



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

July/August 2017



Lexington, SC.

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**At A Glance Calendar
July/August**

For a list of events in Lexington County for July and August

See page 13 - Happenings Around Lexington County

Weekly on Tuesdays in July

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Tuesday, July 4th

Independence Day
County Office Closed

Thursday, July 6th

Gaston Outreach

Friday, July 7th

Chapin Outreach

Friday, July 14th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Tuesday, July 25th

County Council Meeting

Weekly on Tuesdays in August

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, August 3rd

Gaston Outreach

Friday, August 4th

Chapin Outreach

Friday, August 11th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Tuesday, August 22nd

County Council Meeting

Purple—Holidays/Special Days

Brown—County Council Meetings

Blue—Outreach dates

Pink—Special Events throughout the County

Red—County Offices Closed,

Orange—Director Out of Office

No van scheduled and Special Notices

Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings

Black—Director's appearances in the County

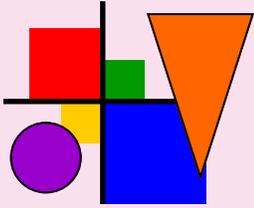
From the Director...

There is an exciting event coming up where the Lexington County Blowfish will be honoring Vietnam Veterans on Monday, July 3rd at 6:45pm. The Veteran and one guest will be admitted free and will get to sit in an air conditioned suite that will include free food and drink. Select Veterans will throw out the first pitch. Also, all Vietnam Veterans will receive a special commemorative lapel pin made possible by the Department of Defense. Their spouses and family members will also receive special buttons that honor them as a spouse or family member of a Vietnam Veteran. Please contact the Blowfish to reserve your tickets to this special event. (see the flyer on page 9 for more information.)

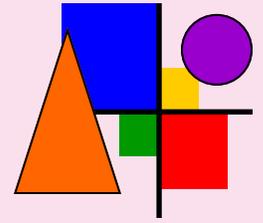
Our building is under heavy renovation that comes with lots of noise and some confusion but through it all, we look at the bigger picture and know the end result will be worth it. We were recently briefed it won't be completely done until November. We will host a ceremony to officially open the new complex. More details will come as the construction completion date nears.

Have a great summer!





Compensation Benefits



Disability compensation is a monthly tax-free benefit paid to Veterans who are at least 10% disabled because of injuries or diseases that were incurred in or aggravated during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training. A disability can apply to physical conditions, such as a chronic knee condition, as well as mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The benefit amount is graduated according to the degree of the Veteran's disability on a scale from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). Compensation may also be paid for disabilities that are considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service. Generally, the degrees of disability specified are also designed to compensate for considerable loss of working time from exacerbations or illnesses.



If you have dependents, an additional allowance may be added if your combined disability is rated 30% or greater. Your compensation may be offset if you received disability severance pay or separation incentive payments. Military retirement pay for Veterans rated 40% and below, is offset by their VA compensation. Military retirees receiving 50% or higher receive both their VA compensation and full military retirement.



To be eligible for VA compensation, you must meet the following criteria:

1. Service in the Uniformed Services on active duty, OR
2. Active duty for training, OR
3. Inactive duty training, AND
4. You were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions, AND
5. You are at least 10% disabled by an injury or disease that was incurred in or aggravated during active duty or active duty for training, or inactive duty training

Note: If you were on inactive duty for training, the disability must have resulted from injury, heart attack, or stroke.

Evidence required to file a claim includes: Medical evidence of a current physical or mental disability, AND evidence of a relationship between your disability and an injury, disease, or event in military service. Medical records or medical opinions are required to establish this relationship.



Note: Under certain circumstances, VA may conclude that certain current disabilities were caused by service, even if there is no specific evidence proving this in your particular claim. The cause of a disability is presumed for the following Veterans who have certain diseases.



Continued on page 4

Compensation Benefits - continued from page 3



The VA presumes that specific disabilities diagnosed in certain Veterans groups were caused by their military service. VA does this because of the unique circumstances of their military service. If one of these conditions is diagnosed in a Veteran in one of these groups, the VA presumes that the circumstances of his or her service caused the condition, and disability compensation can be awarded. These Veterans groups are:

1. Former prisoners of war.
2. Veterans who have certain chronic or tropical diseases that become evident within a specific period of time after discharge from service.
3. Veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation, mustard gas, or Lewisite while in service.
4. Veterans who were exposed to certain herbicides, such as by serving in Vietnam.
5. Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War.

HOW MUCH DOES VA PAY? The amount of basic benefit paid ranges, depending on how disabled you are. Note: You may be paid additional amounts, in certain instances, if:

1. you have very severe disabilities or loss of limb(s).
2. you have a spouse, child(ren), or dependent parent(s).
3. you have a seriously disabled spouse.



How to Apply: Apply online using eBenefits, OR work with an accredited representative or agent, OR go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you, OR call our office for assistance.

Lowe's Expands Support Of The Military With Enhanced Discount



Lowe's Companies, Inc. recently announced it will expand its military discount program by offering 10 percent off personal purchases every day to current and honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The new program uses a MyLowe's card for quick identification, is available both in U.S. stores and on Lowe's.com and offers easy online enrollment. The discount is effective immediately.

