

Veterans Affairs Office of Lexington County



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VET NEWS

February 2009

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FEBRUARY DATES TO REMEMBER:

Feb. 2nd Groundhog Day
Feb. 14th Valentines Day
Feb. 16th Presidents Day [Observed]
Offices Closed / No VAN

**TIME TO SUBMIT
THOSE ANNUAL
REPORTS!**



Anyone who receives an **Eligibility Verification Report (EVR)** or **Medical Expense Report** should call our office as soon as possible to schedule an appointment for the completion of these forms.

Once your appointment is set, please gather the following information relating to your 2008 **expenses**:

- ◇ Computer printout from pharmacy itemizing medication expenses
- ◇ Paid receipts for Doctor/Hospital Expense, Glasses and Eye Exams, Hearing Aids, Dental Care, Over-the counter drugs
- ◇ Itemization of total mileage accumulated while traveling to/from doctors, hospital, pharmacy
- ◇ Private Medical Insurance premiums

Also bring with you items relating to your **INCOME**, such as your Social Security 2009 award statement, checking/savings account information, IRA/stocks/bonds/mutual funds from 2008. Method of payment information for aid and attendance payment (if applicable) should be provided to us as well.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will **not consider** canceled checks as proof of payment, nor will Explanation of Benefits Statements (EOB) or prescriptions qualify as proof of expense. These forms should be **postmarked** by March 1, 2009 to avoid interruption of compensation payments.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Liberty may be endangered by the abuse of liberty, but also by the abuse of power."

-James Madison



**4TH PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

POSSIBLE NPRC SCAM ALERT

The following email has been received by a number of veterans who are asking if it is legitimate. A review of the website provided in the message revealed that it contains a number of veteran-related informational items but does not provide any information on who the owner/sponsor of this site is or any background that would attest to the legitimacy of the site. Since this web site ends in **.com** not **.gov** it is not a government site and could possibly be a scam to get personal information. Readers are advised to exercise caution before providing any personal information or records. The text of the email is as follows:

"HOUSTON , TX (October 21, 2008) In order to alleviate the strain on the National Personnel Records Commission (NPRC), and Veterans Affairs (VA), U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs introduced today that veterans can permanently store their service medical records (SMR), legal records, or military records in their new, user-friendly, Records Archive Division (RAD). <http://www.veteranprograms.com>"

[Source:CA DVBE Advocate, Nov.3, 2008]



What Freedom Means to Me



What freedom means to me as the son of an American soldier? On September 21, 2006, I began to understand why freedom is something that we, as Americans, should consider a gift, not a privilege. That is the day that my father left to serve fifteen months in Iraq.

Freedom means missing holidays and birthdays. It means missing the birth of his niece and the death of his aunt. It means missing soccer and baseball games of all three of his sons. It means family celebrations are a lot less festive because my father wasn't there. It means that he missed fifteen months of being a part of my life. It is about the sacrifices that American soldiers make for the freedom we enjoy.

Freedom is a fifteen minute phone call on a Sunday afternoon. It is trying to squeeze a week worth of "guess what happened" into a phone conversation. It's putting together care packages with items that my father needs. It's sending candy and lollipops to Iraqi children to keep them from being scared.

My father spent over a year fighting for freedom in a foreign country and sacrificing his freedoms in the process. He couldn't go to the movies or out to dinner. He had guidelines and rules that he had to follow based on their customs and beliefs. Every time he left his base he was armed and

aware that he was a target of insurgents. He was always on his guard against his enemies. He was shot at, had IEDS explode, and saw his fellow soldiers wounded or killed.

Soldiers not much older than me fight for my freedom. I have the freedom to worship in a church of my choice. I have the freedom to speak out against what is wrong or unfair. I have the freedom to read what I want, to eat what I want and to go where I want without fear of prosecution.

We owe all these freedoms that we take for granted to soldiers like my father and the ones that came before him. These soldiers do not know who we were, they only know what was right and that they fought for freedom.

