



VET NEWS

JUNE 2004

I WANT YOU... TO VOTE!

June 8th is the primary election for contested races. This is an important day to make decisions regarding those who will be representing us for the next few years.



Voting is an issue that veterans have prided themselves on preserving. Our troops in Iraq now are setting the stage for democratic government there. It seems appropriate that we should take the necessary time out of our schedules to participate in this right which many other people have died fighting for and which many here take for granted. Get out and vote and get your family and friends to vote also, now and in November.

PTSD STRESSORS

A number of veterans have come into the VA Office to file claims for PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome), sometimes called shell-shock. There are three basic elements of filing a claim for PTSD: (1) a current, clear medical diagnosis of PTSD; (2) credible supporting evidence that the claimed in-service stressor actually occurred; and (3) a link, established by medical evidence, between current symptomatology and the claimed in-service stressor.

The stressor must be some event or incident which occurred while the veteran was in-service.

If the veteran engaged in combat and the claimed stressor is related to that combat, the veteran's statement is usually sufficient to establish the stressor,

provided that the combat is consistent with the veteran's military service.

A veteran who was not involved in combat situations must show by credible supporting evidence that a stressful event occurred. Such evidence may include certified statements from other witnesses to the event, letters to family members, diaries, or other forms of documentation. Evidence may also be presented of names and units of persons injured or killed in the event.

The claims must show evidence that all three elements exist. While the veteran must provide the evidence of the existence of the stressor, a VA doctor or private doctor must provide a diagnosis of PTSD. The doctor must also provide evidence that the stressor and the current symptoms of PTSD are related.



OUTREACH

We are continuing to do our Outreach programs throughout Lexington County according to the following schedule each month:

1st Tuesday- Batesburg-Leesville Police Department Courtroom

2nd Tuesday- Chapin Town Hall Council Chambers/Courtroom

3rd Tuesday- Swansea Town Hall Council Chambers/Courtroom

Representatives from the VA Office are at the location from 8 am to 12 noon to assist veterans and family members with claims, benefits, or to respond to questions.

Recent outreach programs have involved filing claims for service-connected disabilities, widow's pensions, applications for awards, and correction of military records.

June programs are scheduled for June 1 at Batesburg-Leesville; June 8 at Chapin; and June 15 at Swansea.

CARES

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi, recently released his decisions regarding the VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES). These decisions were based on a two-year in-depth study of all VA facilities and programs.

Decisions affecting South Carolina include (1) three new outpatient clinics in Aiken, Goose Creek, and Spartanburg, (2) minor renovation applications for two facilities at Dorn VA Medical Center, and (3) Major construction projects at Dorn VA Medical Center to include a new Imaging Center, expanded ancillary and diagnostics space and services, new specialty care clinics, and a new Intensive Care unit.



Dorn VA Medical Center, Columbia

The VA is currently studying the feasibility of locating the Veterans Benefits Administration Office (VARO) at the Dorn VA Medical Center property. There are also recommendations for the Dorn VA Medical Center to share resources with the Medical University of South Carolina.

According to Secretary Principi, "These changes will provide greater access to care for South Carolina's veterans."

Dorn VA Medical and its outpatient clinics treated over 51,000 veterans last year. So far this year that number has increased an additional 10%.

The impact of the VA on Lexington shows \$55,963,000 of expenditures which includes \$28,527,000 of compensation and pension benefits and \$24,010,000 in medical expenditures. An additional \$3,426,000 went to education and vocational rehabilitation, and insurance and indemnities.

Last year, some 4,155 unique patients from Lexington County were treated at VA medical facilities. Lexington County is the home to almost 24,000 veterans.



KOREAN DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL

The Korean Defense Service Medal has been approved for award to members and veterans of the armed forces who served in support of the defense of the Republic of Korea.

The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the Republic of Korea, and the contiguous water out to 12 nautical miles, and all air spaces above the land and water areas. The period of eligibility is July 28, 1954, to a future date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense.

