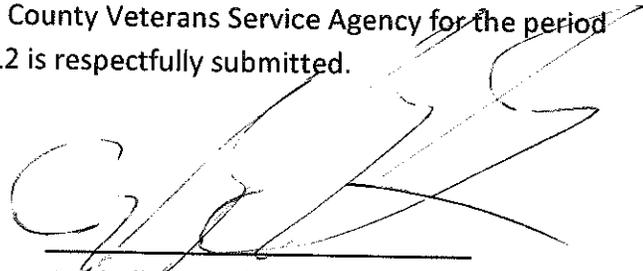


**GREENE COUNTY
VETERAN'S SERVICE AGENCY
159 Jefferson Heights
Suite A104
Catskill, New York 12414**

TO: The Honorable Board of Legislators of Greene County

The Annual Report of the Greene County Veterans Service Agency for the period
January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012 is respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Romalin Black', written over a horizontal line.

Michelle Romalin Black, Director

**REPORT OF THE GREENE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY FOR THE PERIOD OF
JANUARY 1, 2012 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012**

I. Administrative Organization:

Personnel:

GCVSA Director	(4/11/11 to present)
Veterans Van Chauffeur	(10/11/11 to present)
Senior Clerk	(12/1/10 to present)

Employed by NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs:

Counselor (Part time) one day a week - Wednesdays	(7/01/11 to present)
NYSDOL Local Veterans Employment Rep. Fridays	(7/01/11 to 8/10/12)
Wednesdays	(10/24/12 to present)

II. Administrative Expenses

A. Expenses

1. Salaries	\$ 98,065.64
2. Equipment	\$ -0-
3. Rent for Offices at Greene Medical Arts Center	\$ 16,335.60
4. Office Supplies and Postage	\$ 2,130.78
5. Repairs	\$ -0-
6. Veterans Transportation Services & Travel	\$ 8,909.56

7. Equipment-Vehicles		\$	-0-
8. Employee Benefits		\$	58,346.10
9. Insurance		\$	2,950.12
10. Telephone		\$	<u>2,068.99</u>
Total Expenses		\$	<u>188,806.79</u>
III. Reimbursement			
1. Salaries, Office Supplies, etc. – NYSDVA		\$	8,654.00
2. Private Donations			<u>-0-</u>
		\$	<u>8,654.00</u>
Operating Costs to County		\$	<u>180,152.79</u>
IV. Claims and Benefits			
A. Compensation – Service-connected disability incurred or aggravated in service.			
Applications: Pending from 2011	35		
Filed in 2012	<u>56</u>		
	91		
Approved	38	\$448,443.00	
Denied	6		
Pending	46		
Withdrawn	<u>1</u>		
	91		
B. Pension – Non-service connected disability based on low income, age, physical condition and inability to pursue a gainful occupation.			
Applications: Pending from 2011	3		
Filed in 2012	<u>5</u>		
	8		
Approved	2	\$31,390.00	
Denied	0		
Withdrawn	0		
Pending	<u>6</u>		
	8		

C. Widows and Children – Compensation (in-service death or death from service-connected disability), or pension from service (non-service connected death).

Applications: Pending from 2011	3	
Filed in 2012	<u>14</u>	
	17	
Approved	2	\$ 780.00
Denied	2	
Unknown	0	
Pending	13	
Withdrawn	<u>0</u>	
	17	

D. Burial Allowances:

Applications: Pending from 2011	3	
Filed in 2012	<u>7</u>	
	10	
Approved	1	\$ *
Pending	8	
Denied	1	
Withdrawn	<u>0</u>	
	10	

Education Allowances: Pending from 2011	4	
Filed in 2012	4	
Approved	4	\$ 11,493.62
Denied	0	
Pending	4	
Withdrawn	<u>0</u>	
	8	

TOTAL AMOUNT OF BENEFITS RECEIVED \$492,106.62

*(Burial benefits awarded not reported back to GVSVA)

STATISTICAL REPORT OF SERVICES RENDERED

A. Contacts for 2012

Veterans – World War I	0
World War II	44
Korean War	75
Vietnam War	409
Persian Gulf War	144
Peacetime	109
Servicemen	3
Other (funeral homes, nursing homes, DSS, veteran's dependents, VA hosp.,etc.)	19
TOTAL CONTACTS	<u>404</u>
	<u>2,007</u>

B. Services Rendered

Armed Forces	147
Blind Annuity	0
Burial	369
Compensation (Veteran & Dependent)	729
Education-H.S. College	22
Education-Vocational Rehabilitation	2
Labor – Civil Service, Employment, Re-employment, Unemployment	25
Insurance	8
Legal	7
Loans	14
Hospital, Dental	203
Pension (Veterans & Dependent)	290
Personal Affairs	32
Social Security	4
Social Services	1
Taxes	22
Counseling – in-depth	0
Other	176
TOTAL	<u>2,051</u>

C. Veterans Van Service

(Transporting Veterans to and from VAMC in Albany, three days a week)	1,043
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2012 ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS

The most recent figures available from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) estimates Greene County's veteran population at approximately 4,300. However, this figure is based on a statistical formula derived in 2007 that uses an assumption that the mortality rate of pre-Persian Gulf Veterans will exceed the number of post Persian Gulf era Military Troops transitioning into Veterans. In light of the next dawning of draw-downs and other cuts in Military spending in addition to the culmination of the Iraq War, and speculative end to the Afghanistan War, the Department of Veterans Affairs may need to re-evaluate the use of this 30-year projection. In other words, it is hard to say whether this figure, 4,300 Veterans, is very accurate. Especially considering, every current active member of our Army National Guard, is dually a Veteran.

