

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



GARY R. BAKER
DIRECTOR

BARBARA O'CONNOR
ASST. CSO

BETTY J. CARSON
Editor

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

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

VET NEWS

September 2006

SOME LEXINGTON COUNTY VAN PASSENGER RULES

To better coordinate the available van drivers, we are asking you to schedule your Dorn VA Medical Center appointments between the hours of 9:00 am. to 12:00 pm., Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. You must live in Lexington County to ride the van. The van driver is not allowed to lift or attend to any patient medically. All riders must be ambulatory (capable of boarding and departing the van without the driver's aid and attendance). No individuals, other than the veteran, will be permitted to ride the van unless:

a. He/she is the veteran's spouse/caregiver who is authorized in writing by the VA physician to render the veteran "Aid and Attendance" and has been issued a written "Permission to Travel" slip by the patient's VA physician, during the first visit. **(NOTE: You must secure this slip from a VA medical facility.)**

b. Veteran's with appointments have priority. Spouses/Caregivers may be removed from the passenger list up until the last minute and will be replaced only by qualified veterans with scheduled appointments.

The van driver has the right to refuse transportation to any passenger whom he/she feels is too ill to ride the van, or the driver may request a written statement from the patient's VA physician stating it is permissible for the veteran to ride without aid or attendance.

The van driver is only permitted to stop the van for rest stops and/or emergencies, or to pick up and discharge passengers at designated pick-up points.

Passengers should not ask the driver to make side trips to take care of personal business.

"BLUE WATER" NAVY & AIRFORCE VETERANS ENTITLED TO THE PRESUMPTION OF EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE

On August 16, 2006, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC or Court) held that Vietnam veterans who served in the waters off Vietnam (these class of veterans are known as "Blue Water" Navy veterans) are entitled to disability benefits for diseases related to exposure to Agent Orange. This decision reverses the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy that veterans had to step foot on Vietnamese soil in order to be entitled to the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange, and hence, presumptive disability benefits related to this exposure. The decision will also affect Air Force veterans who served elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

It is unclear at this time what action the VA will take. As of this writing, *Haas* is the "law of the land" and therefore VA must abide by it.

Veterans seeking service connection for diseases as a result of Agent Orange exposure (as well as those seeking to have their benefits restored) are encouraged to contact the VA office immediately.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local service officer at (803) 785-8400.

(The American Legion Bulletin, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Washington, D.C.: August 22, 2006.)

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERAN'S PARADE

The annual Lexington County Veteran's Parade will be Sunday, November 5, 2006 at 2:30 p.m. (no entry fee). Route will come down North Lake Drive to South Lake Drive.

COME HELP HONOR OUR VETERANS!! Grand Marshalls: Tuskegee Airmen Association.

Sponsored by: Lexington County Employee Committee, American Legion Post 7, VFW Post 8738, Lexington County Veterans Affairs, and Town of Lexington.

Contact Sharon Willis at 785-8121 or 237-9617 (after 5 p.m.), Gary Baker or Barbara O'Connor at 785-8400 or Bob Hall at 785-8349.

SEPTEMBER DATES TO REMEMBER

Labor Day (office will be closed)	September 4
Patriot Day	September 11
POW/MIA Remembrance Day	September 15



Volunteer drivers are still needed to transport disabled veterans to and from the Dorn VA Medical Center. If you are interested, come by the Veterans Affairs Office and pick up an application. All applicants must pass a physical and take a TB test at the Dorn VA Hospital to become a certified driver. Call Gary Baker at 785-8401 for more information.

JURY DUTY SCAM

Most of us take those summons for jury duty seriously, but enough people skip out on their civic duty, that a new and ominous kind of scam has surfaced. Fall for it and your identity could be stolen, reports CBS.

In this con, someone calls pretending to be a court official who threateningly says a warrant has been issued for your arrest because you didn't show up for jury duty. The caller claims to be a jury coordinator.

