

January – February -  
March 2023



## Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office

"Serving those who served  
and sacrificed for America"



"While I breathe, I hope"

# Lexington County Veterans' News

"Proud to be an American"



The Flag Still Stands for Freedom



As a department in Lexington County government, we value honesty, respect, and service to country, patriotism, sacrifice and personal excellence. We acknowledge, respect and honor all Veterans for their service to America no matter how, when or where they served. We proudly pledge ourselves to creating and maintaining a customer service environment for Veterans and their survivors. We hold ourselves accountable to our customers, partners and each other. We have a passion for Veterans and firmly believe that excellence is not a goal, it is the standard.

# From the Director

## Your VA Office Family

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We welcome 2023 and thank God for the opportunity to do what we do, serve Veterans and their survivors. We accomplished a lot as a work family in 2022 and look forward to many great things in this New Year.

Many of you have given complimentary comments on the re-format of our newsletter and we appreciate that. We are proud of it and want to continually improve the look, the content and the format. If you would like to provide our newsletter to people who don't have email, please stop by the office so we can print one for you. We would be happy to help you!

We have received many questions and comments on the PACT ACT and began filing claims in August, soon after the bill was signed by the President. We did not want to waste any time in serving our Veterans and we stand ready to continue filing these claims. Additionally, we are filing claims for eligible survivors of Veterans affected by the new legislation in the PACT ACT. These survivors have started receiving letters from the VA informing them of possible benefits.

Our office family has increased to six full-time positions and we have a new Benefits Counselor who begins work in late January. I will talk more about this in our next issue. We are excited to be one of only five offices in South Carolina that have six full time employees serving Veterans and their survivors.

Thank you for your continued support of our office and our mission! We strive to give accurate information and timely service to all we serve.

Enjoying the journey, *Ed Lundeen*

# How to apply for a Veteran ID Card

A Veteran ID Card (VIC) is a digital form of photo ID you can use to get discounts offered to Veterans at many restaurants, hotels, stores, and other businesses. Find out if you're eligible for a Veteran ID Card—and how to apply.

## Am I eligible for a Veteran ID Card?

You may be eligible if you meet both of these requirements.

### Both of these must be true:

- You served on active duty, in the Reserves, or in the National Guard (including the Coast Guard), **and**
- You received an honorable or general discharge (under honorable conditions)

If you received other than honorable, bad conduct, or dishonorable character of discharge, you're not eligible for a Veteran ID Card. If you have an uncharacterized or unknown discharge status, we'll have to verify your eligibility before we approve your application.

You'll need to provide a copy of your discharge papers when you apply for a VIC to prove your character of discharge.

**Note:** As of September 2022, all new Veteran ID Cards are digital. If you already have a physical Veteran ID Card, you can continue using it to get discounts.



### Sign in to apply for a Veteran ID Card

Sign in with your existing **Login.gov**, **ID.me**, **DS Logon**, or **My HealthVet** account. If you don't have any of these accounts, you can create a free **Login.gov** or **ID.me** account now.

### 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.

### 2023 VA Disability Increase | 2023 Cost of Living Adjustment | 2023 COLA Increase

In this episode of theSITREP, Paul discusses the new, 2023 VA Disability Compensation rates and based on Social Security's Cost of Living Adjustment. Official compensation tables will be provided by VA in December 2022. Please refer here <https://www.ssa.gov/cola/> for the Social Security Administration's official notice regarding COLA or the links below for additional assistance and information.

<https://youtu.be/kZq0SRBRHE8>

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to say the pledge!

### Help Reshape VA's Mission Statement

VA is seeking your input on how its mission statement may evolve to be more inclusive and representative of the changing needs of all Veterans. Click below to learn more and share your voice.

<https://survey.voice.va.gov/?yz9mAW-Mission>

We Will Be **CLOSED!!!**

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Day Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>

And

President's Day  
February 20<sup>th</sup>!

## Aid and Attendance Benefits

A Veteran can receive housebound or aid and attendance benefits through the VA in one of two ways. The first is if you are a 100% service-connected Veteran; the other is through the non-service connected pension program. A surviving spouse can receive this benefit through survivor's benefits.

**For service-connected Veteran:** If a Veteran is service-connected at the 100% rate and is housebound, bedridden, or is so helpless to need the aid and attendance of another person, then payment of additional Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) can be considered. The amount of SMC will vary depending on the level of disability. The service-connected disabilities or one service connected disability must be why the Veteran needs the aid and attendance.