We don't know how good we have got it until we see people being imprisoned for what they believe, or if they are being treated unfairly because the government does not like them. It was like this where my dad was, children would roam the street and live in mud houses and their bathroom is a bucket. Boys would beat up a girl over a pink soccer ball if a soldier gave it to a girl.

My dad knew men personally that got killed that had children or wives waiting for them at home. We live our lives wishing we had something else or wanting what someone else has, never making sacrifices or appreciating the freedom we do enjoy. Soldiers sacrifice their lives everyday just so that we have the freedom to make choices and live in a free country. That is what freedom means to me.

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(This short essay was written by a 14-year old young man named Deuce Brown, in honor of his father, who recently served 15 months in Iraq. Deuce lives in the Lowcountry Region of South Carolina.)

BONUS QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

**"They who would give up an essential liberty for temporary security deserve neither liberty or security."
- Benjamin Franklin**



Korean War Ace Ralph "Hoot" Gibson Dies

Former Thunderbird was 84 Years Old

Tucson, Arizona—**Ralph D. "Hoot" Gibson**, a Korean War ace and former lead pilot for the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds flight demonstration team, has died. He was 84 years old.

Gibson, an Air Force Colonel who founded a Tucson real estate firm after he retired in 1974, died Jan. 2nd after striking his head while showing a buyer a piece of property, his son Scott Gibson said.

Born in Illinois, Gibson joined the Army Air Forces in 1943 and went to flight school, but didn't see combat during World War II. Assigned to the 4th Flying Group during the Korean War, he flew 94 missions in the F-86 Sabre and downed five MiG-15 fighters to become the nation's third jet fighter ace.

In the 1960's, Gibson led the Thunderbirds for two years and flew 104 missions in F-4 Phantoms over Vietnam as a squadron commander, according to an Air Force biography.

[Source: [The State Newspaper](#), 1/11/09 article]

SOUTH CAROLINA MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND

The **South Carolina Military Family Relief Fund** (SCMFRF), signed into law in 2004 by Governor Mark Sanford, provides monetary grants to families of South Carolina National Guard members and South Carolina National Guard members and South Carolina residents serving in the U.S. Armed Forces Reserve components who were called to active duty as a result of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.



Many families of South Carolina National Guard members and Reservist face serious financial hardship because the military pay of a service member can be far less than their civilian salary. Some families may see as much as a 70% drop in their household income when the service member is away.

SCMFRF grants are intended to help families defray the costs of food, housing, utilities, medical services, and other expenses that become difficult to afford when a wage-earner has temporarily left civilian employment to be placed on active military duty.

Beginning in 2005 donations have been accepted through a voluntary check-off on South Carolina individual income tax forms or through other grants and donations made to the fund.

Grant applicant must be a member of the South Carolina National Guard or a South Carolina resident serving in a U.S. Armed Forces Reserve component, or a family member of the Guardsman/Reservists and enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Proof of residency and/or familial relationship consists of information obtained from DEERS.

Service member was/is on active military duty for 30 consecutive days or more as a result of Sept. 11, 2001.

For Status Based Grant –flat rate of \$500

Orders must state one of the following:

Operation Noble Eagle/Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom
Executive Order #1322

Any future operations as determined by the President or
Governor of South Carolina

Rank must be no higher than O-3 or W-2 (based upon rank at time of mobilization.) Proof of pay grades consist of information obtained from DEERS.

For Need Based Grant—up to \$2,000 (Maximum)

Must include all rules listed in Status Based Grant. Must submit monthly civilian and military pay stub to show the service member sustained a 30% or greater decrease from his or her civilian salary. Must submit proof of expenses or bills. Must submit a signed statement on what the grant will be used for. If custodial parent or guardian is applying on behalf of a member's dependent, then proof of guardianship must be provided.

If you would like more information about SCMFRF, or an application, please contact:
SC Division of Veterans Affairs at 1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 369, Columbia, SC 29201 or
call **(803) 734-0200**.