"Lowe's was founded by Carl Buchan, an Army Veteran who wanted to make home building and home improvement affordable for returning GIs and their families," said Robert A. Niblock, chairman, president and CEO. "The values and leadership instilled through his military service formed the foundation of our company. Enhancing our discount program honors his memory and the commitment servicemen and women and their families make to our country."

Lowe's has offered discounts to Veterans and military servicemen and women for more than a decade. Current and former servicemen and women can follow these easy steps to enroll in the discount program:

Visit Lowe's.com/military and complete a short personal profile. Check the box to receive a free MyLowe's card.

After the one-time enrollment, U.S. military customers can present their MyLowe's card at the store cash register, scan their card at self-checkout or sign in to their account at Lowe's.com and receive the discount. In addition to simple checkout in stores and online shopping, the MyLowe's card offers free parcel shipping for purchases ordered online with no required minimum purchase. For additional details about the discount, visit Lowe's.com/military.



IMPORTANT DAV VAN INFORMATION

The van runs on certain Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays taking Veterans to appointments at DORN VAMC for their scheduled appointments between 9am and 1pm.



If you need to schedule a ride on the DAV van, please call the office for dates and space availability at 803-785-8400.



WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER VAN DRIVERS!!!

If you are 18 or older or know someone who may be interested in volunteering to drive the DAV van at least one day a month, please contact the office at 803-785-8400.



The U.S. Department of Treasury, in partnership with the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority and SC Housing Corp., has made over \$295 million available to help eligible South Carolina homeowners avoid serious first mortgage delinquency and foreclosures.

Qualifications

SC Help is intended to assist borrowers who are facing first mortgage delinquency or possible foreclosure. There is no household income limit, the property must be an owner occupied primary residence, applicants must have a minimum 24 months homeownership history and applicants do NOT have to be delinquent.

How to Apply

Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically at: www.schelp.com. Applicants without the internet may call 1-855-435-7472, toll free number for assistance. There is NO FEE required at any point during the SC HELP process.

July is National Pickle Month!



August is National Goat Cheese Month!



ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of July & August?



July 1, 1862 - The Bureau of Internal Revenue was established by an Act of Congress.

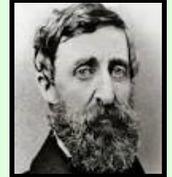
July 3, 1863 - The Battle of Gettysburg ends.



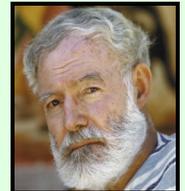
July 10, 1943 - The Allied invasion of Italy began with an attack on the island of Sicily.



July 11, 1817 - American philosopher Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts.

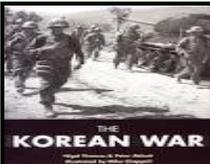


July 19, 1863 - During the Civil War, Union troops made a second attempt to capture Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina. The attack was led by the 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry, commanded by Colonel Robert G. Shaw, who was killed along with half of the 600 men in the regiment. This battle marked the first use of black Union troops in the war.



July 21, 1899 - Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois.

July 27, 1953 - The Korean War ended with the signing of an armistice. The war had lasted just over three years.



July 31, 1790 - The U.S. Patent Office first opened its doors.

August 1, 1779 - "Star-Spangled Banner" author Francis Scott Key was born in Frederick County, Maryland.



August 2, 1776 - Most of the 55 members of the Continental Congress signed the parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence.



August 3, 1492 - Christopher Columbus set sail from Palos, Spain, with three ships, Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria.



August 4, 1901 - Jazz trumpet player Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans, Louisiana.



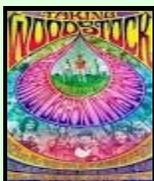
August 5, 1962 - Film star Marilyn Monroe died at age 36 from an overdose of sleeping pills.



August 9, 1974 - At noon, Richard M. Nixon resigned the presidency as a result of the Watergate scandal.



August 15, 1969 - Woodstock began in a field near Yasgur's Farm at Bethel, New York.



August 21, 1959 - Hawaii was admitted to the Union as the 50th state.



August 27, 1910 - Mother Teresa was born (as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu) in Skopje, Yugoslavia.



August 28, 1963 - The March on Washington occurred as over 250,000 people attended a Civil Rights rally in Washington, D.C., at which Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech.



ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE



Veterans who wear or use a qualifying prescribed prosthetic or orthopedic appliance and/or prescription medication for a service connected disability or skin condition may be eligible for an annual clothing allowance. To be eligible, the appliance must wear or tear clothing, or medication must irreparably damage the Veteran's outer-garments. Effective December 16, 2011, Veterans who wear or use more than one qualifying prescribed prosthetic or orthopedic appliance and/or prescription medication for more than one service-connected disability or skin condition may be eligible for more than one clothing allowance. To be eligible for more than one clothing allowance, the qualifying appliances must wear or tear more than one type of article of the Veteran's clothing and/or medications must irreparably damage more than one type of the Veteran's clothing or outer-garment. Appliances such as an artificial limb, rigid brace, wheelchair, crutches or other appliance prescribed for the Veteran's service-connected disability are included. Non-rigid appliances, such as knee, ankle, or elbow sleeves are not included. Any medication prescribed for a service connected skin condition that causes permanent stains or otherwise damages the Veteran's outer garments is included. Clothing such as shirts, blouses, pants, skirts, shorts and similar garments permanently damaged by qualifying appliances and/or medications are considered in clothing allowance decisions. Shoes, hats, scarves, underwear, socks, and similar garments are not included.



