



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

May/June 2017



Lexington, SC.

YOUR VA OFFICE STAFF

ED LUNDEEN

ELUNDEEN@LEX-CO.COM
DIRECTOR

JENNIFER HENDRIX

JHENDRIX@LEX-CO.COM
VETERANS AFFAIRS SUPERVISOR
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

KATHY DEBERRY

KDEBERRY@LEX-CO.COM
VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS COUNSELOR

JENNIFER PARLER

JPARLER@LEX-CO.COM
VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS COUNSELOR

DANA FORRESTER

DFORRESTER@LEX-CO.COM
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

OFFICE EMAIL ADDRESS

VETERANSAFFAIRS@LEX-CO.COM

605 WEST MAIN STREET
SUITE 101
LEXINGTON, S.C. 29072
8am to 5pm
Monday through Friday

TELEPHONE: (803) 785-8400
FAX: (803) 785-0115

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office: 785-8400
From Batesburg/Leesville: 332-8400
From Chapin: 941-0231

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**At A Glance Calendar
May/June**

For a list of events in Lexington County for May and June

See page 15 - Happenings Around Lexington County

Weekly on Tuesdays in May

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, May 4th

Gaston Outreach

Friday, May 5th

American Legion Revitalization 10am - 2pm AL Post 6, Columbia

Saturday, May 6th

American Legion Revitalization 10am - 2pm AL Post 6, Columbia

Tuesday, May 9th

County Council Meeting

Wednesday, May 10th

Confederate Memorial Day
County Offices Closed

Saturday, May 13th

Dang-it Doll Workshop
For more information see page 18
St. Andrews Presbyterian Church
Veterans Fair 10am - 2pm

Sunday, May 14th

Mother's Day

Friday, May 19th

Operation Stand Down - See flyer on page 15

Saturday, May 20th

Armed Forces Day
Informational Seminar at Thompson Funeral Home—see flyer on page 13

Tuesday, May 23rd

County Council Meeting

Monday, May 29th

Memorial Day
See page 21 for list of activities
County Offices Closed

Weekly on Tuesdays in June

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, June 1st

Gaston Outreach

Friday, June 2nd

Chapin Outreach
Ft. Jackson 100th Anniversary
See page 8 for more information

Friday, June 9th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Saturday, June 10th through Saturday, June 17th

NACVSO Conference in CA - Director out/office on limited staff

Tuesday, June 13

County Council Meeting

Wednesday, June 14th

Flag Day

Sunday, June 18th

Father's Day

Wednesday, June 21st

Summer Begins

Tuesday, June 27th

County Council Meeting

Purple—Holidays/Special Days
Blue—Outreach dates
Red—County Offices Closed,
No van scheduled and Special Notices
Black—Director's appearances in the County

Brown—County Council Meetings
Pink—Special Events throughout the County
Orange—Director Out of Office
Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings

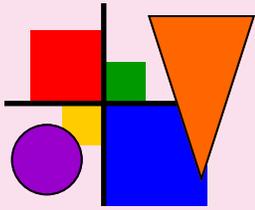
**From the
Director...**

As summer approaches South Carolina and the heat intensifies, let us be mindful of an important day in late May. A day the country sets aside to honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Memorial Day helps us to reflect on the price of freedom and to honor and remember that sacrifice. Many ceremonies and commemoration services will be held throughout the Nation. Please check local newspapers for activities in the Midlands. Another important day is June 14, Flag Day, where Old Glory is celebrated and honored. Fort Jackson usually conducts a ceremony to honor both of these days.

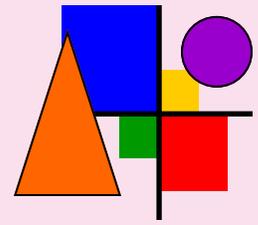
The main building where our office is located is under heavy renovation and although the noise of saws, drills and other construction equipment is distracting, it is a pleasant noise for us because when it is complete, we will be moving to the front of the building in a new office complex. Slated for completion later this summer, we will have all of the modern things an office complex is expected to have. This will enable us to better serve our Veterans and their survivors.

Please remember and honor Memorial Day!





National Guard & Reservists Benefits



Eligibility for VA Benefits

Reservists who serve on active duty establish Veteran status and may be eligible for the full-range of VA benefits, depending on the length of active military service and a discharge or release from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable. In addition, reservists not activated may qualify for some VA benefits.