JUST A NOTE:

**The Lexington County
DAV Van will not run
on Monday, February 16th, due to
the Presidents Day Holiday. Our
office will be *closed* on that day.**



SC HONOR FLIGHTS

The next scheduled SC HONOR FLIGHTS are set for April 15th and May 27th, 2009.

Go to their website at www.honorflightsc.com for information on how to apply for future flights.

You may also call **803-582-8826** for more information on how to participate as a veteran, sponsor or volunteer.

Veterans, please see copy of application on **PAGES 5 and 6** of this newsletter.

VA to Provide Payments to Eligible Surviving Spouses Quick Action Taken to Resolve Problem Identified by Senate Chairman

WASHINGTON (Dec. 18, 2008) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced immediate actions to quickly identify and pay surviving spouses who are eligible to receive a one-time compensation or pension payment for the month of the veteran's death.

"This benefit payment is long overdue to many of our beneficiaries," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "In these difficult economic times, it is imperative that we take aggressive action to fix this situation for the families of our veterans."

Problems in VA's implementation of a change in law that was effective in 1997 resulted in some surviving spouses not receiving the veteran's compensation or pension payment for the month of death. This problem was recently brought to VA's attention by Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Peake immediately directed the formation of a special task force to identify and pay the beneficiaries who never received the benefit or were inadvertently required to repay the money issued for the month of a veteran's death.

Surviving spouses most likely to be affected by this processing problem are those who never applied to VA for survivors' benefits following the death of a veteran.

The task force is in the process of reviewing VA's payment records for veterans who died after December 31, 1996, and

who are survived by a spouse. The review will identify those to whom VA owes retroactive benefits for the month of the veteran's death. Current address information is being obtained for as many of these beneficiaries as possible.

VA will begin issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of this month. Payments will continue to be issued as additional unpaid beneficiaries are identified and VA is able to obtain current address information.

Because there are deceased veterans for whom VA does not have marital status information, a special Survivors' Call Center has been established for spouses who believe they may be entitled to this retroactive month-of-death benefit.

Surviving spouses are encouraged to contact the Survivors' Call Center at the toll-free telephone number, 1-800-749-8387. Call center agents will assist surviving spouses in providing VA with the information needed to determine their eligibility.

The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm central standard time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.

VA is aggressively changing its processing procedures to ensure this benefit is correctly paid to all surviving spouses in the future. VA's disability payment system will also be enhanced to automate the month-of-death payment for all eligible surviving spouses.

" To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan. "
- Abraham Lincoln

VETERANS TRUST FUND OF SOUTH CAROLINA

The Veterans Trust Fund of South Carolina was created in 1995 to supplement/augment the quality of life for the veterans of South Carolina. Standard benefits and services for veterans do not always cover or meet their total needs; therefore, the Veterans Trust Fund of South Carolina was designed to:

- ◇ Make better the lifestyle of nursing home veterans
- ◇ Assist with transportation initiatives to and from VA Hospitals
 - ◇ Assist veterans groups in keeping Patriotism alive
 - ◇ Help establish memorials honoring veterans
 - ◇ Support educational scholarships
- ◇ Assist with established homeless veterans programs

If you would like more information about the Veterans Trust Fund, please contact: **Veterans Trust Fund of South Carolina** at 1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 369, Columbia, SC 29201 or call **(803) 734-0200**. ***South Carolinians have the opportunity to make certain contributions through their income tax returns. See **line 13** of **SC1040A** or **line 28** of **SC1040**. **Contributions to SC Veterans' Trust Fund** should be entered on **line item 4** of **SC form I-330**, and that **FORM** should be attached to **SC1040A** or **SC1040**.