If you protest that you never received a summons for jury duty, the scammer asks you for your Social Security number and date of birth so he or she can verify the information and cancel the arrest warrant. Sometimes they even ask for credit card numbers. Give out any of this information and bingo! Your identity just got stolen.

The scam has been reported so far in 11 states. This (scam) is particularly insidious because they use intimidation over the phone to try to bully people into giving information by pretending they're with the court system. The FBI and the federal court system have issued nationwide alerts on their web sites, warning consumers about the fraud.

The easiest way to circumvent this process (and to ensure this is not a real court official calling you) is to simply ask what jurisdiction (county or city and state) they are calling from and allegedly has this warrant. If it isn't one where you live or have lived recently, it almost assuredly is a scam. If it happens to be your jurisdiction the caller identifies, hang up and call your local sheriff's office or PD to check on a warrant for you. You could also call the court directly to see if they did indeed send a jury summons. Check out the veracity of this here:

<http://www.snopes.com/crime/fraud/juryduty.asp> or http://www.fbi.gov/page2/june06/jury_scams060206.htm

**VA ADDS POW, PURPLE HEART
DESIGNATION TO VETERANS
IDENTIFICATION CARD**

The VA has added Former POW and Purple Heart (PH) designations on its Veterans Identification Card (VIC). These designations are in addition to the Service-Connected designation already displayed on the VIC.

The cards have a photo of the veteran and identifying information embedded using bar code and magnetic strip technology. Cards are issued to veterans enrolled in the VA health care system and are used for identification and administrative processing purposes. It cannot be used as a credit or an insurance card and does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities.

Former prisoners of war and Purple Heart recipients who are currently enrolled with VA and have a current VIC photograph on file will automatically be sent an updated VIC. Those who are enrolled but have not yet been issued a VIC may request the new card by visiting their local medical center to have their photo taken. Card processing will take five to seven days once eligibility is verified.

VIETNAM WALL VISITOR CENTER APPROVED

The federal commission gave approval of the new Vietnam Wall Visitor Center Friday, August 4, 2006. A sprawling underground center will be constructed between the Lincoln Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall.

The center will be the first new memorial project on the coveted Mall since the National World War II Memorial was built. The project was supported by some veterans groups that have long been troubled by the understated nature of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall and want to provide more history and context for its list of more than 58,000 Americans killed or missing in the war. With memorial space at a premium in Washington, the Vietnam veterans won one of the biggest prizes of all.

No portion of the center can be visible from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Constitution Avenue or surrounding streets. It must be built below the existing grade on the land surrounding the Lincoln Memorial. Any skylights, monitors, light wells or sunken areas cannot be seen from surrounding sidewalks, according to the commission's guidelines. The center must have a single entrance for both visitors and service personnel, and the lighting must be subtle. The footprint of the center must be within the root areas of the existing elms, and no new parking can be constructed to accommodate the visitors.

The center will cost \$100 million, of which the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has raised \$25 million. The sponsors expect to have a design selected by the end of this year and plan to get final approval for construction early next year.

DIGNITY AT MILITARY FUNERALS SECURED ON MEMORIAL DAY

Chairman Buyer Joins President Bush

*as Respect for America's Fallen
Heroes is Signed into Law*

America's military families will now be guaranteed their peace while mourning the loss of a loved one. The enactment of H.R. 5037, as amended, the *Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act*, prohibits disruptions of military funerals in national cemeteries. The bill was signed into law by President Bush minutes before he attended the Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

"It is fitting that legislation protecting the sanctity of military funerals at national cemeteries was signed into law on Memorial Day," said Buyer. "We owe the living spirit of those who made the highest sacrifice for our freedoms a profound debt of gratitude. Our obligation to these heroes and their families includes a dignified funeral befitting their sacrifice." (*VetsInfoService*, July, 2006)



**PRESENTATION OF THE STATE FLAG TO
FAMILIES OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF
THE SC NATIONAL GUARD**

The State Adjutant General's Office shall present to the family of each deceased member of the South Carolina National Guard a flag of the State of South Carolina, appropriate for use as a burial flag, upon application of the family of the deceased.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the **VETERAN**, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.
It is the **VETERAN**, who salutes the flag.
It is the **VETERAN**, who serves under the flag.
Eternal Rest grant them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

GOD BLESS THEM ALL!!!



