bugler for Taps (or other appropriate bugle calls) for any honorable discharged veteran or related military ceremony. In the event I cannot play because of a scheduling conflict, I can generally still provide a substitute bugler so please contact me - Bob Caggiano, USAF Veteran, (973) 222-7591 (cell) or FinalTaps@gmail.com.



## **Editors Corner:**

By Linda Skellenger (AVVA)

Please have information to be included in the August newsletter to me by Sunday, August 18th by email: skelle@ptd.net or by snail-mail to:

Linda Skellenger  
174 Lewisburg Rd.  
Sussex, N.J. 07461