YOUR DONATION TO THE VETERANS TRUST FUND OF SOUTH CAROLINA IS TAX-DEDUCTIBLE



VETERAN APPLICATION

Honor Flight recognizes American veterans for your sacrifices and achievements by flying you to Washington, DC to see YOUR memorial at no cost. Top priority (for which we are currently accepting application only) is given to WW II and terminally ill veterans from all wars. In the future, Honor Flight will be expanded to include Korean and Vietnam veterans. In order for Honor Flight to achieve this goal, guardians fly with the veterans on every flight providing assistance and helping veterans have a safe, memorable and rewarding experience. For what you and your comrades have given to us, please consider this a small token of appreciation from all of us at Honor Flight. For further information, please contact us at 803-582-8826 or www.honorflightsc.com

DATE: _____/_____/_____

NAME: _____ NICK NAME: _____

(As it appears on your ID for airline travel)

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: DAY: _____ EVENING: _____ MOBILE: _____

AGE: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

OCCUPATION: _____ ARE YOU A VETERAN? _____ YES _____ NO

Please check your T-Shirt Size: S M L XL XXL XXXL

ALTERNATE CONTACT (son, daughter, etc):

NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION (someone available the day you travel):

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____

PHONE: Day: _____ Evening: _____ Mobile: _____

SERVICE HISTORY: BRANCH OF SERVICE: _____ RANK: _____

HOMETOWN (from which city and state did you enter the service?): _____

ACTIVITY DURING WWII: _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL NOT DISQUALIFY YOU. It permits us to access the support we need during the trip. Information is for Honor Flight and medical personnel only.

Do you use mobility equipment? YES NO.

If yes, please check: CANE WALKER WHEELCHAIR SCOOTER

MEDICATIONS (name of medication and how often you take it)

Medication	Taken how often?	Medication	Taken how often?
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please complete page 2

● Do you have any **drug allergies**? _____

● Do you have a history of **seizure**? YES NO

Please describe what type (i.e. grand mal, petit mal, other) _____

When was your last seizure? _____. If within the past 5 years, we STRONGLY advised you discuss trip with your private physician!

● Do you have problems with **motion sickness** (sea or air)? YES NO

If **yes**, is it controlled with medications? YES NO If motion sickness is not controlled with medications, it is STRONGLY advised you discuss the trip with your private physician!

● Do you have any **breathing problems**? YES NO

If **yes**, please describe: _____

● Do you use a **home nebulizer machine**? YES NO

If **yes**, you are STRONGLY encouraged to discuss the trip with your private physician concerning the use of portable hand-held nebulizers during the trip.

● Do you use **oxygen** at any time? YES NO

If **yes**, you will need your private physician to write a prescription for oxygen to be used during the flight and during the tour. Oxygen will be provided. The prescription should be turned in with the application.

● Do you have a **problem walking** the length of a football field without assistance? YES NO

If **yes**, please describe the reason (e.g. lung problems, arthritis, heart problems, etc.): _____

● Do you have a history of **open head injuries, sinus problems, or ear problems**? YES NO

If **yes**, have you flown since the open head injury, sinus or ear problems occurred? YES NO

If **yes**, did you have any problems? YES NO

If **yes**, it is STRONGLY advised you discuss the trip with your private physician. If you have **never** flown since the open head injury, sinus or ear problems, again we STRONGLY advise you discuss the trip with your private physician.

● Do you have a **urostomy or colostomy bag**? YES NO

If YES, please make sure the bag is vented prior to flight. If you do not know if your bag is vented, it is STRONGLY advised that you discuss this issue with your private physician.

Additional Comments or Concerns: _____

PLEASE REVIEW CAREFULLY AND SIGN:

The undersigned acknowledges and agrees that:

1. As photographic and video equipment are frequently used to memorialize and document Honor Flight trips and events, his/her image may appear in a public forum, such as the media or a website, to acknowledge, promote or advance the work of the Honor Flight program. I hereby release the photographer and Honor Flight from all claims and liability relating to said photographs. I hereby give permission for my images captured during Honor Flight activities through video, photo, or other media, to be used solely for the purposes of Honor Flight promotional material and publications, and waive any rights or compensation or ownership thereto.