SECURITY ALARM ALERT

The next time you come home for the night and you go to put your keys away, think of this: It's a security alarm system that you probably already have and requires no installation.

Start keeping your car keys next to your bed on the nightstand when you go to bed at night.

If you think someone is trying to get into your house, or if you hear a noise outside your house, press the panic alarm on your car key chain. Test it! It will go off from most everywhere inside your house and will keep honking until your battery runs down or until you reset it with the button on the key fob chain. It works if you park in your driveway or garage.

If your car alarm goes off when someone is trying to break in your house, odds are the burglar, or rapist, won't stick around....after a few seconds all the neighbors will be looking out their window to see who is out there and sure enough the criminal won't want that.

Try yours to make sure it works before you rely on it. Just know that you must press the alarm button again to turn it off. And remember to carry your keys while walking to your car in a parking lot. The alarm can work the same way there.

This is something that should be shared with everyone. It could save a life or a sexual abuse crime.

**PURPLE HEART VETERANS:
WIN A FREE TRIP TO VIETNAM**

If you received a Purple Heart while serving in Vietnam, you could be one of none veterans to win the

VFW's "Return to Vietnam" trip. You do not have to be a member of the VFW to enter.

From May 11-20, 2007, you will visit Saigon, the Mekong Delta, Cu Chi, Hue, the DMZ, Hoi An, Marble Mountain, and China Beach. Airfare, accommodations, and meals are included.

Don't miss this chance to revisit battle sites and to share your experiences with fellow Vietnam veterans.

Entries must be received before the December 1, 2006 drawing. Winner will be notified by mail or e-mail in early December. Go to: <http://www.vfw.org> for an entry form and more information.

FYI AND ACTION

The Health Revenue Center has advised us of the following:

We have received credible information regarding a telephone scam whereby veterans are contacted and urged to call a 1-800 number.

The pretext for this action is regarding the recent data loss by the VA and publicly generated from that event. The veteran or their spouse is compelled to believe this is a resource to assist them. Once the veteran calls the 1-800 number, they are directed to call 1-900 number, where they incur a \$9.99 per minute charge. So far this scam has only been identified in VISN 16.

Please caution veterans that this is a hoax, not a VA sponsored piece of information, and that they should never dial a 1-900 number without knowing that there always will be a significant charge to their phone bills if they do.

LET'S ALL DO A GOOD DEED!

If you go to the website at: www.letsaythanks.com you can pick out a thank you card and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to some member of the armed services. It only takes a second and wouldn't it be wonderful if they received a bunch of these.

VA INITIATIVE AGAINST OBESITY, DIABETES ADVANCES

Setting his sights on the twin maladies of obesity and diabetes, the Secretary of Veterans

Affairs has announced the launch of a national registration campaign to let veterans and their families tailor their diets and exercise programs into a healthful life-style.

"Good nutrition and physical activity can help millions of Americans preserve the independence that would be threatened by diabetes and being overweight," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson. "We want everyone to know that they can act now, before it is too late, and VA has the tools to help."

The new health care assessment is part of a campaign called **MOVE -- Managing Obesity/Overweight for Veterans Every-where** -- which is part of the HealthierUS Veterans program sponsored by the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) to reduce obesity and diabetes, a disease often associated with being overweight.

Patients enrolled in VA's health care program can complete an interactive on-line questionnaire about their health status, nutrition, and exercise. Based on their information, veterans and family members receive a custom report with health information and instructions for follow up with the staff of a VA medical center.