National Guard members can establish eligibility for VA benefits if activated for federal service during a period of war or domestic emergency. Activation for other than federal service does not qualify guard members for all VA benefits. Claims for VA benefits based on federal service filed by members of the National Guard should include a copy of the military orders, presidential proclamation or executive order that clearly demonstrates the federal nature of the service.

Qualifying for VA Health Care

Effective Jan. 28, 2008, Veterans discharged from active duty on or after Jan. 28, 2003, are eligible for enhanced enrollment placement into Priority Group 6 (unless eligible for higher Priority Group placement) for 5 years post discharge. Veterans with combat service after Nov. 11, 1998, who were discharged from active duty before Jan. 28, 2003, and who apply for enrollment on or after Jan. 28, 2008, are eligible for this enhanced enrollment benefit through Jan. 27, 2011.

Activated reservists and members of the National Guard are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, and, have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Veterans who enroll with VA under this “Combat Veteran” authority will retain enrollment eligibility even after their five-year post discharge period ends. At the end of their post discharge period, VA will reassess the Veteran’s information (including all applicable eligibility factors) and make a new enrollment decision. For additional information, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

Disability Benefits

VA pays monthly compensation benefits for disabilities incurred or aggravated during active duty and active duty for training as a result of injury or disease, and for disabilities due to injury, heart attack, or stroke that occurred during inactive duty training.

Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve

Members of reserve elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, and members of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard, may be entitled to up to 36 months of educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) – Selected Reserve. To be eligible, the participant must:

- Have a six-year obligation in the Selected Reserve or National Guard signed after June 30, 1985, or, if an officer, agree to serve six years in addition to the original obligation.
- Complete initial active duty for training.
- Have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate before applying for benefits.
- Remain in good standing in a Selected Reserve or National Guard unit.

Reserve components determine eligibility for benefits. VA does not make decisions about eligibility and cannot make payments until the reserve component has determined eligibility and notified VA.

Period of Eligibility: Benefits generally end the day a reservist or National Guard member separates from the military. Additionally, if in the Selected Reserve and called to active duty, VA can generally extend the eligibility period by the length of time on active duty plus four months for each period of active duty. Once this extension is granted, it will not be taken away if you leave the Selected Reserve.

Eligible members separated because of unit deactivation, a disability that was not caused by misconduct, or otherwise involuntarily separated during Oct. 1, 1991, through Dec. 31, 2001, have 14 years after their eligibility date to use benefits. Similarly, members involuntarily separated from the Selected Reserve due to a deactivation of their unit between Oct. 1, 2007, and Sept. 30, 2014, may receive a 14-year period of eligibility. Payments: The rate for full-time training effective Oct. 1, 2010, is \$337 a month for 36 months. Part-time benefits are reduced proportionately. For complete current rates, visit www.gibill.va.gov/. DOD may make additional contributions.

Continued on page 4

National Guard and Reservists Benefits - continued from page 3

Training: Participants may pursue training at a college or university, or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; State licensure and certification; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training; correspondence courses; independent study programs; flight training; entrepreneurship training; remedial, deficiency or refresher courses needed to complete a program of study; or preparatory courses for tests required or used for admission to an institution of higher learning or graduate school. Accelerated payments for certain high-cost programs are authorized effective Jan. 28, 2008.

Work-Study: Participants who train at the three-quarter or full-time rate may be eligible for a work-study program in which they work for VA and receive hourly wages. Students under the work-study program must be supervised by a VA employee and all duties performed must relate to VA. The types of work allowed include: • VA paperwork processing at schools or other training facilities. • Assistance with patient care at VA hospitals or domiciliary care facilities. • Work at national or state Veterans' cemeteries. • Various jobs within any VA regional office. • Other VA-approved activities.

***MGIB** – Selected Reserve work-study students may also assist with an activity relating to the administration of this education benefit at DOD, Coast Guard, or National Guard facilities.

Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)

This program provides educational assistance to members of National Guard and reserve components – Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) – who are called or ordered to active duty service in response to a war or national emergency was declared by the President or Congress. Visit www.gibill.va.gov for more information.

Eligibility: Eligibility is determined by DOD or the Department of Homeland Security. Generally, a service member who serves on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, for at least 90 consecutive days or accumulates a total of three or more of years of service is eligible.

