

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



GARY R. BAKER
DIRECTOR

BARBARA O'CONNOR
VETERANS SPECIALIST

BETTY J. CARSON
Editor

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

VET NEWS

605 WEST MAIN STREET
SUITE 101
LEXINGTON, S.C. 29072

NOVEMBER 2005

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS' PARADE COME HELP HONOR OUR VETERANS!

Grand Marshals: Veterans of World War II and Vietnam

Sponsored by Lexington County Employee Committee, American Legion Post 7, VFW Post 8738, Lexington County Womans Club, Town of Lexington, and Lexington County Chronicle, Sunday, November 6, 2005, North Lake Drive and South Lake Drive; the parade begins at 2:30 p.m. No entry fee. For more information call 785-8401.

WWII AND VIETNAM WAR RECOGNITION

Lexington County will be recognizing its veteran sons and daughters who participated in WWII and Vietnam. A program is being planned for November 13th 2005, at White Knoll High School at 3:00 p.m. Veterans of both wars will receive individual recognition.



Veterans who served during these two war periods should contact the VA office or their veterans organization to be put on the list for recognition.

UNEMPLOYABILITY DETERMINATION IN COMPENSATION CASES

To establish entitlement to total compensation benefits because of individual unemployability, a veteran must claim to be unable to secure or retain employment by reason of service-connected disability. The rating activity must consider both the veteran's current physical condition and employment status when rating claims for total compensation because of individual unemployability. If a 100% service-

connected evaluation is awarded, any pending claim for a total disability evaluation based on individual unemployability is moot.

A veteran must submit VA Form 21-8940 in order to certify employment status and establish eligibility for individual unemployability. Use this form as the basis for development of evidence to support the claim. When rating claims for total benefits because of individual unemployability, the evidence must be sufficient to evaluate both the veteran's current degree of disability and employment status.

Evidence sufficient to support a current evaluation of the extent of all of the veteran's disabilities must be of record. The evidence must reflect the veteran's condition within the past 12 months and include, but need not be limited to, results of VA examination, hospital reports, or outpatient treatment records.

VA Form 21-8940 requires the veteran to furnish an employment history for the 5-year period preceding the date on which the veteran claims to have become too disabled to work and for the entire time after that date. It is essential that VA Form 21-8940 contains the work history. In addition, request each employer during the 12-month period prior to the date the veteran last worked to complete and return a VA Form 21-4192, "Request for Employment Information in Connection with Claim for Disability Benefits." Forms indicating only that the veteran retired will require addition information to determine if the veteran's retirement was by reason of disability, and if so, the nature of the disability for which retired.

If available evidence is insufficient to award individual unemployability benefits and the record shows that the veteran is receiving Social Security benefits because of the disability, complete copies of the SSA records must be obtained and considered.

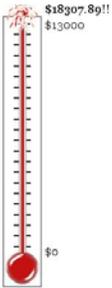
Vocational rehabilitation records must be obtained and considered in individual unemployability claims whenever there is indication that training was not found to be medically feasible.

Development to produce evidence necessary to establish the degree to which service-connected conditions have impaired the veteran's ability to engage in self-employment must generally be more extensive than development where the veteran worked for others. The frequency and type of service performed by the veteran for the business and the veteran's net and gross earnings for the past 12 months must be taken into consideration. Inability to make a profit is not synonymous with the inability to engage in substantially gainful employment.

VETERANS' VAN

Donations to the Veterans' Van Fund have reached approximately \$18,000.00. The van will be purchased through a program of the DAV at approximately \$13,000. The vans are titled to the VA Medical Center which then accepts responsibility for maintenance, fuel, and insurance. Volunteer drivers will be needed soon (see related article). Call Gary Baker at 785-8401.

Additional donations can be made to the Lexington County Veterans Van Fund, 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC 29072.



The thermometer graph shows the current status of funds collected, \$18,307.89

REQUIREMENTS FOR VAN/POV DRIVERS

Need copy of current DRIVER'S LICENSE

Need copy of current AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Must view DRIVER SAFETY VIDEO
If you are a DAV Van and/or POV Driver**

**Must sign SC Dept. of Public Safety Request
for Drivers Information—Form MV-20**

Must have a VAN DRIVER'S PHYSICAL EXAM

**Must complete Van Drivers' Questionnaire
VA Form May 1991-10-0043A**

Must complete a DAV VA VS Form 20



PATIENT CARE GROUP ALERT

We have received several reports of an organization identifying itself as "Patient Care Group" contacting veterans and falsely telling them that PCG is now dispensing prescriptions for VA. Callers saying they represent the company have asked veterans for a credit card number to ensure the veterans will continue to receive medications.