The application form for the clothing allowance is VA Form 10-8678 APPLICATION FOR ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE. Clothing allowance claims should be forwarded to the VA Medical Center (VAMC) or Outpatient Clinic (OPC) of jurisdiction, for the attention of the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service.

To be eligible for the 2017 clothing allowance, the Veteran must be found to meet the eligibility requirements as of August 1, 2017. At the end of July 2017, computer generated letter/applications will be issued to Veterans whose records are set to require annual redetermination of clothing allowance eligibility. The 2017 clothing allowance payments for Veterans who have been authorized recurring payments and for others whose awards are input on or before the last processing cycle of August, will be issued from September 1st to October 31st. If you have not received your payment by October 31st, you should contact your local prosthetic representative. Payments authorized after the last processing cycle of August will be made by out-of-system payment processing and should go out about 7 - 10 days after authorization. The 2017 clothing allowance is \$779.62. Veterans who are receiving their compensation payments by direct deposit will receive the clothing allowance payment by direct deposit. Veterans without direct deposit will receive their clothing allowance payments by check to the same address as their compensation payments. A Veteran receiving military retired pay is not required to waive any portion of his/her retired pay to receive the clothing allowance.

CLOSINGS...

County offices will be closed on the following dates:
Tuesday, July 4th - Independence Day



Medical Expense Reports

For Veterans and Surviving Spouses not receiving the maximum Non-Service Connection Pension or Survivor Benefits, the VA may be able to pay you at a higher rate if you identify expenses the VA considers allowable. Medical and dental expenses paid by you may be deducted from the income the VA counts when determining your benefit entitlement. Any medical or dental expense that you paid for a member of your household (self, spouse, child, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed may also be counted. Expenses may be listed on a **VA Form 21P-8416, Medical Expense Report (MER)**, and submitted anytime for the previous year. For example: Medical Expense Reports for 2016 may be submitted anytime during the calendar year of 2017.

You can contact our office at 803-785-8400 to schedule an appointment for us to help you complete your 2016 MER.



Reports

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**; you can chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is also available.

IT'S YOUR CALL



For basic information, questions, and copies of our newsletters, please check out our webpage at www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx

A list of the Veterans Service Organizations in Lexington County are also on our webpage.

Direct Deposit



What is the fastest way to enroll or make a change to your Direct Deposit? The fastest way is to call 1-800-827-1000. They will be able to change it over the phone. To enroll you will need to know your routing and account number along with the amount that is being deposited. If you are changing your direct deposit, you will need to know your old routing and account number along with your new information.

Free counseling for war time Veterans & their dependents

The Columbia Vet Center offers a wide range of services to help you make a successful transition from military to civilian life. You have earned these benefits and there is no cost to you or your family members.

Services provided are:

- Individual & group counseling
- Family counseling for military related
- Bereavement counseling for families
- Military sexual trauma
- Outreach & education
- Substance abuse assessment & referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation & referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues

The Columbia Vet Center is located at 1710-A Richland Street, Columbia. Their telephone number is 803-765-9944.



Job Hunting?

The VA medical center and regional office is hiring Veterans.

Visit USAjobs.com for more information.





Vietnam Veterans Recognition Night

Lexington County Baseball Stadium
Monday, July 3, 2017 – 6:45 PM

Lexington County Blowfish Salute to the Service of Vietnam Veterans

- **Complimentary admission for each Veteran & 1 guest**
 - **Pre-game on the field group recognition**
 - **Group photo opportunity**
 - **“Fallen Comrade” table display with explanation**
 - **Veteran representative interview**
 - **Veteran representative “First Pitch”**
 - **50th anniversary pin presentation**
 - **Color Guard / National Anthem / TAPS**
 - **In Game announcements throughout the game**
 - **Reserved media table on stadium concourse**
 - **Television/Radio/Print media publicity**

**Veterans reserve your complimentary tickets by contacting:
Kyle Calhoun, LC Blowfish Office: 803-254-3474 or by email
at: kyle@blowfishbaseball.com**

VA Automobile Allowance

Service members and Veterans may be eligible for a one-time payment of not more than 20,235.20 toward the purchase of an automobile or other conveyance if you have certain service-connected disabilities. The grant is paid directly to the seller of the automobile and the service member or Veteran may only receive the automobile grant once in his/her lifetime. Certain service members and Veterans may also be eligible for adaptive equipment. Adaptive equipment includes, but is not limited to, power steering, power brakes, power windows, power seats, and special equipment necessary to assist the eligible person into and out of the vehicle. The VA may provide financial assistance in purchasing adaptive equipment more than once. This benefit is payable to either the seller or the Veteran or service member. **Important:** You must have prior VA approval before purchasing an automobile or adaptive equipment.

