

**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

April 2007

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

**April 9, 2007**

The quarterly Advisory Committee meeting will be held April 9, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office. Please try to have at least one representative from your organization in attendance.

Light refreshments will be served.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Children's Easter Egg Hunts

March 31, VFW Post 6740, Leesville: 12-2pm

April 7, VFW Post 8738, Lexington: 3 pm

Easter Sunday, April 8

DAV Convention, May 17-19, Raddison Inn

VFW State Convention, June 15-17, Raddison Inn

American Legion Convention, June 23-24, Raddison Inn

## SPRING TRAINING

The South Carolina County Veterans Affairs Spring Training will be held April 11-13 in Spartanburg. The office will be open those days but the service representatives as well as the Service Officer will be at the training sessions.



The Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office has crutches, a hospital bed, potty chairs, walkers, and wheelchairs to loan. Call 785-8400 to reserve.

## AID & ATTENDANCE PROGRAM

The Aid and Attendance (A&A) Special Pension provides benefits for veterans and surviving spouses who require the regular attendance of another person to assist in eating, bathing, dressing and undressing or taking care of the needs of nature. It also includes individuals who are blind or a patient in a nursing home because of mental or physical incapacity. Assisted care in an assisting living facility also qualifies.

The A&A Pension can provide up to \$1,519 per month to a veteran, \$976 per month to a surviving spouse, or \$1,802 per month to a couple. (Figures are from the VA as of 1/01/07)

Eligibility must be proven by filing the proper Veterans Application for Pension or Compensation. This application will require a copy of a DD-214 or separation papers, medical evaluation from a physician, current medical issues, net worth limitations, and net income, along with out-of-pocket medical expenses.

To apply for the Aid & Attendance Special Pension, you will need the following:

- Discharge/Separation Papers (DD-214)
- Copy of Marriage Certificate and all marital information (surviving spouses only)
- Copy of the Death Certificate (surviving spouses)
- Copy of current Social Security Award letter
- Net worth information, including bank accounts, CDs, Trusts, Stocks, Bonds, Annuities, etc.
- Proof of all income from pensions, retirement, interest income from investments, & annuities
- If you are a court-appointed guardian of the veteran or surviving spouse, a certified copy of the court order of the appointment
- Proof of insurance premiums, medications, medical bills, any other medical expenses not reimbursed by insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid
- Physician statement that includes current diagnosis, medical status, prognosis, etc.
- Banking information for Direct Deposit (include a voided check)
- Employment history (if under 65)
- List of all doctors and hospitals visited in the last year.

Call your local VA Office at: 785-8400 for help.

## MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> – SILVER STAR DAY

Thanks to the efforts of Silver Star Families of America, several states have proclaimed May 1<sup>st</sup> as “Silver Star Day” to honor the nation’s wounded servicemembers.

Silver Star Families of America is a member of America Supports You, a Defense Department program highlighting the ways Americans are supporting the nation’s servicemembers.

The proclamation has been sent to every state. So far, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Idaho, Iowa, New Mexico, Louisiana, Nebraska, and Mississippi have declared Silver Star Day. The group is asking for volunteers in each state. The American Legion has expressed interest in supporting the group.

Their main goal would be to get the word out about the Silver Stars and what we do: . . . honor and assist our wounded and their families in any way possible. This is done by presenting the Silver Star banners and care packages.

The Silver Star Banner, which the group is working to make a government-recognized service banner like those of the American Gold Star Mothers, will play a big part in observing Silver Star Day on May 1. Silver Star Families of America members are hoping to present their banners to veterans and wounded servicemembers in each state.



Founder and President Steve Newton  
1-417-743-2508 or [steven.newton1@att.net](mailto:steven.newton1@att.net)  
The Silver Star Families of America  
525 Cave Hollow Road  
Clever, MO 65631-6313

### VET CENTER SESSIONS

David Cox of the Vet Center of Columbia is available each Tuesday in the Conference Room in the Lexington Auxiliary Building at 605 West Main St., Lexington, SC for counseling of combat veterans. Give him a call at: 765-9944 to make an appointment.