The VA has not changed the process of receiving and dispensing prescriptions. Veterans are advised to never give out their personal information including social security numbers and credit card numbers to any organization without first verifying their legitimacy.

Below are two links to new clips about this scam. Please spread the work at your facilities.

http://www.wisinfo.com/sheboyganpress/news/archive/local_22876962.shtml and
<http://community.emeraldcoast.com/article.showarticle.d b.php?a=2477>

If you feel you may be a victim of this scam, visit

www.consumer.gov/idtheft/law_resources.htm

to contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.

To learn more about how to avoid being taken advantage by this or any other scams, you should visit the Federal Trade Commission's "Identity Theft" website to learn what steps you need to take.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO GOOD

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

You will be given a receipt for tax purposes. The money will be used to help homeless people, and those in danger of homelessness, especially veterans, and troops deployed to the war zones and their families.

**Please contact the Veterans Formation at
803-765-0260, ext. 27 or 28.**



6 IN 10 MILITARY WOMEN HARASSED

Six in 10 women who have served in the National Guard and Reserves say they were sexually harassed or assaulted, but less than one-quarter reported it and many who did were encouraged to drop their complaints, a government survey says. The survey by the Veterans Affairs Department found that nearly half of the women who responded said the incidents occurred while they were on duty.

One in 10 said she was raped, nearly 60 percent said they were verbally harassed, and the rest of the reports were for other types of incidents, according to the survey, which was released by Democratic members of Congress.

In addition, more than 27 percent of male Guard and Reserve veterans said they experienced some type of sexual harassment or assault - most often by other men.

"I am releasing the report, which I have obtained through other sources, to shine a light on a serious problems that the White House wants to hide in the shadows," said Rep. Lane Evans of Illinois, the top Democrat on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Defense Department spokesman Roger Kaplan said the survey "tells us that we were correct in placing greater emphasis on combating sexual assault and sexual harassment in the active and reserve components."

He said more recent surveys show lower rates of harassment and sexual assaults in the military.

Interviewed between August 2002 and March 2003 were men and women who had completed their service. No one in the Guard or Reserves at the time of the research was questioned.

The study surveyed those in the Guard and Reserves from 1950 to 2000; most of the 4,000 respondents served in the 1980s and 1990s.

The survey echoes oft-repeated concerns about sexual harassment and assault in the military. In a report last year, the Pentagon acknowledged problems in preventing, treating and investigating sexual assaults on military personnel.

As a result, the Defense Department instituted broad new policies this year, requiring additional training and providing for confidential reporting of assaults and harassment by victims.

The report noted that 78 percent of the women and 90 percent of the men did not report the incidents, and half or less of those who did said some action was taken to correct the situation. About 58 percent of the men who reported the incident and 66 percent of the women said they were encouraged to drop the matter.

Also, less than 14 percent of the men and 28 percent of the women sought help or treatment, and only about 1 percent went to the VA for that help.

VA officials did not release the study, saying it was still in the final stages of review.

Department spokesman Scott Hogenson, explaining the nearly two-year delay in releasing the study, said officials were checking the facts.

PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED VETERANS

If you have been rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to be permanently and totally disabled by reason of service connected disability, you may be eligible for the following entitlements. Please bear in mind that you may not be eligible for all benefits. The VA Regional Office will provide you with permanently and total letters upon request. The VA Regional Office telephone number is: 1-800-827-1000.

1. Disabled Veterans Special License Plate (V-Tag)
2. Property Tax Exemption
3. Free South Carolina Hunting and Fishing Licenses
4. Military ID Card (except medical) (N/A if retired military)
5. CHAMPVA for Dependents (N/A if retired military) (1-800-733-8387) (1-888-289-2411 if over age 65)
6. Chapter 35 Education Benefits for Dependents (1-800-442-4551)
7. Waiver of Premium for VA Life Insurance (N/A if over the age of 65) (1-800-669-8477)
8. South Carolina Education Assistance – Free Tuition for Children of Certain Wartime Veterans



VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS: BE PREPARED

Section 56-3-110 of the 1976 Code:

In time of serious sickness and/or death of a spouse, the following information may be necessary to help secure any benefits due the surviving spouse. Use this handy checklist to ensure that this information is readily available. It is recommended that these documents be placed in a safe location such as a safety deposit box. By taking these precautions, you will be doing yourself and your family a great favor.