**For non-service connected Veterans:** Veterans who are eligible for VA pension and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person may be eligible for an additional monetary payment. These benefits are paid in addition to monthly pension and they are not paid without eligibility to pension. Since Aid and Attendance and housebound allowances increase the pension amount, people who are not eligible for a basic pension due to excessive income may be eligible for pension at these increased rates. A Veteran may not receive aid and attendance benefits and housebound benefits at the same time.

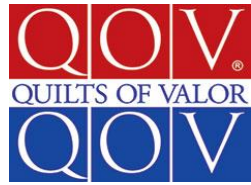
**For Surviving Spouses:** Surviving spouses that are eligible for either DIC or Surviving Spouse pension may also qualify for housebound or aid and attendance benefits. The surviving spouse must meet the same healthcare requirement as listed above for a Veteran.

**Aid and Attendance (A&A)** – This increased monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount if you meet one of the following conditions: 1 – You require the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment. 2 – You are bedridden in that your disability or disabilities requires that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalesce or treatment. 3 – You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity. 4 – Your eyesight is limited to a corrected 5/200 visual acuity or less in either eyes; or concentric contraction of your visual field to 5 degrees or less.

**Housebound** - This increase monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount when you are substantially confined to your immediate premises because of permanent disability.

You may apply for A&A or housebound benefits through our office. There are other forms to complete depending on whether the Veteran or surviving spouse is at home with caregivers, in assisted living or a nursing home. Our office can help you determine which additional forms are needed.





# Quilts of Valor

Quilts = Healing

## What is a Quilt of Valor?

A Quilt of Valor® (QOV) is a quality, handmade quilt that is machine or hand quilted. It is awarded to a Service Member or Veteran who has been touched by war. The Quilt says unequivocally, "Thank you for your service and sacrifice in serving our nation."

To use the term Quilt of Valor, Quilts of Valor or QOV, the quilt must be a specific size, must have a label with required information, it must be awarded (it is not a gift) and it must be recorded.



# Veterans can plan their legacy with VA burial and memorial benefits

Preparing for the passing of a loved one, or even yourself, can be a difficult and confusing time. VA can help you and your survivors prepare for the future. Here's how VA's burial and memorial benefits can honor your legacy.

## Burial and memorial benefits

No one wants to leave their family with large burial and funeral expenses. VA's compassionate and professional memorial and burial services can help ease families through loss and save them thousands of dollars. If you are a Veteran, service member, spouse or dependent, [you may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery and other benefits](#). These benefits include:

Access to more than 140 national cemeteries, 95 of which are open to interments of caskets or cremated remains. Specific burial options are limited to those available at a cemetery and will vary based on availability.

A United States flag, provided at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a Veteran who served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces.

A single headstone, columbarium niche cover or a flat marker for a Veteran's final resting place, whether in a private, state or national cemetery.

A medallion for use on a headstone, or other memorial in a private cemetery, to indicate a deceased person's Veteran status. Multiple sizes are available, and VA delivers the headstone or marker anywhere in the world at no cost.

A Presidential Memorial Certificate – an engraved certificate signed by the current President that honors the memory of honorably discharged Veterans – for families of deceased Veterans.

VA also provides burial benefits to partially offset the cost of burial expenses, plot costs and transportation costs for a Veteran's remains. These benefits are paid at [different rates](#) based on whether the Veteran's death was service-connected or non-service connected. More information on burial benefits compensation is available at [VA.gov](#). VA will pay the first living person to file a claim as listed below:

- The Veteran's surviving spouse, or
- The survivor of a legal union between the deceased Veteran and the survivor, or
- The Veteran's children, regardless of age, or
- The Veteran's parents or the surviving parent, or
- The executor or administrator of the deceased Veteran's estate, or the person acting for the deceased Veteran's estate.

# Lifeline Free Government Phone Program

## **Federal Lifeline Assistance:**

Assurance Wireless is a federal Lifeline Assistance program. Lifeline is a government assistance program. The Assurance Wireless offer provides eligible low-income customers free monthly data, unlimited texting, and free monthly minutes. Plus a free phone.

**Qualifications:** Enrollment is available to individuals who qualify based on federal or state-specific eligibility criteria. You **may qualify** if you are on certain public assistance programs like:

- Medicaid/Medi-Cal
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps or SNAP)/CalFresh
- Supplemental Security Income
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- Tribal Head Start
- **Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit**

You can also qualify based on your household income. If you are unemployed, you can use your Unemployment Benefit Letter as proof of eligibility.