## AIRMEN TO SEE NEW COMBAT MEDAL

Airmen involved in combat operations, on the ground and in the air, will see the unveiling of the Air Force Combat Action Medal (AFCAM) some time in April.

In order for an Airman to wear the AFCAM, a narrative explanation of the Airman’s involvement in combat activities must be submitted by a person with first-hand knowledge of the incident.

The application will be processed through the chain of command and eventually be approved or disapproved by the Commander of Air Force Forces (COMAFAFFOR).

Airmen can apply for the award to recognize participation in combat activities dating back as far as September 11, 2001.



Columbia TELEPHONE ADVICE PROGRAM  
(803) 776-9189 in the Columbia Area  
or 1-800-293-VAMC (8262)

The Telephone Advice Program (TAP) was implemented by the VA Medical Center as a result of feedback received from veterans who were trying to call the VA. TAP was implemented to better meet veterans’ needs and to improve the customer service the VA provides.

The purpose of the Telephone Advice Program is to improve communications, to help the patients receive care when they need it, to assist patients in avoiding unnecessary trips to the medical center and to reduce wait time. The Telephone Advice Program features a Pharmacy, a Scheduling Line, and a Nursing Line to meet needs of the patients. If you have a health care or other questions, that if addressed rapidly, can put your mind at ease or quickly solve a problem, the Telephone Advice Program will allow you to immediately contact staff that can be of assistance.

If you need to talk with a health care professional, call (803) 776-9189 or 1-800-293-VAMC (8262) outside the Columbia area; this is a 24-hour phone line. The Telephone Advice Program will ask you several brief questions and then transfer you to a Nurse, Pharmacist, or Program Support Assistant, depending on the reason for your call.

## ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Advance Directives are written instructions to guide your doctors and nurses and inform them of your treatment wishes. Advance Directives can be written anytime. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides for three different kinds of Advance Directives: the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, the Living Will, and the Treatment Preferences Document.

### Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care

- Allows you to name someone to speak for you if you should be unable to make decisions for yourself. This person is called a Health Care Agent.
- Gives your Agent authority to make health care decisions for you when you cannot.
- Allows the VA to give your Agent information from your medical record to help make health care decisions.
- Instructs your Agent to follow your wishes.
- Allows you to name an alternate Agent.

### Living Will

- Is useful for patients who do not have someone to name as a Health Care Agent.
- Allows you to document the type of treatment you wish at the end of life.
- Allows you to add any additional preferences or details about treatment.

### A Health Care Agent

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Should be someone you know and trust.
- Family members, a friend or a member of the clergy are often chosen as Agents.
- The Agent should know your preferences and values.
- You should tell the Agent where your written instructions are located.
- You should give a copy of your Advance Directives to your Agent.
- You should try to name an Alternate Agent.
- You should place a copy of your Advance Directives in your medical record.

### Questions Commonly Asked

- 1. Can I change my mind about something after I've completed the Advance Directive?**
  - You can always change your Advance Directive.

- It is best to put changes in writing.
- 2. Suppose I want to have everything possible done but only as long as there is a reasonable chance of recovery. Can an Advance Directive let me do that?**
    - Idea of a treatment is common.
    - Doctors would use a treatment as long as there seemed a reasonable hope of improvement.
  - 3. Is a Living Will the same as a regular will?**
    - A Living Will is for health decisions when you are unable to communicate but are still living. Examples: coma, severe dementia, like Alzheimer's Disease, or stroke.
    - Estate Wills are for personal possessions and finances, and only go in effect after you have died.
  - 4. Do I need a lawyer to complete an Advance Directive?**
    - You do not need a lawyer.
    - But, most forms do require two people to witness.
  - 5. What if there is no one I want to make decisions for me?**
    - Advance Directives are useful even if you have no one to name as Health Care Agent.
    - Advance Directives can guide doctors and nurses toward the kind of treatments you would or would not want.
  - 6. What if my family doesn't agree with my Advance Directive?**
    - Prepare your Advance Directive before you become severely ill.
    - Have family participate if possible.
    - Name as a Health Care Agent someone you can trust to carry out your wishes. It may not always be a family member.
    - Your doctor must follow your instructions, even if the family disagrees.
  - 7. Who can be a witness?**
    - The two witnesses must be over 18 years and competent.
    - Spouses, any potential inheritor, any creditors, any doctors or nurse taking care of you or employed by the VA cannot witness Advance Directives.