According to the Veterans Administration, \$8,550,000 in Compensation and Pension benefits were paid to Greene County veterans and their families in fiscal year 2011, the latest figures available. This represents an increase of \$905,000 in direct cash payments to Greene County veterans and their families over the previous year. Further DVA statistics show, 2011 medical expenditures for Greene County veterans of \$12,636,000 a decrease of \$1,005,000. This loss is most likely attributed to Federal Government budget cuts that caused Albany Stratton VAMC (Veterans Affairs Medical Center), to eliminate and/or reduce certain long-term care and transportation services to Veterans in its service area; Educational payments (GI Bill and VRAP) of \$1,962,000, an increase of \$446,000; and insurance indemnities of \$236,000. The total Veterans Administration expenditure for Greene County considering all services rendered totaled \$23,385,000, an overall increase of \$282,000.

The Greene County Veterans Service Agency and Greene County Veterans would benefit significantly from re-instating and filling the position of Deputy Director. New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (NYDVA) has pulled back its visiting Counsellor to one day per week. Though the overall remuneration to Greene County Veterans for claims has increased by almost \$1,000,000 from the VA, that figure is based on the difference between 2011 and 2010. Our claim-count has suffered in the past year due to the cut in services from NYDVA. A Deputy Director would be a Veteran who attends training and becomes a Veterans Service Officer (VSO). Two accredited VSO's working solely for Greene County Veterans would allow the Agency to double its presence. The overall cost in salary and benefits to the county would be returned 100 times in possible compensation and pension claims filed. It would also allow the Director to spend more time researching and advocating for Greene County Veterans against adversarial trends practiced by local VAMC that has cost our Veterans over \$1,000,000 in reduced healthcare services.

During 2012, the Agency sponsored two "Honor a Veteran" ceremonies recognizing Greene County veterans for their military service and service to their communities. These events increase awareness for the agency, bring our state and federal representatives to our area to visit, and show Greene County Veterans and their families, that their government and community appreciate their service.

The Agency maintains a partnership with the County Clerk to keep the Greene County Veterans discount program for honorably discharged veterans active and positively received among Greene County Merchants. We are constantly working to increase participation in the Greene County F.A.V.O.R. program, and many businesses in the county provide significant discounts to Greene County Veterans.

As Director of the Greene County Veterans Service Agency, I was the keynote speaker for the Prattsville Memorial Day Ceremony, I gave a presentation to the Cairo Republicans Club in November, and was the keynote speaker for the Athens Pearl Harbor Day Memorial in December.

I hold the position of Service Officer for the Greene County American Legion, Greenville American Legion Post 291, the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 186, and the Greene County Marine Corps League Mountain Top Detachment. Each organization holds monthly meetings, I attend and/or provide a service report to each organization monthly. Additionally, I sit on the executive committee of the Greenville American Legion Post 291, and attend an additional monthly meeting for that committee. I oversee the Greene County Honor A Veteran Committee, and hold approximately six official meetings for that committee annually.

The Agency has been working synergistically with Congressman Gibson's office and our own Legislature in our endeavor to hold on to the Catskill Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), aka, the VA Clinic. This has been quite a struggle, as the VA officials we have been dealing with are extremely adversarial. In our nearly two-year struggle, we have managed to garner the support of our Congressman and the new owners of the building housing the VA Clinic, Columbia Memorial Hospital.

Lastly, I would like to address our Greene County Veterans Service Agency Transportation program. In July 2011, the Agency purchased a new 14 passenger van. In 2011, we transported 1812 Veterans to and from Albany Stratton VAMC using the new 14 passenger and on some occasions also the old 10 passenger vans. However, this resulted in a significant amount of overtime payments to our regular driver, and additional payments to a per diem driver we borrowed from the Department of Aging. Our current driver is part-time and is only allotted 33 hours per week/66 hours per pay-period. 30 hours per week are used for transporting Veterans, 3 hours per week are used for scheduling, routing, and routine maintenance. The van runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In order to maintain a 10-hour transportation day, the driver begins his route at 6AM to arrive at the VA at ~9 AM, and must leave the VA by 1 PM in order to be off the clock by 4 PM. These give the veterans a very limited window for medical services when they use the van.

Though overtime needed has always been approved, I have tried to work within the confines of my budget. Unfortunately, attempting to do so resulted in what I think is an unacceptable number of rejected requests for transportation. In 2012, we only transported 1043 Veterans to and from the VA. In light of the VA's decrease in medical benefits to our Veterans, I propose creating a full-time 40 hour position for a CDL holder and adding a 20-passenger mini-bus to the Agency's fleet for Veterans Transportation to Albany; and, maintain the 33-hour position and 14-passenger van combination for transportation to and from the VA Clinic. By providing the latter, our landlord can add that service as an addendum to public transportation services to the building when submitting their proposal to the VA to retain the VA Clinic in its current location. Additionally, I believe that increasing our transportation service, time and ability—wheel chair accessibility—will significantly increase the medical services provided to Greene County Veterans; as, the VA's in-home healthcare programs suffered the greatest cut-backs.

I appreciate your attention to Greene County Veterans, and your consideration in the matters I have addressed with the Agency's highlights. I am confident that the extended services I have proposed will provide benefits to Greene County Veterans, and ultimately Greene Government and all of its tax-payers, that will far out-weigh the expenditure.