Eligibility Requirements (Automobile Grant)

1. You must be either a service member who is still on active duty or a Veteran, **AND**
2. You must have one of the following disabilities that are either rated as service-connected or treated as if service-connected under 38 U.S.C 1151 or, for a service member, the result of disease incurred or injury contracted in or aggravated by active duty:
 - A - Loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both feet, **OR**
 - B - Loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both hands, **OR**
 - C - Permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a certain degree, **OR**
 - D - Severe burn injury, **OR**
 - E - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).



Eligibility Requirements (Adaptive Equipment)

1. You must be either a Service member who is still on active duty or a Veteran, **AND**
2. Meet the disability requirements for the automobile grant (see above), **OR**
3. Have ankylosis (immobility of the joint) of one or both knees or hips that VA recognizes as being service-connected or treats as if service-connected under 38 U.S.C. 1151.

Evidence Requirements

To support a claim for automobile allowance, the evidence must show that you are service-connected or are treated as if service-connected under 38 U.S.C 1151 or, for a service member, the result of disease incurred or injury contracted in or aggravated by active duty, for a disability resulting in:

1. The loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both feet, **OR**
2. The loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both hands, **OR**
3. Permanent impairment of vision in both eyes, resulting in central Visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with glasses, **OR**
4. Central Visual acuity that is greater than 20/200, if there is a visual field defect in which your peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual fields subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye, **OR**
5. Severe burn injury: Deep partial thickness or full thickness burns resulting in scar formation that cause contractures and limit motion of one or more extremities or the trunk and preclude the effective operation of an automobile, **OR**
6. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).



To support a claim for adaptive equipment, the evidence must show that you have a disability as shown above, **OR** you have ankylosis of at least one knee or one hip due to service-connected disability.

How to Apply

Complete VA Form 21-4502, "Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment" and submit it to your local VA regional office. If you are entitled to adaptive equipment only (i.e., service connected for ankylosis of knees or hips) you should complete VA Form 10-1394, "Application for Adaptive Equipment - Motor Vehicle" and submit it to your local VA medical center.

VA's Final Rule to Consider Certain Diseases Associated with Exposure to Contaminants in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune as Presumptive for Service Connection



As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' ongoing commitment to provide care to Veterans, the VA published regulations on January 13, 2017, to establish a presumption of service connection for eight conditions associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune. *The rule became effective March 14, 2017.*

Based on evidence from several internationally recognized scientific authorities, including the National Academies of Science, VA determined there is sufficient scientific and medical evidence available to establish a presumption of service connection between exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and the occurrence of eight health conditions.

The eight presumptive diseases are:

- adult leukemia
- aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- bladder cancer
- kidney cancer
- liver cancer
- multiple myeloma
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

The VA will not limit entitlement to active duty military. Rather, the VA will also presume exposure for reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days (cumulative) between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987.

In addition, the VA will establish a presumption that members of the reserves and the National Guard who served at Camp Lejeune during this period and later develop one of the presumptive diseases became disabled during the relevant period of service for purposes of establishing active military service for benefit purposes.



Presumptive service connection for a disease alleged to have been caused by contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune requires medical evidence of a current disease on the presumptive list and evidence from military records or other official service department records of service at Camp Lejeune during the period of contamination.

"It is impossible to govern a nation without God and the Bible."

- George Washington



Happenings Around Lexington County

For the Months of July and August

Monday, May 29th
through
Friday, August 11th

Lexington Blowfish Baseball Season

Lexington County Baseball Stadium; Games start at 7:05pm
For more information, visit their website at
goblowfishbaseball.com.



Saturday, July 1st
through
Friday, August 25th

Guided Purple Martin Tours on Lake Murray

7 to 9pm from Jake's Landing
For more information call (803) 359-9091.



Saturday, July 1st

Lake Murray Boat Parade

Parade begins @ 12 noon at Bombing Island heading
towards the dam. For more information call (803) 781-5940.



Saturday, July 1st

Lake Murray Fireworks display

Starts at dusk (approximately 9:15pm)
Fireworks will be set off from two great locations: Spence Island and
Dreher Island State Park. Patriotic music will be played on 98.5. The
best places to view the fireworks are Dreher Island State Park and
both parks at the dam.



Monday, July 3rd

Star Spangled Symphonic Salute

Saluda Shoals Park
Concert starts @ 8pm - free admission
For more information call (803) 772-1228.



Monday, July 3rd
through
Tuesday, July 4th

Lexington County Blowfish Baseball Games

Games start @ 7:05pm—fireworks after each game.
July 3rd @ 6:45pm is Vietnam Veterans Recognition Night.
For more information and tickets go to
www.goblowfishbaseball.com.



Tuesday, July 4th

59th Lexington County Peach Festival

Gilbert, South Carolina
Parade starts @ 9:30am; Fireworks start @ 10pm
For more information go to
www.lexingtoncountypeachfestival.com.