- ___ Veteran's DD-214 and Discharge Papers (it is wise to record these at the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office so a certified copy can be located in case of emergency).
- ___ Branch of Service and Serial Number
- ___ Date of Enlistment and Place
- ___ Date of Discharge and Place
- ___ Social Security Number
- ___ Social Security Papers and Information
- ___ VA Claim Number (if any)
- ___ VA Office where Veteran's Records are maintained
- ___ VA Compensation Amount and Type
- ___ Birth Certificate
- ___ Marriage License(s) and/or Divorce Decree(s)
- ___ Wills (Name and Address of Attorney who drew them up)
- ___ Real Estate Records (Loan Papers or Titles)
- ___ Automobile Records (Loan Papers or Titles)
- ___ Government Life Insurance (Policy Number and Amount)
- ___ Other Life Insurance (Company Name, Policy Number, Amount)
- ___ Name of Bank and Account Numbers (Checking, Savings, etc.)
- ___ Attorney's Name, Address, and Telephone Number
- ___ Accountant's Name, Address, and Telephone Number
- ___ Investment Counselor's Name, Address, and Telephone Number
- ___ Total Income from All Sources
- ___ Total Assets (checking, savings, stocks & bonds, etc.)

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“V” TAG

Provides for the issuance of a free license tag (“V” Tag) by the SC Department of Revenue to any wartime disabled veteran who is entitled to compensation for the loss, or loss of use of one or both legs or arms, or the permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a degree as to constitute virtual blindness and is also entitled to a special monthly statutory award by reason thereof. In addition, any wartime disabled veteran who has been classified as totally and permanently disabled due to service-connected disabilities as determined from medical records on file with the USDVA also is eligible.

Application for registration and license of the vehicle must be mailed or taken to the SC Department of Revenue. The application must be accompanied by a letter **for the current year** from the USDVA attesting to the fact that the veteran is receiving a statutory award for the loss, or loss of one or both legs or arms or that he is blind, or that he is permanently and totally disabled from service-connected disabilities. It also provides that disabled veterans shall be exempt from the payment of municipal parking meter fees when their vehicles bear a disabled veteran's license plate (“V” Tag) issued by the SC Department of Revenue. The license plate shall be permanent so long as the eligible veteran owns the vehicle for which the plate is issued.

Section 12-37-220 B (3) of the 1976 Code:

This section provides that one personal motor vehicle owned by any disabled veteran for which special license tags have been issued by the SC Dept. of Revenue under Section 56-3-1110 shall be exempt from state, county, and municipal taxes.

The decal must be placed on your Disabled Veteran or Purple Heart license plate to allow parking in disabled spaces.

Note: Widow may keep tag but will not be exempt from taxes.

ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY EXEMPTION

Q: What property is included in the Active Duty Military Exemption and how do I apply?

If your home of record is not South Carolina, you do not have to pay personal property taxes on property which you own while permanently stationed in this state. This exemption does not include county taxes on real property. The exemption covers motor vehicles (including trucks), campers, motor homes, boats and outboard motors, personal recreational watercraft (like wave-runners and jet-skis), aircraft and mobile homes (occupied by the owner). The property must be singularly titled in the name of the military service member in order to qualify for a 100% exemption. If there is a non military co-owner, only 50% of the exemption will be applied. In order for your mobile home to be qualify, it must be the service member's primary residence. To obtain the exemption, the service member can submit their latest Leave & Earnings Statement to any of the auditor's offices or complete a military exemption examination and submit it to any of the auditor's offices. The documents can be submitted by mail, fax, or in person. The exemption is valid for only one year, so you will need to reapply every year.

Q: Are there any special exemptions for POW's or Medal of Honor recipient?

If you were a POW or a Medal of Honor recipient, you may qualify for an exemption from property tax on up to two motor vehicles. Application should be made through the SC Department of Revenue (DOR). There is a DOR office in the South Carolina State Museum on Gervais Street.