You may get copies of these forms at the Office of Veterans Affairs: 1-803-734-0200 or call the Columbia VA Regional Office: 1-800-827-1000.



**The Pearl Harbor Memorial dedicated to the Marine Detachment, November 2005**

### USS ARIZONA MEMORIAL

On December 1, 1942, *Arizona* was officially stricken from the register of the Navy. For years afterward, the burned-out hulk quietly rusted away, forgotten except by the families of the men entombed in her hull and the occasional Navy ship, which unofficially rendered honors, as if she was still commissioned. In 1950, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, established a small memorial on the rusted hulk. A flagpole was attached to the stump of a leg of the tripod and an American flag was raised and lowered daily. Seven years later, Hawaii's delegate to Congress, John Burns, proposed construction of a more suitable monument. The bill passed, with the proviso that no government funds be used. A public fund drive was launched to collect the \$500,000.00 construction cost. It reached its goal in 1960. Elvis Presley performed at a sold-out concert in Pearl Harbor's Block Arena and donated the proceeds, \$65,000, to the fund.

Construction began in 1960 based on a design by Alfred Pries. The design featured a bridge-like structure spanning *Arizona*'s sunken remains, without actually touching it. The memorial is 184 feet long and varies in width from 27 feet at the center to 36 feet at the ends. Its height varies from 14 feet at the center to 21 feet at the ends. The memorial is divided into three sections: a museum room; an assembly area that can accommodate two hundred people for ceremonies; and a shrine room that contains a marble wall listing the names of *Arizona*'s 1,177 crewmen killed in the attack, with the Marines listed together at the end. The flagstaff is mounted on a portion of the battleship's superstructure and does not touch any portion of the memorial itself.

On November 14, 2005, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Michael W. Hagee, dedicated a memorial to *Arizona*'s Marine detachment. It is located on a point of land between the USS *Arizona* Memorial Visitors Center and the USS *Bowfin* Submarine Memorial and Park. The memorial consists of a thirty-six foot flagpole embedded in a seven-sided concrete base on which seven bronze plaques, inscribed

with the names of the detachment, are fixed. The plaques are three feet tall and weigh 185 pounds.

One hundred and nine Marines made the ultimate sacrifice during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The *Arizona* suffered seventy-three of those fatalities, 67 percent of the total. Only fifteen of her eighty-eight man detachment survived December 7, 1941. According to the final muster, the bodies of sixteen *Arizona* Marines were identified and buried at Red Hill Cemetery; they were later exhumed and reburied at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. The remains of five additional Marines from the *Arizona* were identified after the completion of the final muster. Fifty-two Marines remain entombed in the *Arizona*.

In May 2007, the National Park Service will bulldoze this United States Marine Corps National Memorial unless they are stopped. The National Park Service, Jon Jarvis, Director of Region NPS, has decided that honoring the Marines is not important and will not fit the artist concept for what the water front should look like. Jon Jarvis never served in America's military so he doesn't/couldn't understand the passion of Marines taking care of Marines. He wants the entire acreage turned over as an empty parking lot. In a recent speech, he referred to the Marine Remembrance as "that flagpole."

