

This Weekly Newsletter
is brought to you by

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Legal Power for Seniors

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Online Application for VA Benefits

by Jennifer Woods-Pagano, CECC
Client Benefit and Care Coordinator

As we all know, there are many types of claims for disability compensation. Those that are administered through the Veterans Administration (VA) are currently experiencing a 14-16 month delay in processing, when those claims are submitted by mail. Some clients are even passing away before they can receive any benefits.

However, there is now some good news! It has just been learned that a veteran or a Veteran's Service Officer (VSO) may file a Fully-Developed Claim for Service-Connected or Non-Service-Connected Benefits online. The processing time for an online application cuts the waiting time in half, as compared to the traditional mail-in application. "Finding a key piece of evidence in a thick paper file folder takes time," said James Thomas, a claims specialist at the Salt Lake VA Regional Office. "With digital claims records, we can find all the key information related to the claim with a key stroke." The VA is attempting to eliminate the backlog by 2015. With that goal in mind, it has authorized overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional offices through the end of FY 2013. The VA is also urging online filing, because it has other advantages as well. Online applicants can track the status of their claim and access a host of information on such related services as education, home loans, and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

Even if the application cannot be completed in 1 sitting, there are advantages to filing online. Once the process has begun, the veteran has 365 days to complete it. Even in such an extreme case, the date of the application is calculated from the date it was initially filed (not completed). This starts the clock ticking, in layman's terms, so that if the veteran qualifies, benefits are paid back to that original filing date. To learn more about veteran disability benefits, go to www.ebenefits.va.gov. There's really no downside to this new process, and it's the way things are done today.

(Source = VA News Release, July 18, 2013 from http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opalist_listserv.cfm.)



Chihuahuas from California

Hook Law Center: Kit Kat, is there really a surplus of Chihuahuas from California?

Kit Kat: Yes, there really are. The Portsmouth Humane Society has just received 20 Chihuahuas from California, and they will be ready for adoption as of July 26, 2013. I read somewhere that the reason for this is that the dog was popularized by the movie "Legally Blonde." Many people wanted to imitate Reese Witherspoon and carry their dogs around in a purse. However, after they got the dog, apparently, their commitment did not last long for some unknown reason. So the Portsmouth Humane Society agreed to take 20 Chihuahuas from the Pasadena Humane Society. Portsmouth has a shortage of small dogs which they say are always in demand. In fact, Jennifer Austin, Executive Director of the Portsmouth Humane Society commented, "We put a small dog up for adoption and nine times out of ten, he or she is adopted the same day." So if you are interested in one of these friendly canines, don't wait too long. They'll be gone in a snap. Adoption costs from the Portsmouth Humane Society are \$100 for any dog 6 months or older and \$200 for any dog younger than 6 months. That's really quite a deal--they are spayed/neutered, have all their shots, and are micro-chipped.

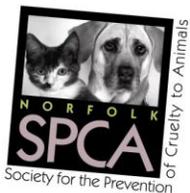
By the way, do you know where Chihuahuas come from? Chihuahua is a state in the country of Mexico. They were a dog favored by the Toltec Indians. They are the smallest breed of dog recognized by some kennel clubs. They can be short- or long-haired. Their heads can be deer-shaped or apple-shaped. (Wikipedia) In any shape or hair length, they're great dogs!

(<http://www.wvec.com/my-city/portsmouth/Portsmouth-Humane-Society-getting-20-Chihuahuas-from-California-shelter-for-homes-in-Portsmouth>)

Upcoming Events

- Hook Law Center will be presenting at the Towne Bank Senior Partners Conference at TowneU, Harbour View Blvd., Suffolk, VA on **July 31, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.**
- Hook Law Center will be presenting a seminar on Special Needs Trusts at Hope House, 801 Boush Street, Suite 302, Norfolk, VA 23510 on **August 6, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.** This event, hosted by ARC of South Hampton Roads, is free and open to the public.
- Hook Law Center will be presenting at the Advanced Elder Law Seminar sponsored by Virginia Continuing Legal Education at The Place at Innsbrook, 4100 Cox Rd., Glen Allen, VA on **September 11, 2013.**
- Hook Law Center will be presenting a seminar on Providing for Pets in Estate Plans at Care-A-Lot Pet Supply, 5457 Indian River Road, Virginia Beach, VA on **September 19, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.** This event, hosted by the Norfolk SPCA and Care-A-Lot Pet Supply, is free and open to the public.
- Hook Law Center will be hosting a shred event at our Virginia Beach office on **September 21, 2013 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**
- Hook Law Center is participating in the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's on **October 13, 2013** to raise funds and awareness. We know **Team Hook Law Center** can make a difference with your support! It's easy to give online using this link: http://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk/VA-SoutheasternVirginia?team_id=87329&pg=team&fr_id=3766. If you would like to join **Team Hook Law Center**, raise funds and walk with us, please email **Jennifer Woods-Pagano, CECC**, our team captain, at pagano@hooklawcenter.com for more information.
- Hook Law Center will be presenting on Estate and Long-Term Care Planning at the Medicare Health Fair at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, 1000 19th Street, Virginia Beach, VA on **November 16, 2013.** This event, hosted by Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia, is free and open to the public.

Special Offer for Subscribers of Hook Law Center News: **This Summer, Bring Home a New Best Friend!**



The Norfolk SPCA is offering subscribers of Hook Law Center News a discount on adoptions this summer. As kids get out of school, it's a perfect time to welcome a new family member into your home! The adoption discount lasts through Labor Day. Bring the whole family and find a wonderful new addition for your home!

Adoption Discount

Bring a copy of this ad at the time of adoption and receive a 20% discount off adoption fees:

- **\$30 off of the regular dog adoption fee of \$150.**
- **\$20 off of the regular cat adoption fee of \$100.**

View all the adoptable pets and check out the hours of operation at www.NorfolkSPCA.org/adopt. The Norfolk SPCA is open seven days a week and has lots of loving, homeless pets in need of new, forever homes. The shelter is located just off I-264 at the Ballentine Blvd. exit. Phone: (757) 622-3319.

Care-A-Lot Pet Supply and the Norfolk SPCA announce their new

Companion Animal Education Program

with guest speakers
Attorneys and Estate Planning Experts

Andrew H. Hook, Esq.
and

Jessica A. Hayes, Esq.
of Hook Law Center

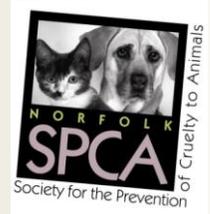
on
“*Providing for Your Pets in Estate Plans*”

at

Care-A-Lot Pet Supply
5457 Indian River Road, Virginia Beach, VA

on

Thursday, September 19, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.



*For more information, please visit NorfolkSPCA.org or
contact us at 757-622-3319 ext. 126 or info@NorfolkSPCA.org*

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