Payments: Reserve or National Guard members whose eligibility is based upon continuous service receive a payment rate based upon their number of continuous days on active duty. Members who qualify after the accumulation of three or more years aggregate active duty service receive the full payment allowable.

Reserve Educational Assistance Rates

| Active Duty, Reserves and National Guard members | Monthly Payment Rate for Full-Time Students |
|---|--|
| 90 days but less than one year | \$570.40 |
| One year but less than two years | \$855.60 |
| Two or more continuous years | \$1,140.80 |

*Effective October 1, 2010

Training: Participants may pursue training at a college or university, or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; state licensure and certification courses; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training; correspondence courses; independent study programs; flight training; entrepreneurship training; remedial, deficiency, or refresher courses needed to complete a program of study; or preparatory courses for tests required or used for admission to an institution of higher learning or graduate school. Accelerated payments for certain high-cost programs are authorized.

Period of Eligibility: Prior to Jan. 28, 2008, members of the Selected Reserve called to active duty were eligible as long as they continued to serve in the Selected Reserve. They lost eligibility if they went into the Inactive Ready Reserve (IRR). Members of the IRR called to active duty were eligible as long as they stayed in the IRR or Selected Reserve.

Effective Jan. 28, 2008, members who are called up from the Selected Reserve, complete their REAP-qualifying period of active duty service, and then return to the Selected Reserve for the remainder of their service contract, have 10 years to use their benefits after separation.

In addition, members who are called up from the IRR or Inactive National Guard (ING), complete their REAP-qualifying period of active duty service, and then enter the Selected Reserve to complete their service contract, have 10 years to use their benefits after separation.

Continued on page 5

National Guard and Reservists Benefits - continued from page 4

Work-Study Program: Reserve Education Assistance Program students in the work-study program may also assist with an activity relating to the administration of this education benefit at DOD, Coast Guard, or National Guard facilities.

Home Loan Guaranty

National Guard members and reservists are eligible for a VA home loan if they have completed at least six years of honorable service, are mobilized for active duty service for a period of at least 90 days, or are discharged because of a service-connected disability.

Reservists who do not qualify for VA housing loan benefits may be eligible for loans on favorable terms insured by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), part of HUD.

Life Insurance

National Guard members and reservists are eligible to receive Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI), Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI), and Family Service members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI). They may also be eligible for SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection if severely injured and suffering a qualifying loss, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance if they receive a service-connected disability rating from VA, and Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance if approved for a Specially Adapted Housing Grant.

Burial and Memorial Benefits

VA provides a burial flag to memorialize members or former members of the Selected Reserve who served their initial obligation, or were discharged for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, or died while a member of the Selected Reserve.

Re-Employment Rights

A person who left a civilian job to enter active duty in the armed forces is entitled to return to the job after discharge or release from active duty if they: • Gave advance notice of military service to the employer. • Did not exceed five years cumulative absence from the civilian job (with some exceptions). • Submitted a timely application for re-employment. • Did not receive a dishonorable or other punitive discharge.

The law calls for a returning Veteran to be placed in the job as if he/she had never left, including benefits based on seniority such as pensions, pay increases and promotions. The law also prohibits discrimination in hiring, promotion or other advantages of employment on the basis of military service. Veterans seeking re-employment should apply, verbally or in writing, to the company's hiring official and keep a record of their application. If problems arise, contact the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in the state of the employer.

Federal employees not properly re-employed may appeal directly to the Merit Systems Protection Board. Non-federal employees may file complaints in U.S. District Court. For information, visit www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/main.htm.

National Guard and VA Partnership to Assist Veterans

The Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) program within the National Guard (NG) Office of Warrior Support places a NG/VA trained expert at the NG Headquarters in each of the 50 states and PR, GU, VI and District of Columbia, as an advocate for Guard members and their families as well as other geographically dispersed military members and families. In collaboration with state directors of Veterans Affairs and other state and local coalition partners, the Transition Assistance Advisor provides enrollment, referrals and facilitates access for Veterans through the overwhelming maze of programs, with the compassion of someone who knows what it's like to transition from Guard to active duty and to civilian status.