Friday, July 14th
through
Friday, August 11th

Twilight in the Garden

Waterfall Junction @ Riverbanks Zoo
Starts @ 6pm - Fridays only
For more information go to www.riverbanks.org.



Friday, August 4th

Brew at the Zoo @ Riverbanks Zoo

7 to 9:30pm
For more information go to
www.riverbanks.org/brew-at-the-zoo.



Friday, August 11th
through
Saturday, August 12th

35th SC Peanut Party in Pelion

Pelion, South Carolina
For more information go to
www.scpelionpeanutparty.com.



Monday, August 21st

Solar 17 @ Lake Murray

Lake Murray will have the largest viewing area. This event will take
place at both park sites on either side of the Lake Murray Dam.
For more information call (803) 791-5940.



The History of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence



With the Revolutionary War in full swing, the movement for independence from Britain had grown, and delegates of the Continental Congress were faced with a vote on the issue. On June 7, the Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee introduced a motion calling for the colonies' independence before the Continental Congress when it met at the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall) in Philadelphia. Amid heated debate, Congress postponed the vote on Lee's resolution and called a recess for several weeks. Before departing, however, the delegates also appointed a five-man committee—including Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania and Robert R. Livingston of New York—to draft a formal statement justifying the break with Great Britain.

Jefferson had earned a reputation as an eloquent voice for the patriotic cause after his 1774 publication of "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," and he was given the task of producing a draft of what would become the Declaration of Independence. Considering Congress's busy schedule, Jefferson probably had limited time for writing over the next seventeen days, and likely wrote the draft quickly. As Jefferson drafted it, the Declaration of Independence was divided into five sections, including an introduction, a preamble, a body (divided into two sections) and a conclusion. In general terms, the introduction effectively stated that seeking independence from Britain had become "necessary" for the colonies.

The Continental Congress reconvened on July 1, and the following day 12 of the 13 colonies adopted Lee's resolution for independence. The process of consideration and revision of Jefferson's declaration continued on July 3 and into the late morning of July 4, during which Congress deleted and revised some one-fifth of its text. Congress officially adopted the Declaration of Independence later on July 4 when they voted. The signatures of the delegates were not needed to make it official. The handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence that was signed by Congress is dated July 4, 1776. The signatures of fifty-six delegates are affixed; however, the exact date when each person signed it has long been the subject of debate. The best-known version of the Declaration, a signed copy that is popularly regarded as the official document, is displayed at the National Archives in Washington, DC. This engrossed copy was ordered by Congress on July 19, and signed primarily on August 2.



The first and most famous signature on the engrossed copy was that of John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress. Two future presidents (Thomas Jefferson and John Adams) and a father and great-grandfather of two other presidents (Benjamin Harrison) were among the signatories. Edward Rutledge (age 26) was the youngest signer, and Benjamin Franklin (age 70) was the oldest signer.

As the first formal statement by a nation's people asserting their right to choose their own government, the Declaration of Independence became a significant landmark in the history of democracy. In addition to its importance in the fate of the fledgling American nation, it also exerted a tremendous influence outside the United States, most memorably in France during the French Revolution. Together with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence can be counted as one of the three essential founding documents of the United States government.

Makes Wait Times for Patients Transparent for Veterans

New online tool first of its kind

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking unprecedented steps to increase transparency. The VA has launched a new Access and Quality Tool that provides Veterans with an easy-to-use, easy-to-understand way of accessing patient wait time and quality of care data. This tool not only provides Veterans with more information about VA services, it increases accountability and ensures the VA is held to a higher standard.

“Veterans must have access to information that is clear and understandable to make informed decisions about their health care,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin. “No other health-care system in the country releases this type of information on wait times. This allows Veterans to see how VA is performing.”

The tool allows Veterans to access the average times patients are waiting to be seen in their local area; how Veterans describe their experiences scheduling primary- and specialty-care appointments at specific VA facilities; timeliness of appointments for care needed right away; and the quality of health care delivered at VA medical centers compared with local private-sector hospitals. The Access and Quality Tool is the most transparent and easy to understand wait time and quality data website in the health-care industry.

“This tool is another example of VA leading the way,” said Acting Under Secretary for Health Dr. Poonam Alaigh. “No one in the private sector publishes data this way. This tool will instill a spirit of competition and encourage our medical facilities to proactively address access and quality issues while empowering Veterans to make choices according to what works best for them and their families.”

The VA will continue to make improvements to this tool based on the feedback it receives from Veterans. The Access and Quality Tool can be found at www.accesstocare.va.gov.

County Council Needs You!

Veterans are still needed to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at County Council meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. County Council meetings start at 4:30pm, so please be present around 4:15pm.



Contact the office at 803-785-8400, if you are interested.

The office would like to thank David Pelley, Alan Shoemaker, David Kerr and Jerome Butler. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of May and June.