Servicemembers must have been assigned, attached, or mobilized to units operating in the area of eligibility and have been physically deployed in the area of eligibility for 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days or meet one of the following criteria:

- Be engaged in actual combat during an armed engagement, regardless of the time in the area of eligibility.
- Is wounded or injured in the line of duty and requires medical evacuation from the area of eligibility.
- While participating as a regularly assigned air crewmember flying sorties into, out of, within, or over the area of eligibility in support of military operations. Each day that one or more sorties are flown in accordance with these criteria shall count as one day toward the 30 or 60-day requirement.
- Personnel who serve in operations and exercises conducted in the area of eligibility are considered eligible for the award as long as the basic time criteria is met. Due to the extensive time period for KDSM eligibility, the nonconsecutive service period for eligibility remains cumulative throughout the entire period.

Send your requests for award of the Korean Defense Service Medal on a Form 180 for

veterans, retirees, or their next of kin to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.

The request must include documents supporting service in Korea from July 28 1954 to a date to be determined. NPRC will add the Korean Defense Service Medal to the veterans DD214 by issuing a DD Form 215 (Correction to DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty).



SOUTH CAROLINA MILITARY PLATES

The State of South Carolina offers a number of license plates for veterans to highlight their military career. Please see the attached material and form for information on the criteria for each plate.



'Old Backpack 4 Iraq' Program

Congressman Joe Wilson and the Blue Star Mothers have launched 'Old Backpack 4 Iraq' Program. They are collecting used and new backpacks containing school supplies to be provided to Iraqi children.

The backpacks can be loaded with pencils, pens, notebooks, crayons, rulers, construction paper, a small teddy bear, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, Band-Aids, soap, washcloth and a towel.

Backpacks can be left at The Lexington County VA Office, the Lexington County Chronicle, or at Congressman Wilson's office, 1700 Sunset Blvd (US 378), Suite 1, West Columbia, SC 29169 (803) 939-0041.

VETERANS FORMATION NEEDS

The Veterans Formation is requesting donations of resources such as clothes, furniture, household items, toilet articles, money, and expertise to help homeless veterans.

Contact the Veterans Formation at 765-0260, ext. 27 or 28.

JULY FOURTH ACTIVITIES

Remember to fly your flag on the Fourth. Also, remember the reason for the holiday!

This is a good time to replace worn out flags. A number of veterans organizations and Boy Scout posts periodically conduct dignified flag disposal ceremonies.

Have a Happy, safe Fourth.



WWII MONUMENT DEDICATION

The World War II Monument in Washington, DC was dedicated Saturday, May 29, 2004, to honor the service of America's men and women veterans during the war. A nationally-televised ceremony attended by more than 150,000 people saw the dedication of this long-overdue monument.

Thank you to all the veterans of World War II, the Greatest Generation.

VIETNAM WAR WEBSITES

Two websites of interest to Vietnam veterans wishing to find the status of friends or to find information about veterans killed or died in the Vietnam War are:

<http://www.angelfire.com/ny2/SGTFATS/vietwarDL.html>

www.noquarter.org

The first website, Vietnam War Dead, is a free downloadable database which allows searches by name, date of death, or by home. It provides further information like birthdates, rank, unit, marital status, and location of death.

The second site, NoQuarter, provides a more advanced, searchable database with a number of search options.

Both sites are easy to use for veterans who need to find information to back up a VA claim or for personal interest.



POW-MIA DISPLAY TABLE (from American Legion Post 7)



White Knoll HS Color Guard

A number of veterans organizations designate a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War to remind all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in the defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing.

This table set for one is small... It symbolizes the frailty of one prisoner against his oppressors.

The tablecloth is white... It symbolizes the purity of their intentions responding to their country's call to arms.

The single rose displayed in a vase... It reminds us of the families and loved ones of our comrades in arms who keep faith awaiting their return.

The red ribbon... Tied on the vase, is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn by thousands who bear witness to their determination to demand proper accounting for our missing.

A slice of lemon... Is on the bread plate to remind us of their bitter fate.

There is salt... Upon the bread plate symbolic of family tears as they wait.

The glass is inverted... They cannot toast us today.

The chair is empty... They are not here.

Remember all of you who served with them and called them comrades. You who depended on their might and aid and relied upon them.

Do not forsake them.

Pray for them and remember!