MOTOR VEHICLE TAX

Q: How do you determine what my motor vehicle is worth?

The S.C Department of Revenue (DOR) determines the value of motor vehicles within the state by using a set of nationally accepted standards and guidelines established by the auto industry. County auditors throughout the state use the DOR Motor Vehicle Values manual to establish the fair market value in preparing your motor vehicle tax

bill. The manual lists each model and make of all available motor vehicles. The vehicle's fair market value is multiplied by the assessment ratio set by law to determine the assessed value. The assessed value is then multiplied by the millage rate to determine the amount of tax owed.

Motor vehicle taxes are the only personal property taxes which are due a year in advance (in accordance with state law).

DRIVERS NEEDED FOR LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS' VAN

A volunteer driver or volunteer drivers is/are needed for the Lexington County Veterans' Van. The van will be parked at the Lexington County Auxiliary Building at 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC. The van will be titled to the VA Medical Center which has the responsibility for maintenance, fuel, and insurance.

The designated driver(s) will be required to take a physical examination at the Dorn VA hospital and have a current driver's license. For more information call Gary Baker at 803-785-8401.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR TROOPS STATIONED IN AFGHANISTAN & IRAQ

Once again, the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office is assisting the Blue Star Mothers to provide Christmas gifts for our troops overseas. The Blue Star Mothers collect the items and wrap them for shipment for distribution to the servicemembers. Donations can be forwarded to this office, or we can arrange pickup if necessary. We will need any donations prior to about November 10th to insure delivery by Christmas.



GEORGE WASHINGTON'S 1789 THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION

Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor; and Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to *"recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness:"*

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our National Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness to us), and to bless them with good governments, peace, and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and, generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand, at the city of New York, the 3d day of October, A.D. 1789.



TWO NEW WAYS SCAMMERS CAN TAKE MONEY OUT OF YOUR BANK ACCOUNT

There are a number of ways for scammers to get money out of your bank account. One recent way is after the scammers get your bank account number (perhaps by stealing a check or a statement, or simply by having you write them a check), they can create unauthorized demand drafts.

Demand drafts are usually used to allow firms to make withdrawals from your account without you having to write a check each time. However, scammers are now creating phony demand drafts and using them to take money out of innocent people's bank accounts.

Another method scammers are using to steal money from bank accounts is to print fraudulent checks based on the information on your check. Desktop publishing makes this quite easy.

Actions to take to protect yourself: Keep your checks in a safe spot. Be very careful whom you write a check to—once you've written someone a check, they then have all of your bank account information (except your password). Carefully review your bank statement regularly for unauthorized checks and transfers.

ICE YOUR CELL PHONE

ICE is an acronym that stands for "in case of emergency," and it is a new idea that started in April and is spreading around the world.

After the London bombings, emergency workers had no idea which of the many phone numbers listed in cell phones of the injured and dead should be called.

The idea, which we understand was conceived by Bob Brotchie, a British paramedic, is to insert the word ICE before the people you'd like called in case of an emergency. That way, paramedics and other emergency workers will know whom to call.

For example, let's say you want your husband, Steve Smith, and your mother, Jane Simon, to be called if there is an emergency. Your cell phone entries might be: ICE-Steve Smith and ICE-Mom.

Most paramedics now know what ICE means and they look for it. This save them time, so your loved ones are contacted more quickly.

Tip: Always place ICE before more than one name in your cell phone in case the first person doesn't answer right away. You can even use ICE1, ICE2, ICE3, to designate the order you'd like people called.

Added benefit: If you lose your cell phone and someone honest finds it, they'll have more options of whom to call to get the phone back to you.

Action: Enter ICE before several names in your cell phone right now.

CAUTION! FREE CEMETERY LOTS

The VA has gotten complaints from vets who were approached by commercial funeral outfits offering free cemetery lots or other so-called veteran benefits. They DO NOT represent the U.S. government! Be sure to ask:

- ◆ Must you also purchase another lot?
- ◆ Where is it located? How much will it cost?
- ◆ Is “perpetual care” additional?
- ◆ What are the costs for opening and closing **each** grave?
- ◆ Must certain memorials be purchased through the cemetery?
- ◆ What are the costs for setting memorials?
- ◆ Is a vault required? Even for cremated remains? May it be purchased elsewhere?
- ◆ Are there marker or planting restrictions?
- ◆ What are the “administrative” charges?
- ◆ Who owns the cemetery? Are there nearby municipal or religious cemeteries which charge less for the same services?