Transition Assistance Advisors receive annual training by VA experts in VA health care and benefits to assist Guard members and their families' to access to VA health care facilities and TRICARE facilities in their network. To find a local Transition Assistance Advisor call 1 877 577-6691 or go to www.taapmo.com/TAAprogram.htm.

Outreach for OEF/OIF (New Dawn) Veterans

VA's OEF/OIF New Dawn Outreach Teams focus on improving outreach to members of the National Guard and Reserve by engaging Guard members throughout the deployment cycle with targeted messages and face-to-face encounters with VA staff. These Teams are located at VA Medical Centers to help ease the transition from military to civilian life. Cost-free VA health care and medications may be provided for conditions potentially related to combat service, including full access to VA's medical benefits package.



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.

May is National Blood Pressure Month!



June is National Hunger Awareness Month!



ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of May and June?



May 5, 1961 - Alan Shepard became the first American in space.



May 6, 1937 - The German airship, the Hindenburg, burst into flames following a trans-Atlantic voyage.



May 7, 1915 - The British passenger ship, the *Lusitania*, was torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. The attack hastened neutral America's entry into World War I.



May 10, 1869 - The newly constructed tracks of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways were first linked at Promontory Point, Utah, with a golden spike.



May 14, 1607 - The first permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown, Virginia.



May 17, 1875 - The first Kentucky Derby horse race took place at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky.



May 18, 1980 - Mount St. Helens volcano erupted in southwestern Washington State.

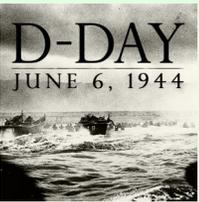


May 21, 1881 - The American Red Cross was founded by Clara Barton.

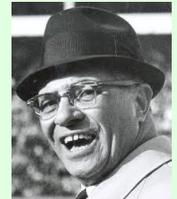


May 27, 1937 - In San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge was opened.

June 4, 1989 - The Chinese government ordered its troops to open fire on unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China.



June 6, 1944 - D-Day, began as Allied forces landed in Normandy, France.



June 11, 1923 - American football coach Vince Lombardi was born in Brooklyn, New York.

June 14, 1777 - John Adams introduced a resolution before Congress mandating a United States flag. This anniversary is celebrated each year in the U.S. as Flag Day.



June 18, 1983 - Dr. Sally Ride, became the first American woman in space.



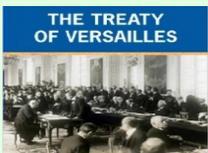
June 20, 1782 - The U.S. Congress officially adopted the Great Seal of the United States of America.



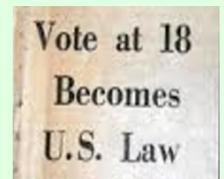
June 25, 1876 - General George A. Custer attacked an encampment of Sioux Indians near Little Bighorn River in Montana. This became known as 'Custer's Last Stand'.



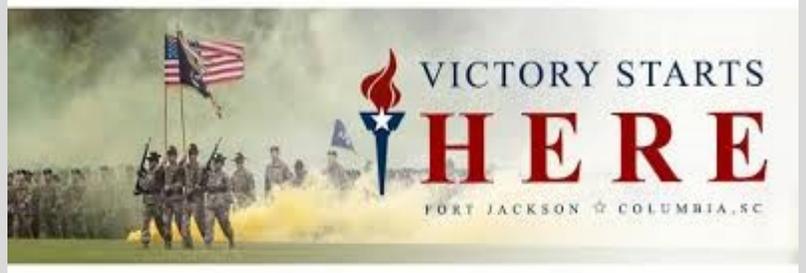
June 28, 1919 - The signing of the Treaty of Versailles formally ended World War I.



June 30, 1971 - The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted, granting the right to vote in all federal, state and local elections to American citizens 18 years or older.



Fort Jackson Centennial Celebration



On June 2, 1917 Congress approved the War Department plan to place a training center near Columbia, S.C. This installation was named for Andrew Jackson, a United States Army General and seventh President of the United States of America. On June 22, 1917 one hundred and ten men from Company E, 1st Regiment, South Carolina Infantry arrived to serve as camp guard. Construction for the installation began on June 25, 1917 and was completed on December 22 of that same year.