THANKS

Summer Word Search

S	U	N	F	Z	H	P	A	S
V	A	C	A	T	I	O	N	W
S	W	O	M	F	H	O	T	I
U	T	F	I	A	Q	L	L	M
M	J	U	L	J	U	N	E	M
M	U	N	Y	A	R	H	S	I
E	L	A	U	G	U	S	T	N
R	Y	M	B	E	A	C	H	G

Find these words.

family
summer
vacation

sun
hot
fun

beach
pool
swimming

June
July
August

Lexington County Veterans Group



All Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.

The Veterans group also participates in various social activities such as group lunches, group dinners with wives/significant other, boat trips on Lake Murray, participation in the Lexington County Veterans parade and other general group tours.

Due to the construction in the building, the group is currently meeting off site at different locations. Please check their website for the location of the meeting for that week.



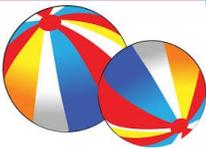
For further information, please visit their website at lex-coveteransgroup.com or contact our office at 803-785-8400.



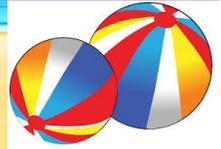
Dang-it Dolls Workshops

There will be no workshops in July or August.

The next meeting will be on Saturday, September 9th.



BEACH TIME



Information on VA home Loans and how to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility

Any Veteran who wants to use their VA loan guaranty benefit must have a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). The Veteran's lender needs the COE in order to have the loan guaranty insured.

Current process: There are three ways to apply for a COE

1. The easiest and quickest is to apply through eBenefits. It takes just a few minutes and generally can be printed out by the Veteran.
2. Alternatively and equally simple, the Veteran's lender can gather the required information and apply electronically through a VA hosted loan guaranty website.
3. Last option (if the first two are not possible) is for the Veteran to complete and sign a paper application, then mail it by U.S. Post to their Regional Loan Center of jurisdiction.

For more information on VA home loans, call 1-888-768-2132.

STAYING COOL WHEN IT IS HOT!!!

When we are feeling warm/hot, we perspire. The perspiration evaporates and that allows our bodies to cool. If our bodies do not cool correctly or cool enough, we can feel and become ill. Here are some things we can do to help stay cool.

1. **Dress for it.** Wear lightweight, loose-fitting and light colored clothing. Wear a hat with a brim or use an umbrella to help block out the sun.
2. **Protect yourself.** Do not get too much sun. Wear sunscreen. Wear sunglasses. Avoid being outdoors during the peak sun hours 10 am - 4 pm.
3. **Drink up.** That would be plenty of water. Drink even when you do not feel thirsty. Water or 'sports' drinks are beneficial. Do not drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages in the warm weather - they can cause dehydration.
4. **Eat small meals and eat more often.** Eat cool foods such as salads. Avoid hot and heavy foods. Try to limit high protein foods. These can increase your metabolic (internal body) heat.
5. **Slow down and take it easy.** Try to avoid strenuous activity. If that is not possible, then do it during the coolest part of the day, before 10AM or after 4PM.
6. **Take a break.** Take regular breaks in the shade or cool area when it is hot.
7. **Stay indoors.** When possible, stay indoors and spend more time in air conditioned places. Find a cooling center. Move your exercise indoors. Walk the air conditioned malls.
8. **Keep the shades down and blinds closed.** Blocking out the sunlight will keep indoor temperatures cooler. Do a minimum of cooking. Use the oven only if absolutely necessary.
9. **If you take medications, talk to your pharmacist.** Ask if you need to be extra careful during the warm weather.



New VA Online Tool Helps Veterans Learn About and Compare Effective PTSD Treatments

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new online tool this week that will help Veterans compare various treatment options for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The [PTSD Treatment Decision Aid](#) is a free, interactive online tool that helps educate patients about effective treatment options for PTSD and encourages them to participate actively in decisions about their care. The tool includes information about evidence-based PTSD treatments, such as talk therapy and prescription medication options. It also includes useful information designed for people who have served in the military. Users can watch videos of providers explaining different treatment options and what to expect with those treatments, and hear from Veterans who have benefited from them.

Veterans can also build a chart to compare the treatments they prefer and print a personalized summary to share with their providers. All personal information is erased once the tool is closed to protect users' privacy. According to VA findings, approximately eight of every 100 people will experience PTSD at some point in their lifetimes, and almost 620,000 of the Veterans treated by VA have a diagnosis of PTSD.

To learn more about PTSD visit the National Center for PTSD website at ptsd.va.gov. Health-care providers who have questions about the PTSD Treatment Decision Aid or other free resources can call the PTSD Consultation Program at 866-948-7880 or email them at PTSDconsult@va.gov.

POST
TRAUMATIC
STRESS
DISORDER

List of Common Allowable (Recurring) Medical Expenses for an Initial Claim Application

The list below shows recurring VA allowable medical expenses for the initial claim application for pension benefits. The list is not all-inclusive and must be unreimbursed by insurance. They must be paid for by the applicant and are used to reduce outside income that exceeds the VA income limit.

1. Medicare Part B Premiums
2. Medicare Part D Premiums
3. Insurance Premiums for supplemental medical insurance
4. Home Health Services
5. Assisted Living Facility Services
6. Nursing Home Services
7. Long Term Care Insurance
8. Medical Monitoring Program (like Life Alert)



There is a new number to call for billing issues through the VAMC for any private health care that was fee based out. That number is 1-877-881-7618 9am to 5pm EST.