BURIAL AT SEA

Burial (or the scattering of cremains) at sea is available to all veterans and dependents, and is provided by the Navy or US Coast Guard. A flag is required, and—if supplied by the family—can be returned. If supplied by the Navy, it will not be.

Because sea burials are done at the convenience of the military, the family may not witness sea burial.

Bodies waiting for sea burial must be embalmed to a state of preservation that will last for at least 60 days. (This is accomplished with undiluted embalming fluid; “stiff.”)

A nonsealing metal casket must be used, bound with six bands of nylon. The casket must carry 150 lbs. of extra weight.

Two-inch holes (20 total) must be drilled in the top, bottom, and at each end.

MISCELLANEOUS BURIAL BENEFITS AND OTHER INFORMATION

- You may not reserve space in a national cemetery ahead of time; arrangements are made only at the time of death. Therefore, there is no guarantee that spouses will be interred side-by-side.

- Burials in a national cemetery are not usually conducted on weekends.
- National cemeteries provide space for both body burial and cremated remains.
- Check with the cemetery regarding gravesite adornments other than natural cut flowers.
- Military honors or a funeral honor guard **may** be available from nearby military installations or veterans groups. Fly-overs are reserved for those on active duty at the time of death.
- A flag is provided on request for the burial or any veteran. Apply through the VA and pick up at a U.S. Post Office. Family members may wish to purchase a flag case for later display, available through private sources.
- Next-of-kin, other relatives or friends may request a “Presidential Memorial Certificate.” More than one may be requested.
- A family may apply directly to the VA for all benefits. Although it may be convenient to let the undertaker do so, you may wish to ask if the mortician charges for submitting claims.
- When the body of a veteran without next-of-kin is unclaimed from a VA facility and the estate is without sufficient assets, the VA will assume responsibility for burial.
- Other than for sea burial, there are NO casket requirements for routine body burial. An undertaker handling the unclaimed body of a vet must supply something more durable than cardboard, unless the body is to be cremated.
- “No-fee” passports are available for family visiting overseas gravesites or memorials.
- The National Cemetery System may be asked to do a search to locate anyone interred in a national cemetery. In addition to general vital statistics, you will need to know the state from which the veteran entered military service.
- There are state-run veterans cemeteries that may offer the same or similar benefits, with some restrictions. For a listing of VA cemeteries, check: <http://cem.va.gov>

Military Order of Purple Heart Scholarship for 2006 school year is open. Last year, 25 scholarships of \$2,000 were awarded to Purple Heart spouses and lineal descendants. The new deadline is January 16, 2006. If you need information, please contact: wthichangthong@purpleheart.org for latest information and application.

**WOMEN VETERANS
HEALTH PROGRAM**

**Breast Cancer: Understanding your
Mammogram Results**

The fear of abnormal mammogram results is real, but facts may help calm it. Most abnormalities on a mammogram are not breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society recommends having a baseline mammogram between ages 35 and 40, and then a screening mammogram every year after age 40. Questionable mammogram results sometimes require additional evaluation. With further examination (imaging studies and/or biopsy), most of these abnormalities are found to be normal breast tissue or benign (noncancerous) tissue.

Screening mammograms are recommended annually for all women starting at age 40, even if they are asymptomatic, meaning they have no signs or symptoms of breast disease.

Diagnostic mammograms differ from screening mammograms in that the examination focuses specifically on an area of tissue that appeared abnormal on the screening mammogram. Diagnostic mammograms are also done for women who have not had a screening mammogram but may be showing signs or symptoms of something abnormal in the breasts.

Mammograms are covered through the VA for all female veterans. Contact your Primary Care provider to ask that a mammogram be ordered for you.



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**The Veterans Affairs Office will be closed
November 11th for Veterans Day
November 24-25, for Thanksgiving.**

NOVEMBER OUTREACH PROGRAM

November 1st	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
November 8th	9-12	Chapin
November 15th	8-12	Swansea

NEW OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

These are toll-free calls