**Proof of Eligibility:** You must provide proof of program participation or proof of income.

**One Account per Household:** The Lifeline Assistance program is available for only one wireless or wireline account per household. Separate households that live at the same address are eligible, including residents of homeless shelters and nursing homes. Residents with temporary addresses are also eligible.

For more info or to apply online, visit Assurance Wireless website:

<https://www.assurancewireless.com/>







## Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal

This medal was established on Dec. 4, 1961, to be awarded to members of the United States armed forces who, after July 1, 1958, have participated in a United States operation and encountered foreign armed opposition, or were in danger of hostile action by foreign armed forces.

The description of the medal: the obverse has an eagle with wings raised, perched on a sword. In back of this is a compass rose, with rays coming from the angles of the compass points. This design is encircled by the inscription "Armed Forces" at the top and "Expeditionary Service" below. Between these words, completing the circle is a sprig of laurel on each side. The reverse has the shield as it appears on the presidential seal. Below this are branches of laurel to right and left, joined in the center by a knot. At the top in a semicircle, is the inscription "United States of America".

The description of the ribbon: The ribbon has three narrow stripes of blue, white, and red in the center, flanked by wide stripes of light blue and, on each side, four equal stripes of black, brown, yellow, and green. The center stripes symbolize the United States, and the many colors at the edges symbolize other areas of the world.

# How to apply for VA health care

- Find out if you're eligible for VA health care benefits
- Gather the information listed below that you'll need to fill out an Application for Health Benefits (VA Form 10-10EZ)

## **You'll need this information:**

- Social Security numbers for you, your spouse, and your qualified dependents
- Your military discharge papers (DD214 or other separation documents)
- Insurance card information for all insurance companies that cover you, including any coverage provided through a spouse or significant other. This includes Medicare, private insurance, or insurance from your employer.
- Gross household income from the previous calendar year for you, your spouse, and your dependents. This includes income from a job and any other sources. Gross household income is your income before taxes and any other deductions.
- Your deductible expenses for the past year. These include certain health care and education costs.

**Note:** You don't have to tell us about your income and expenses when you apply. But if you're not eligible based on other factors, we'll need this information to decide on your application.

## **You can also apply in any of these 4 ways**

### **Option 1: Apply by phone**

Call our toll-free hotline at [877-222-8387](tel:877-222-8387), Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET to get help with your application.

### **Option 2: Apply by mail**

Fill out an Application for Health Benefits (VA Form 10-10EZ).

[Get VA Form 10-10EZ to download](#)

You or someone acting as your power of attorney must sign and date the form. And:

- **If you're using a power of attorney**, you'll need to submit a copy of the Power of Attorney form along with your application.
- **If you sign with an "X,"** 2 people you know must witness your signature. They'll also need to sign and print their names on the form.

Send your completed application here:

Health Eligibility Center  
2957 Clairmont Rd., Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30329

### **Option 3: Apply in person**

Fill out an Application for Health Benefits (VA Form 10-10EZ).

[Get VA Form 10-10EZ to download](#)

You or someone acting as your power of attorney must sign and date the form. And:

- **If you're using a power of attorney**, you'll need to submit a copy of the Power of Attorney form along with your application.
- **If you sign with an "X,"** 2 people you know must witness your signature. They'll also need to sign and print their names on the form.

Go to your nearest VA medical center or clinic. Bring a signed Application for Health Benefits (VA Form 10-10EZ) with you.

### **Option 4: Apply with the help of a trained professional**

You can work with a trained professional called an accredited representative to get help applying for health care benefits.

# Need Healing!

## Counseling Help for the Whole Family

At **Crossroads Counseling Center** we have experience in the full spectrum of counseling issues, working with adults, children and adolescents. Healing begins with an in-depth assessment and the careful guidance of a licensed counselor tailored to your needs.

Don't suffer with anxiety, depression, ADHD issues or marriage problems any longer!



Executive Director

Our professional staff can offer expert assessment and practical help for almost all mental, emotional and behavioral problems for adults, children and adolescents.

Crossroads Counseling Center  
130A Whiteford Way  
Lexington, SC 29072  
803-808-1800

## Columbia, SC Vet Center

We offer confidential help for Veterans, service members, and their families at no cost in a non-clinical setting. Our services include counseling for needs such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the psychological effects of military sexual trauma (MST). We can also connect you with more support in VA and your community.