2. I further state that medical insurance is the responsibility of the veteran and I understand that Honor Flight does NOT provide medical care. I understand that I accept all risks associated with travel and other Honor Flight activities and will not hold Honor Flight responsible for any injuries incurred by me while participating in the Honor Flight program

SIGNED*: _____

DATE: ____/____/____

(E-mail applicants will be required to sign prior to actual trip date)

Please submit this form to:

South Carolina Guard Foundation, Inc

Attn: Honor Flight SC

551 Granby Lane, Columbia, SC 29201-4655

COMMISSIONING OF USS GEORGE HW BUSH



The U.S. Navy has commissioned a new aircraft carrier named for former U.S. President George H. W. Bush. The former president and his son, President George W. Bush, took part in the January 10, 2009 ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia. It is the ultimate honor for a decorated Navy pilot from World War II.

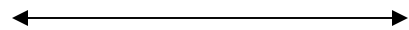
With the command "I hereby place the United States Ship George H.W. Bush into commission...May God bless and guide this warship and all who shall sail in her", the former president put the massive, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier into service. During World War II, the then-future president flew torpedo bombers off the converted aircraft carrier **USS San Jacinto**. While on a mission over the Pacific in 1944, Mr. Bush's plane crashed into the ocean after being hit by Japanese anti-aircraft fire. He then parachuted into the sea and was rescued by a Navy submarine. He returned to combat and served until the end of the war in 1945.

Mr. Bush was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals for his service. During the ceremony, he reminisced about his time in the Navy. "Being here in this ceremony takes me back 65 years to another commissioning, this one on the shipyards of Philadelphia, for the San Jacinto, a light carrier upon which my crewmates, very few of whom are with us today, and I were preparing to serve in World War II," he said.

The carrier bearing Mr. Bush's name is the last of its kind. The USS George H.W. Bush is the tenth and final vessel in the Nimitz class of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, the first of which was launched in 1972. It towers 20 stories above the waterline, has a flight deck of more than 1.8 hectares, and measures 333 meters long.

The former president says the nearly 6,000 sailors and Marines will be the ship's main asset. "For all the special enhancements and state-of-the-art technology, and the safety and environmental features, the most important element will finally be added today, in the form of the men and women who will serve aboard this floating naval air station," he said.

No other former president has visited a carrier named after him. On a recent Fox News program covering the event, the 84-year old Bush said he is moved by the honor. **"Well, it is very emotional for me, and it is kind of the last big thing in my life, and it is just hard to describe it,"** he said.



About 20,000 people attended the commissioning, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, and various members of the Bush family. The former president's daughter, **Doro Bush Koch**, gave the order to bring the ship to life.

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**
605 West Main Street, Suite 101
Lexington, SC 29072
(803)785-8400

PRSR T STD
U S POSTAGE PAID
LEXINGTON, SC
PERMIT NO. 90

**FEBRUARY OUTREACH
PROGRAM DATES**

Feb. 3rd: 9-12 Batesburg-Leesville

Feb. 10th: 9-12 Chapin

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office: 785-8400

From Batesburg/Leesville: 332-8400

From Chapin: 941-0231

**OR CURRENT
RESIDENT**

PLEASE NOTE: If you have received this newsletter in error, please notify our office at **803-785-8400** to have your address removed from our mailing list. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.



IT'S GIRL SCOUT COOKIE TIME AGAIN

“Cookies for Troops” Effort Underway



COOKIE SALE PROGRAM DATES: Girls will be taking cookie orders from January 16 to February 19, and direct sales to the public will be from February 20 to March 16. Look for the Girl Scouts at a retailer/business near you. The Columbia, SC, Service Center is located at 130 Pinnacle Point Ct., Suite 100, Columbia, SC 29223. (**Their phone # 803-782-5133.**) You may reach any Girl Scout Service Center location by calling toll free at **(800) 849-GIRL(4475).**



The Midlands **Blue Star Mothers** will be shipping Girl Scout cookies to our deployed troops again this year. If you know of a service member who would like to receive these cookies, please contact the Blue Star Mothers by going to their website on the Internet: **WWW.BLUESTARMOTHERSSC.COM**. You can give them that service member's deployed address. You may also call the Blue Star Mothers at **803-206-6088**. Donations to the Blue Star Mothers are also welcome as they rely on contributions to fund this effort on a yearly basis.