"Our prescription for America's veterans is simple," said Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "We want them to eat healthy, be active, and get fit for life. Their service in uniform taught veterans what it takes to achieve a high level of fitness. We're helping them stay that way.

People not enrolled in VA's health care program can log into:

www.move.va.gov/move23.asp

and answer 23 questions. They will receive an individualized report giving them suggestions about making changes in their eating and physical activity and referring them to the materials on the web site.

50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY PRESIDENTIAL LETTER

You can have a wedding anniversary (or birthday wish) sent to individuals older than 80 by writing to The White House Greetings Office, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20500. You should include the full name and address of the recipient(s), the occasion being celebrated and the date of the occasion. The request must be sent 30 days before the date of the occasion.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR VIETNAM WALL REPLICA EXHIBITION

The Blue Star Mothers need volunteers to help at the **Vietnam Traveling Wall** exhibition in Columbia, SC on October 27, 28 & 29, 2006. If you can spare an hour or more on any of these dates, call Ann Ricard at: 803-356-3599.

The traveling, $\frac{3}{4}$ scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is 240 feet long, eight feet high, and contains the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam. All names etched on "The Wall" will be read throughout the three-day exhibition in 20-minute intervals.

HOMELESS VETERANS' REINTEGRATION PROGRAM EXTENDED THROUGH 2009 WITH \$50,000 ANNUAL AUTHORIZATION

The purpose of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.

HVRP was initially authorized under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in July 1987. It is currently authorized under Title 38 U.S.C. Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive

Assistance Act of 2001. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants such as: State and local Workforce Investment Boards, public agencies, for-profit/commercial entities, and non-profit organizations, including faith based and community based organizations.

Grantees provide an array of services utilizing a case management approach that directly assists homeless veterans as well as provide critical linkages for a variety of supportive services available in their local communities. The program is "employment focused" and veterans receive the employment and training services they need in order to re-enter the labor force. Job placement, training, job development, career counseling, resume preparation, are among the services that are provided. Supportive services such as clothing, provision of or referral to temporary, transitional, and permanent housing, referral to medical and substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance are also provided to meet the needs of this target group.

Since its inception, HVRP has featured an outreach component using veterans who themselves have experienced homelessness. In recent years, this successful technique was modified to allow the programs to utilize formerly homeless veterans in various other positions where there is direct client contact such as counseling, peer coaching, intake, and follow-up services.

The emphasis on helping homeless veterans get and retain jobs is enhanced through many linkages and coordination with various veterans' services programs and organizations such as the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives stationed in the local employment service offices of the State Workforce Agencies, Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Centers, Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Departments of Veterans' Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services.

For more information about U.S. Department of Labor employment and training programs for veterans, contact the Veterans' Employment and Training Service office nearest you, listed in the phone book under United States Government, U.S. Department of Labor or at: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm>.

HOW TO GUARD AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT

The Department of Veterans Affairs says it is not necessary in the case of the data theft security breach for veterans to contact their financial institutions or cancel credit cards and bank accounts. But veterans need to be vigilant and monitor bank and credit card statements. Report unusual activity immediately to the financial institution involved and contact the Federal Trade Commission.

If you detect suspicious activity, do the following:

Step 1: Contact the fraud department of one of the three major credit bureaus:

- Equifax, PO Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241, 1-800-525-6285
www.equifax.com
- Experian, PO Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013, 1 888-397-3742
www.experian.com

- TransUnion,
- Fraud Victim Assistance Division,
PO Box 6790
Fullerton, CA 92834-6790,
1-800-680-7289
www.transunion.com

Step 2: Close any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.

Step 3: File a police report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.

Step 4: File a complain with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) by using the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline at 1-877-438-4338, online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft, or by mail at Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY
605 West Main Street, Suite 101
Lexington, SC 29072
(803) 785-8400**

SEPTEMBER OUTREACH PROGRAM

September 5 th	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
September 12th	9-12	Chapin
September 19th	8-12	Swansea

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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