**Schools start back in August.
Watch out for the children and buses.**



Department of Defense Announces New Outreach Efforts Regarding Discharges and Military Records

The Department of Defense (DOD) has announced a renewed effort to ensure Veterans are aware of the opportunity to have their discharges and military records reviewed. Through enhanced public outreach; engagement with Veterans' service organizations, military service organizations, and other outside groups; as well as direct outreach to individual Veterans, the DOD encourages all Veterans who believe they have experienced an error or injustice to request relief from their service's Board for Correction of Military/Naval Records or Discharge Review Board.

With this announcement, the DOD is reaffirming its intention to review and potentially upgrade the discharge status of all individuals that are eligible and that apply.

In the past few years, the DOD has issued guidance for consideration of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as the repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and its predecessor policies. Additionally, supplemental guidance for separations involving victims of sexual assault is currently being considered. The DOD is reviewing and consolidating all of the related policies to reinforce the DOD's commitment to ensuring fair and equitable review of separations for all Veterans. Whether the discharge or other correction is the result of PTSD, sexual orientation, sexual assault, or some other consideration, the DOD is committed to rectifying errors or injustices and treating all Veterans with dignity and respect.

Veterans are encouraged to apply for review if they desire a correction to their service record or believe their discharge was unjust, erroneous, or warrants an upgrade.



DID YOU KNOW...

The VAMC Dorn now has a food pantry. Any Veteran in need may participate in the program. He or she must contact Voluntary Services and they will direct you to the food pantry. To contact Voluntary Services call (803) 776-4000 extension 6780.

OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES



Batesburg/Leesville Outreach is the 2nd Friday of the month at the Batesburg/Leesville Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



Chapin Outreach is the 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



Gaston/Swansea Outreach is the 1st Thursday of the month at the Gaston Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

*Appointments are strongly encouraged.
Call the office at 803-785-8400
to schedule a time.*



Care and Benefits for Veterans Strengthened by \$186.5 Billion VA Budget

In his fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget, President Trump is proposing \$186.5 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The budget request will ensure the nation's Veterans receive high-quality health care and timely access to benefits and services. The budget also supports the continued transformation of the VA to rebuild the full trust of Veterans as a premier provider of choice for their services and benefits. This year's budget request includes 82 legislative proposals that will help enable the department to better serve Veterans. The FY 2018 budget includes \$82.1 billion in discretionary funding, largely for health care, and \$104.3 billion in mandatory funding for benefit programs, such as disability compensation and pensions, and for continuation of the Veterans Choice Program (Choice Program). The discretionary budget request is \$4.3 billion (5.5%) above the 2017 enacted level, including nearly \$3.3 billion in medical care collections from health insurers and Veteran copayments. The budget also requests \$74 billion, including collections, for the 2019 advance appropriations for medical care, an increase of \$1.7 billion and 2.4% above the 2018 medical care budget request. The request includes \$107.7 billion in 2019 mandatory advance appropriations for Compensation and Pensions; Readjustment Benefits; and Veterans Insurance and Indemnities benefits programs in the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).



2017 LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS PARADE APPLICATION
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2017 @ 3:00PM

(RAIN DATE OF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH)

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR 15TH YEAR

Grand Marshals will be the Palmetto Base United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.

NO ENTRY FEE, SIGN UP DUE BY OCTOBER 21st, PLEASE

(IF YOU MISS THE DEADLINE GIVE ME A CALL, EVERYONE IS WELCOME IN THIS PARADE)

ALL MARCHING BANDS AND ROTC GROUPS WILL MEET IN THE EMPTY PARKING LOTS OF BUSINESSES IN THE BUTLER STREET AND MAIN STREET AREA. PLEASE USE CAUTION! PLEASE DROP OFF ALL MEMBERS AND YOU CAN PARK AT THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING PARKING LOT FOR PICK UP. PLEASE, PLEASE DO NOT TAKE UP SPACES AT MCDONALD'S FOR PARKING. PARADE ROUTE WILL LINE UP AT HAYGOOD AND WEST BUTLER STREET, ENTER MAIN STREET TAKE A LEFT, GO DOWN MAIN STREET, TURN RIGHT ON SOUTH LAKE DRIVE AND THEN LEFT, ENDING AT THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING PARKING LOT.

Name & Description of Entry: _____

Special Request: _____

Entry Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (W) _____ (H) _____

Email address: _____ Fax : _____

Mail Applications To:

Lexington County Veterans Parade
Attn: Sharon Willis
212 South Lake Drive Ste 302
Lexington SC 29072
swillis@lex-co.com

For More Information Contact:

Lexington Veterans Affairs Office 803-785-8400
Sharon Willis @ 803-785-1454
Cell # 803-237-9617
Fax # 803-785-8300

Applications can also be found on the Lexington County VA website.