Fort Jackson, which began as a World War I training base, will have trained an estimated five million soldiers who have proudly served during WWI, WWII, Korea, the Cold War, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. As the nation's largest basic combat training facility, Fort Jackson is the largest and most active Initial Entry Training Center in the U.S. Army, training 50 percent of all soldiers and 60 percent of the women entering the Army each year.

On June 2, 2017, Fort Jackson, SC will commemorate 100 years of "Training the Best Soldiers in the World" since it started training soldiers to defend our Nation and the American Way of Life. They will commemorate their 100-year anniversary by celebrating their legacy and the continuous support they receive from the surrounding Midlands Community.

Everyone is welcome to join the party in order to celebrate the 100th birthday of Fort Jackson! The party starts at 11:30 AM at Robert B Solomon Activity Center, 6510 Strom Thurmond Blvd, Columbia, SC 29207. This is open to the entire family, so come join Fort Jackson's 282nd Army Band to celebrate this monumental occasion!



*Congratulations to all
Lexington County Graduates
for their accomplishments
and hard work!!*

CLOSINGS...

County offices will be closed on the following dates:

Wednesday, May 10th - Confederate Memorial Day
Monday, May 29th - Memorial 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.





You are invited to a

Memorial Day Service

“The Hero is commonly the simplest
and obscurest of man.”

— Henry David Thoreau

Monday, May 29, 2017
10:00 am

Caughman Harman Funeral Home
503 North Lake Drive
Lexington, SC 29072
803-359-6118

*COME JOIN US TO REMEMBER AND THANK THOSE
WHO SACRIFICED ALL OR SOME OF THEMSELVES
FOR OUR NATION’S FREEDOMS*

Light refreshments will be served following the Service



VA Modernization Initiative Reduces Processing Time for Veterans' Claims, Saves Future Taxpayer Dollars

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently started digitizing older, inactive paper records, which will save taxpayer dollars through reduced, leased office-space that currently houses these records.

This new "paper-extraction" process ensures that when a claim is filed, the Veteran's electronic record is already available in the VA's computer systems, reducing processing time for benefit claims from Veterans and their survivors. In the past, when a Veteran filed a new or supplemental claim, if a medical condition had worsened, the retired paper files were boxed and shipped to a central site to scan into the VA's systems before work would begin on the new claim.

Nearly 2 million inactive files were housed in 33 regional offices across the country before the change. As of April 14, 2017 more than 500,000 files have been collected from eight regional offices for scanning. Once the records have been digitized, the VA will archive and store them in less expensive long-term storage for safekeeping. The agency plans to remove and scan paper claim records from the remaining regional offices by the end of 2018.

Over the past five years, the VA has made concerted efforts to modernize the way it processes compensation and pension claims. Since 2012, 397 million records — consisting of 2.6 billion images — have been scanned, indexed and uploaded into the agency's electronic-claims processing system, Veterans Benefits Management System. In fiscal 2016, the VA provided compensation and pension benefits to more than 5.1 million Veterans and family members, totaling over \$80 billion.

VA 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 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.

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. 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.



VA Life Insurance

As part of our mission to serve Service members, Veterans, and their families, the VA provides valuable life insurance benefits to give you the peace of mind that comes with knowing your family is protected. The VA's life insurance programs were developed to provide financial security for your family given the extraordinary risks involved in military service.

Benefit Descriptions, Eligibility Requirements, and How to Apply

Service Members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) is a low-cost group term life insurance program for service members. Coverage can be extended for up to two years if the service member is totally disabled at separation. Coverage is automatic for most active duty service members, ready reserve and National Guard members scheduled to perform at least 12 periods of inactive training per year, members of the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Public Health Service, cadets and midshipmen of the U.S. military academies, and ROTC members. Use SGLV 8286 to designate beneficiaries, or reduce, decline, or restore SGLI coverage.



Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) allows Veterans to convert your SGLI to a civilian program of lifetime renewable term coverage after separation from service. Service members with full-time SGLI coverage are eligible to convert SGLI to VGLI after separation from service. You would need to complete form SGLV 8714.

Family Service Members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI) insures spouses and children of Service members with SGLI coverage. Spousal coverage may not exceed the service member's coverage. Dependent children are automatically covered at no charge. The term life insurance coverage is automatically provided to spouses and dependent children of service members insured under SGLI. Use form SGLV 8286A to decline, reduce, or restore FSGLI coverage.