**Main Location**  
1710 Richland Street  
Suite A Columbia, SC

**Direct Line**  
803-765-9944

**Hours of Operation**  
Mon-Fri 8am-4:30pm  
Closed Saturday and Sunday

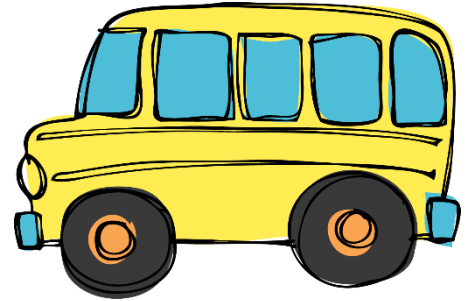


## The Big Red Barn Retreat

Helping Warriors Thrive on the Home Front

Soldiers rarely forget what they have seen and done. For those serving or having served, getting out of their own heads - isolated with their memories and thoughts; instead of being present and living their best life in the present moment can be a huge challenge. We understand that challenge, and that is why the Big Red Barn Retreat (BRBR) offers integrated practices and programs that allow Warriors to thrive at home. These integrated practices are alternatives to traditional treatments; and are provided to Veterans, active duty service members, and first responders at little to no cost to them. So, we encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and join your brothers and sisters in arms at the BRBR as you begin to heal and live the life you deserve full of joy, connection, and purpose.

# Veterans Transportation Service Locations



## *Columbia, South Carolina*

*Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center (544)*

*6439 Garners Ferry Road Columbia, SC 29209*

*803-776-4000*

*Schedule a ride at [www.vetride.va.gov/](http://www.vetride.va.gov/)*

### Contact:

*Roy Tucker*

*[roy.tuckerjr@va.gov](mailto:roy.tuckerjr@va.gov)*

*803-776-4000 ext.6398*

### Alternate Contact

*Harry Plyler*

*[harry.plyler@va.gov](mailto:harry.plyler@va.gov)*

*803-776-4000 ext. 6398*

## *Charleston, South Carolina*

*Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center (534)*

*109 Bee Street Charleston, SC 29401*

*843-577-5011*

*Schedule a ride at [www.vetride.va.gov/](http://www.vetride.va.gov/)*

### Contact

*Allen D. Miller*

*[allen.miller3@va.gov](mailto:allen.miller3@va.gov)*

*843-577-5011 ext. 3686*

### Alternate Contact

*Jerry K. Stout*

*[jerry.stout2@va.gov](mailto:jerry.stout2@va.gov)*

*843-789-6555*

# Major new Vietnam exhibit in Columbia showcases SC voices from controversial war



The S.C. Confederate Relic Room museum opens a new Vietnam War exhibit, featuring letters, weapons, artifacts and more that help tell the role of South Carolinians in the war.

This year, the museum also will feature a special display on World War II art in the main museum and a retrospective of Fort Motte, which stood in Calhoun County during the Revolutionary War.



## Fisher House of Columbia

**Having family nearby greatly benefits patients battling illness or injury!**

Fisher House Columbia will serve Veterans and families 365 days a year. As guests, they will receive the best care and comfort we can give while their loved one receives medical care at the William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center.

Less than 1% of our nation are accustomed to experiencing the hardship and change of military families. Offering the Fisher House will help to decrease the stressors and provide a warm environment for all in need.

Most Veteran families can't afford hotel stays while their hero is receiving care. Fisher House Columbia will save families thousands of dollars in accommodation expenses. Your help can assist us in serving these families.



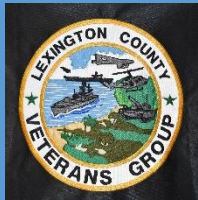
**Ed Lundeen will be at the libraries below:**

Gaston library – 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month between 10am – 12pm

Chapin library – 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of each month between 10am – 12pm

Cayce library – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month between 10am and 12pm

Batesburg library – 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month between 10am – 12pm



# *Lexington County Veterans Group*

All Lexington County Veterans are cordially invited to attend the weekly meeting. The group meets on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm at The American Legion Post 7. The address is 200 American Legion Drive (off Harmon St.) Lexington, SC 29072





Ed

Jennifer

Kathy

Christy

Annastasia



Wishes everyone a  
prosperous and

*Happy  
New Year*