EVERYTHING WILL BE DONE TO PLACE YOU IN THE LINEUP THAT SHOWCASES YOUR ORGANIZATION AT THE BEST POSSIBLE SPOT. ONCE THE LINEUP FOR THE PARADE HAS BEEN DETERMINED YOU WILL RECEIVE A MAP AND LOCATION FOR YOUR PLACE IN THE PARADE. PLEASE ENTER THE PARADE LINE UP ROUTE FROM SOUTH CHURCH AND GO UP BUTLER STREET. PLEASE DO NOT ENTER FROM COLUMBIA AVENUE OR MAIN. TURNING FLOATS AND TRAILERS AROUND IS VERY DIFFICULT. HAYGOOD STREET MUST BE KEPT OPEN FOR THE LINEUP. MAIN STREET WILL BE CLOSED DOWN AT 2:45 SO PLEASE BE AT YOUR LOCATION BY 2:30.

(A CEREMONY WILL BE HELD AT THE VETERANS MONUMENT FOLLOWING THE PARADE.)

**ALL OF THE VETERANS APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT
AND
THEY THANK YOU VERY MUCH.**

NEED A FLOAT? CONTACT KIRBY FLOATS @ 803-359-3134.
(DISCOUNTS GIVEN TO VETERANS)

HELP NEEDED

Help is needed at Lexington Interfaith Community Services (LICS). They are in particular need for folks to assist at the donation door. They have staff members who would work with them and supervise.

This position entails customer service by greeting community members as they drive up to donate items, assisting them with carrying in their items, possibly giving receipts, and then sorting the items. It is physical work, but they can work around any slight limitations. Lifting is often required and they may also be asked to load items onto a truck.

If you are interested, contact: Kitti Clayton, Volunteer Coordinator, at 803-957-6656 ext: 227.



News Tidbits from the VA

The Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) at Dorn VAMC has a total of eight buses and five full time drivers. They are hoping to hire more drivers in the future.



VTS provides transportation for Veterans to their appointments at Dorn within a 25 mile radius of the campus. For more information on this service call them at 803-776-4000 ext. 6398 or ext.4958.



There is a new extension for Patient Advocates at Dorn VAMC. The new extension is ext. 6937. To reach a patient advocate call 803-776-4000 ext. 6937. The caller would need to leave a voicemail if the intake person is on the line or with someone. The voicemail will be returned within 48 hours.

When you use My HealtheVet, you're in good company. Veterans and caregivers use this to manage their health care, refill prescriptions, exchange secure messages and even learn about different conditions and ailments.



Check out the number of secure messages sent, the number of My HealtheVet users and even the number of refills requested and more on the updated My HealtheVet date page. Their website is www.myhealth.va.gov/webusers.



Veterans at over 100 VAMCs across the country are now able to use the new Veteran Appointment Request (VAR) App to request or schedule certain appointments online. VAR is a web application that is also accessible via smartphones, tablets and desktops. Visit mobile.va.gov/appstore to find the app.

As you get older, you are at greater risk for certain illness and disease. While you can't prevent aging, you can help detect and prevent illness and diseases early on.



Immunizations can help you fight off illnesses like the flu and whooping cough. Talking with your health care provider about what immunizations and screening are right for you is important to your health. Learn more at myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/screening and immunizations.

About Our Office



This office is employed by Lexington County not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We

provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for VA medical care. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: service connected disabilities and non-service connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits but can assist with some of these forms.

The VA has a website anyone can access for all VA questions, SEP user guides, regulations, policies, laws and any other VA resources. The website is:
www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov

Website



welcome home **VETERANS**

Sept. 21-23 *Festival* 2017

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Call **828-497-9204** for Reservations

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\$40 PER PERSON**

**DAILY TICKET
\$25 PER PERSON**

**50/50 DRAWING
DAILY**

20% DISCOUNT ON CAMPING with 3 DAY TICKETS

**OPEN
TO THE
PUBLIC**

**reserve
NOW!**

**HAPPY HOLIDAY
CAMPGROUND
CHEROKEE, NC**



CAR SHOW

CASINO

ENTERTAINMENT

Featured Medal: Achievement Medal

The Achievement Medal is a military decoration of the United States military. The Achievement Medal was first proposed as a means to recognize the contributions of junior officers and enlisted personnel who were not eligible to receive the higher Commendation Medal or the Meritorious Service Medal.

Each military service issues its own version of the Achievement Medal, with a fifth version authorized by the Department of Defense for joint military activity. The Achievement Medal is awarded for outstanding achievement or meritorious service not of a nature that would otherwise warrant awarding the Commendation Medal. Since the Achievement Medal is designated as an award solely for junior personnel, it is generally only awarded to officers in the pay grade of O-4 and below and enlisted personnel below the grade of E-7. Award authority rests with local commanders, granting a broad discretion of when and for what action the Achievement Medal may be awarded.



Picture of Achievement Medal and ribbons for the Joint Service, Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps and Coast Guard



**July is Juvenile
Arthritis
Awareness
Month!**

**August is
Immunization
Awareness
Month!**



Coming in the Next Issue...

Special Monthly Compensation; Vocational rehab; & on the job training/work study.