Service Members' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI) is an automatic feature of SGLI that provides payments to service members who suffer losses, such as amputations, blindness, and paraplegia, due to traumatic injuries that occur in service. All service members insured by SGLI are automatically covered by TSGLI. To file a claim for the TSGLI benefit, complete for SGLV 8600.

Service-Disabled Veterans' Life Insurance (S-DVI) provides life insurance coverage to Veterans who have been given a VA rating for a new service-connected disability in the last two years. Totally disabled Veterans are eligible for free coverage and have the opportunity to purchase additional life insurance. This insurance is available for service members who were released from active duty under other than dishonorable conditions after April 25, 1951, AND have been granted service connection for any disability (even 0 percent) within the last two years, AND are in good health except for any service connected conditions may be eligible. For this coverage you would need to complete VA form 29-4364.



Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) provides mortgage life insurance protection to disabled Veterans who have been approved for a VA Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant. VMLI is available to Veterans who received a SAH grant, have a title to the home, and have a mortgage on the home. You would need to complete VA form 29-8636.



CALLING ALL VETERANS AND THEIR SPOUSES!

Saturday, May 20

11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**Thompson Funeral Home
4720 Augusta Road, Lexington**

Join us for a free informational seminar and luncheon to learn more about resources for veterans and their spouses, and get answers to veterans' issues and questions.

Presenters include the following:

- **Ed Lundeen**, Director of Veterans Affairs in Lexington County
- **Cristina Roberson**, Caregiver Support Coordinator for Dorn Medical Center
- **Haylee Anderson**, for First Light Home Care
- **Brian Gargis**, Funeral Director and Cremation Specialist for Thompson Funeral Home

For additional information, or to register for this event, please contact Mary Beth **803-996-1023** or **info@thompsonsfuneral.com**.

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.

"Words are even more feeble on this Memorial Day, for the sight before us is that of a strong and good nation that stands in silence and remembers those who were loved and who, in return, loved their countrymen enough to die to them."

-Ronald Reagan



Homeless Veterans

Telamon Corporation



May 19th, 2017

10am—2pm | Lunch at 12 Noon | Registration starts at 9am

FREE TO VETERANS:

**BRING YOUR
VA ID**

- Job Resources
- Food/Clothing Vouchers
- Blankets/Hygiene Items
- HIV Testing and ***much more***

This event is open to all veterans who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness

Cecil Tillis Center

2111 Simpkins Ln, Columbia, SC 29204

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL 803.256.7411

Happenings Around Lexington County

During the Months of May & June

Thursday, May 4th
through
Thursday, May 25th

Rhythm and Blooms

Riverbanks Zoo Botanical Garden; Thursdays only - 6 to 9 pm
For more information, visit their website at riverbanks.org/events
or call 803-779-8717.



Saturday, May 6th

Pickin' & Piggin'

Saluda Shoals Park; 11am to 2:30pm
For more information, visit their website at icrc.net/pickin-piggin
or call 803-731-5208.



Sunday, May 7th

Spring Open House

At the Lexington County Museum; 2 to 5 pm For more information
visit their website at lex-co.com or call 803-359-8369.



Thursday, May 11th
through
Saturday, May 13th

SC Poultry Festival

Main Street, Leesville; 8am to 10pm
For more information, visit their website at scpoultryfestival.com.



Saturday, May 13th

Lexington Wine Walk on Main

Icehouse Amphitheater, West Main Street; 6 to 10pm
For more information, visit their website at lexingtonwinewalk.com.



Saturday, May 20th

Ultimate Challenge Mud Run

Valley Ridge Road, Gaston; 8:30am to 12pm
For more information, call 803-477-0541.



Saturday, May 20th

Step into Spring Craft Show Extravaganza & Silent Auction

Lexington Middle School (Cafeteria); 9am to 2pm
Benefits Palmetto Health Children's Hospital
For more information, visit their website at eventbrite.com.



Monday, May 29th
through
Friday, August 11th

Lexington Blowfish Baseball Season

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



Friday, June 9th
through
Friday, August 11th

Twilight in the Garden

Riverbanks Zoo Botanical Garden; Fridays only - 6 to 8 pm
For more information, visit their website at riverbanks.org/events
or call 803-779-8717.