If you are interested in preserving this historical site, get in touch with Colonel John R. Bates, USMC (ret) at:

[jrbatesusmc@aol.com](mailto:jrbatesusmc@aol.com)

or

7 Arizona Memorial Way  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96818



**MARINES**  
THE FEW. THE PROUD.

Semper Fidelis

## BUDDY POPPIES

Veterans at the local VA hospital have received kits to begin creating poppies for American Legion and Auxiliary distribution.



It's a large box that holds the kits. There are hundreds of bright red crepe paper sheets, each with multiple leaf-shape cutouts and sheets of green and black strips with close edge cuts resembling flat brooms. There are, also, many pre-cut wires and pages of labels; "Made by Veterans" in memory of veterans, to help veterans that is the essence of the American Legion Auxiliary poppy.

The poppy, merely a symbol, represents the story of men and women off to endure the horrors of war so that their loved ones and others at home might continue to live in peace.

So, when you see the volunteers passing out Buddy Poppies next month, please be generous. Auxiliary Units use their donations to help veterans with food, medicine, and other needs.

***Federal Benefits Information***  
***VA Regional Office***  
***1-800-827-1000***

  **Toll Free**  

**VA Medical Center – Columbia, SC 800-293-8262**

**VA Medical Center – Charleston, SC 888-878-6884**

**VA Medical Center – Augusta, GA 800-836-5561**

## THE VETERANS' VOICE

*The Veterans' Voice* is a free monthly publication which serves as a sounding board for veterans' issues and concerns. It is provided free of charge to VA facilities, VFW and American Legion posts, military posts, and to elected officials.

The VA office receives copies monthly. If you would like to see the publication, come by the VA Office and see what the publication looks like. You also can view the publication on line at: [www.theveteransvoice.com](http://www.theveteransvoice.com).

## NON-SERVICE CONNECTED DISABILITY PENSION

The Veterans Administration administers a pension program to provide financial support to certain disabled wartime veterans with limited income.

Eligibility for the program requires the honorably discharged veterans to have 90 or more days of military service one day of which must have been during a period of war. The veteran must have a disability that the VA has evaluated as permanent and total. Finally, the veteran's annual income must fall below \$10,929.00 and must be below \$14,313.00 if the veteran has one dependent.

The amount of VA payment is the difference between the veteran's annual income and the above amounts. If the veteran has been determined to need aid and attendance permanently, income limitations rise to \$21,615.00 and \$18,234.00 for the veteran.

The income limitation for permanently housebound rises to \$13,356.00 and \$16,740.00 for the veteran with one dependent.

As of December 27, 2001, veterans aged 65 or older do not need to meet the disability determination to be eligible for the pension.

I am America.

You shoved me off balance. You did not knock me down.

You will not cause me to bend. You will not break me.

You do not frighten me. You will not intimidate me.

You will not cause me to cower in my home.

You have done something unacceptable and unwise.

You have awakened the sleeping dragon.

You have filled me with a great resolve.

You will find that I have claws. I have teeth.

I will not meekly submit to an act of war.

You are guilty.

I will find you.

You may not see me coming, but you will surely know when I arrive.

I am America, and I will fight.

**WANT TO DO A GOOD DEED?**

Volunteers needed to drive the DAV van to transport veterans to the VA hospital:

- **Once a week**
- **Every other week**
- **Once a month**

Pick up an application at the Lexington County VA Office at 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC 29072: 803-785-8400.

**OFFICE SUPPLY SCAMS**

This scam generally involves small businesses who do not have a purchasing department. Someone will call asking for the model number of your copier or printer and then send you cartridges. Acceptance of this original shipment may lock you into a purchasing agreement, and since it is the right cartridge number for your equipment, the delivery will probably not be questioned.

Warn your staff never to give out such information on the phone. Designate one person to handle office supply purchases, and refer all supply inquiries to that person. When accepting a delivery, make sure you know what it is and where it came from before you sign for it.

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

**APRIL OUTREACH PROGRAM**

April 3rd	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
April 10th	9-12	Chapin
April 17 <sup>th</sup>	8-12	Swansea

**TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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