Saturday, June 10th

"Murders and Mysteries" Walking Tour

Hosted by the Lexington County Museum
Downtown Lexington; 8pm For more information, visit their
website lex-co.com or call 803-359-8369.



Friday, June 23rd

Lake Murray Troop Appreciation Fishing Derby

Johnson Marina Road, Chapin; 8am to 5pm
For more information, visit their website at lakemurraycountry.com
or call 803-609-0066.



The History of the Great Seal

of the United States



Many people today know what a challenge it can be to come up with a good logo and slogan for their team, business, or organization. Imagine having to design a symbol that would represent an entire nation to the whole world – and to future generations. This is what America's founders had to do back in 1776. Using only a few images and words, they had to illustrate the principles that inspired them to revolutionize their world and create a new nation.

On the same day as America's original thirteen separate states united to declare themselves an independent nation, the Continental Congress took the next step necessary to demonstrate this Independence. They began to create their national emblem, the Great Seal of the United States. Late on the afternoon of July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams to "to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America." Like other nations, America needed an official symbol of sovereignty to seal and authenticate her international treaties and transactions. The new nation needed a symbolic signature others would recognize and honor.

During the next six years of the Revolution, three different committees submitted ideas for this graphic image of America, but none were acceptable. The designs suggested by the three committees are wonderful windows into the revolutionary minds of the founders. They reflect America's struggle for Independence and help us better understand the thinking that went into the Great Seal of the United States.

On June 13, 1782, Congress turned the task over to their trusted Secretary, Charles Thomson who created the final design. Using symbolic elements from all three committees, plus imagery and mottoes of his own, Thomson created a bold and elegant design. A week later, he presented the written description of this two-sided design to Congress, and Congress approved it that same day. The Great Seal of the United States was officially adopted on June 20, 1782. Ever since, its design has remained unchanged. In September 1782, the first Great Seal die was cut and used to begin sealing the peace with England.

The front or obverse side of the Great Seal of the United States is composed of seven symbolic elements. *The shield is on the breast of the American bald eagle holding in his right talon an olive branch and in his left talon a bundle of thirteen arrows. Golden rays of light are breaking through a cloud surrounding thirteen stars forming a constellation.*

The shield – represents the 13 states (stripes) joined in one supporting a chief which unites the whole and represents Congress (blue).

The American bald eagle – represents liberty and freedom.

The olive branch – represents the power of peace.

The bundle of thirteen arrows – represents the power of war.

The Golden rays of light – represents Glory.

The cloud – represents divine Presence and command.

The thirteen stars – represents a new state taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers.

The iconic imagery is complemented by the Latin motto: E Pluribus Unum (Out of Many, One).

The reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States is composed of four symbolic elements. *In the zenith of an unfinished pyramid, an eye in a triangle is surrounded with rays of golden light. On the base of the pyramid is the date MDCCLXXVI.*

The unfinished pyramid – represents strength and duration.

The eye – represents the eye of Providence. (the eye inside the triangle also provides a capstone to the unfinished pyramid).

The golden light – represents Glory. Also alludes to the many signal interpositions of providence in favor of the American cause.

MDCCLXXVI – represents 1776 in Roman numerals.

The iconic imagery is complemented by two Latin mottoes: Annuit Coeptis (to favor or smile upon undertakings, endeavors, or beginnings) and Novus Ordo Seclorum (a new order of the ages).

Designed by some of the nation's most visionary Founders, the two sides of the Great Seal embody the essential guiding principles these farsighted patriots hoped we would always follow. For 233 years now, the Great Seal of the United States has ratified international agreements of peace, cooperation, and trade. Representing the people of America, it seals their promise to other nations.

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.



Congratulations to the group as they celebrated their 10th anniversary on March 10th.



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

Dang-it Dolls Workshops

Saturday, May 13 from 10am to 3pm

At the Cayce Masonic Lodge, 1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.



There is something for everyone to do and this is the one place where



THE MORE THE MERRIER

really counts.

There will be no workshops in June, July or August.



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.

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.



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.

THE COLUMBIA URBAN LEAGUE PRESENTS

"PROTECTING OUR SENIORS FROM FRAUD & EXPLOITATION"

COMMUNITY PANEL DISCUSSIONS

MODERATED BY DR. MACIE SMITH

Key Stakeholders Will Be Participating on the Panel:

- South Carolina Department of Social Services
Adult Protective Services (APS)
- South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED)
- South Carolina Bar
- Department of Consumer Affairs
- Lt. Governor's Office on Aging
and many more

ST JOHN BAPTIST CHURCH

3404 W Beltline Blvd,
Columbia, SC
May 9, 2017
5:30pm-7pm

BIBLEWAY CHURCH OF ATLAS ROAD

2440 Atlas Rd,
Columbia, SC
May 23, 2017
5pm-6:30pm

BETHEL AME CHURCH

819 Woodrow St,
Columbia, SC
May 16, 2017
5:30pm-7pm

BROOKLAND BAPTIST

1066 Sunset Blvd,
West Columbia, SC
May 30, 2017
11pm-12:30pm

culsc.org

803-799-8150





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.

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 Donnie Hudson, John Clarke, Tiffany Martschink and Dan Rusinyak. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of March and April.



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.

PLEASE NOTE

There will be no Chapin or Batesburg/Leesville Outreach during the month of May.

Memorial Day Happenings Around Lexington County

9am

Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Jackson Cemetery. For more information contact the cemetery @ 866-577-5248.

10am

Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Jackson Headquarters. This includes a 21 gun salute. For more information contact Fort Jackson Army Community Service @ 803-751-5256.

10am

Memorial Day Program at Caughman-Harman Funeral Home in Lexington. For more information see their flyer on page 9 or contact the funeral home @ 803-359-6118.



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 VA now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery. Interested individuals may submit VA form 10-10007 to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling office by fax at 1-855-840-8299 or mail at PO Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.



The Dorn VAMC expects the new parking garage on their campus to be completed by the end of the year.



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 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.



Last year over 22,000 Veterans were given the flu vaccine at Dorn VAMC.

Veterans receiving care at VA Medical Centers will now be able to schedule routine ear and eye appointments at local VA Audiology and Optometry clinics without a primary care referral – a move that eliminates multiple steps and gets Veterans into appointments quicker. Before now, Veterans seeking appointments with audiologists or optometrists had to first make an appointment with a primary care physician for a referral for a routine clinic consult visit. The Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative is expected to be fully operational within all VA Medical Centers by the end of 2016.



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

Sponsored by the VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA 994

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\$40 PER PERSON

DAILY TICKET
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DAILY

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TO THE
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NOW!**

HAPPY HOLIDAY
CAMPGROUND
CHEROKEE, NC



CAR SHOW

CASINO

ENTERTAINMENT

Featured Medal:

ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL

The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) is a military award of the United States Armed Forces, which was first created in 1961 by Executive Order of President John Kennedy. The medal is awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who, after July 1, 1958, participated in U.S. military operations, U.S. operations in direct support of the United Nations (UN), or U.S. operations of assistance for friendly foreign nations.

The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal may be authorized for three categories of operations: U.S. military operations; U.S. military operations in direct support of the United Nations; and U.S. operations of assistance for friendly foreign nations. The medal shall be awarded only for operations for which no other U.S. campaign medal is approved, where a foreign armed opposition or imminent threat of hostile action was encountered.

Since its original conception in 1961, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal has been awarded for United States participation in over forty-five designated military campaigns. The first campaign of the AFEM was the Cuban Missile Crisis and the award was issued for military service between October 1962 and June 1963. Following this original issuance, the AFEM was made retroactive to 1958 and issued for actions in Lebanon, Taiwan, Republic of the Congo, Quemoy and Matsu, and for duty in Berlin between 1961 and 1963.

Beginning in 1992 an effort was begun to phase out the AFEM in favor of campaign specific medals and the newly created Armed Forces Service Medal. The Armed Forces Service Medal was originally intended to be a replacement for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, however the two awards are considered separate awards with different award criteria. The primary difference between the two is that the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal is normally awarded for combat operations and combat support missions.

Picture of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and Ribbon



| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
|  | <p>May is National Hamburger Month!</p> | <p>June is National Iced Tea Month!</p> |  |
|---|--|--|---|

Did you know...
Any National Guard member or Reservist who is entitled to retired pay for non-regular service or, would be entitled to retired pay for non-regular service, now has Veteran status. To see if you qualify for any benefits, check with your local VA regional office.

**Coming in the
Next Issue...**
Compensation,
Auto Allowances and
Clothing Allowances.