

SUICIDE PREVENTION

On July 3, 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs launched a pilot on-line Chat Service, in partnership with Lifeline. The Veterans Chat Service is located at the VA National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

Veterans Chat enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If the chats are determined to be a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the chatter to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken. The online feature is intended to reach out to all Veterans who may or may not be enrolled in the VA health care system and provide them with online access to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline and provides Veterans with an anonymous way to access VA's suicide prevention services.

Veterans (and family members or friends) can access Veterans Chat through the Lifeline suicide prevention website.

Know the Signs

Watch for these key suicide warning signs, and provide the Lifeline number to anyone exhibiting them.

- ✦ Talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- ✦ Trying to get pills, guns, or other ways to harm oneself
- ✦ Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- ✦ Hopelessness
- ✦ Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- ✦ Acting in a reckless or risky way
- ✦ Feeling trapped, like there is no way out



Saying or feeling there's no reason for living Suicide Prevention Lifeline is staffed by trained professionals 24 hours a day to help in an immediate crisis. After one year of operation, 62,000 veterans, family members, and friends of veterans have called the Lifeline. Of those there have been 1,400 rescues to prevent possible tragedies.

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

Any veteran who is service-connected for a disability for which he or she uses prosthetic or orthopedic appliances may receive an annual clothing allowance. This allowance also is available to any veteran whose service-connected skin condition requires prescribed medication that irreparably damages outer garments. To apply, contact the prosthetic representative at the nearest VA medical center, or call our office at 785-8400 for more information. Application must be made after April 1 of each year.

ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCES DUE TO DEPENDENTS

Veterans with disability ratings of at least 30 percent are eligible for additional allowances for dependents, including spouses, minor children, children between the ages of 18 and 23 who are attending school, children who are permanently incapable of self-support because of a disability arising before age 18, and dependent parents. The additional amount depends on the disability rating and the number of dependents.

SOUTH CAROLINA FALLEN SOLDIERS CEREMONY AND LUNCHEON

South Carolina lawmakers remembered the members of the armed forces from South Carolina who died last year while serving their country. This year's Fallen Soldiers Ceremony and Luncheon honored ten young men and their families.

Each family was presented with a concurrent resolution from the state House and Senate honoring the fallen soldier, along with The Order of the Palmetto Patriot and a state flag that was flown in his honor over the Statehouse.

The soldiers honored were:

- ◇ Specialist Larry Curtis Applegate, Army, Surfside Beach
- ◇ PFC Jason Watson, Army, Ehrhardt
- ◇ Staff Sgt. Raphael Futrell, Army, Anderson
- ◇ Capt. Mark McDowell, Air Force, Tamasee
- ◇ Specialist Abraham Wheeler III, Army, Columbia
- ◇ LCpl. Christopher Fowlkes, Marines, Gaffney
- ◇ Sgt. Demetrius Void, Army, Orangeburg
- ◇ LCpl. Mills Palmer Bigham, Marines, Columbia
- ◇ PFC Robert E. Foster, Jr. Army, Columbia



COOKIES FOR OUR TROOPS



Emilee Edwards, 11, helps pack Girl Scout cookies for our troops overseas. The Lexington Intermediate School student and member of Girl Scouts Troop 2167 was at the VFW Post 8738 in Lexington on Thursday, March 25. The Girl Scouts teamed up with the Blue Star Mothers of South Carolina to ship 5,000 boxes to our troops.

(source Lexington County Chronicle, March 30)

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

VA and the National Cemetery Administration are not responsible for the provision of military honors. The Department of Defense (DoD) will provide for military honors at the funeral of any eligible veteran whose family requests them as of January 1, 2000. VA will facilitate the provision of honors with DoD, local military units or veterans groups for burials at national cemeteries. The law includes the following provisions:

- The military funeral honors ceremony will consist of the folding and presentation of the flag and the playing of "Taps." Because of the number of funeral honors being requested, versus the number of buglers available, DoD has developed a "ceremonial bugle" consisting of a real bugle with an insert that plays "Taps" when switched on. The Lexington VA office has one that can be checked out.
- A detail to perform honors shall consist of two or more uniformed members of the Armed Forces, including Reserve Component members, with at least one member from the service in which the deceased member served.
- Authority is granted in the law to reimburse members of veterans service organizations (VSOs) and other authorized organizations for expenses when they participate with the military in the delivery of military funeral honors. These individuals are covered for purposes of liability and workers compensation.
- Pays Reserve Component members an allowance of \$50 a day and provides retirement points, which are allowed to accrue above the annual 75 point cap, for performing honor details. Covers Reserve Component members for liability and authorizes reimbursement for their travel over 50 miles.

It should be noted that the military services may provide additional elements during funeral honors in keeping with their military traditions. The Department of Defense, in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Service Organizations and funeral directors associations, has developed a kit to assist funeral directors and others in requesting military honors. The kit includes: a military service directory for every state and county; a military funeral honors brochure; a list of frequently asked questions; an instructional brochure on how to fold the flag and a compact disc of "Taps." The kit will be provided to all licensed funeral directors, VSO headquarters, VA national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Weekly unemployment compensation may be paid to discharged service members for a limited period of time. State laws govern the amount and duration of payments. To apply, veterans should immediately contact their nearest state employment office after leaving military service and present a copy of their military discharge, Form DD-214.

HOMELESS VETERANS

A number of VA benefits assist veterans "at risk" of becoming homeless, including disability compensation, pension and educational benefits. VA also provides health and rehabilitation programs for homeless veterans. VA's Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) Program provides health exams, treatment, referrals and ongoing case management to homeless veterans with mental health problems. The Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program provides biopsychosocial treatment and rehabilitation. VA has a growing number of Compensated Work Therapy/ Therapeutic Residence group homes, special day treatment centers and Comprehensive Homeless Centers. "Stand-Downs" are conducted for up to 3 days to provide general assistance, food, shelter, clothing, and offer information about VA health care and benefits.

VA has joined with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Social Security Administration, veterans service organizations and community nonprofit groups to assist homeless veterans. For information on benefits for homeless veterans, contact your Lexington County VA office.

APRIL 17,21-25
COLUMBIA, SC

FIRST NATIONAL
VIETNAM ERA
VETERAN'S
HOMECOMING

Schedule of Events
 (Subject to change)

Saturday, April 17th
 Ho Chi Minh Trail Ride (Poker Run)

Wednesday, April 21th
 Honor Flight
 (1st time for a few Vietnam Vets)

Thursday, April 22nd
 Golf Tournament postponed

Friday, April 23rd
 Battalion Graduation 0900hrs
 Hilton Field, Ft. Jackson.
 "Welcome Home to Ft. Jackson, SC"
 Weston Lake Rec Center (BBQ) 1200hrs

Medallion Center
 Welcome Home Banquet 1800hrs
 Jack Van Loan, RVN POW Keynote
 War Story Contest, mini-reunions
 Vendor room

Saturday, April 24th 1200hrs
 Spouse Shopping
 Four Corps USO Hangar Dance 1900hrs
 State Aeronautics Hanger,
 Metropolitan Airport

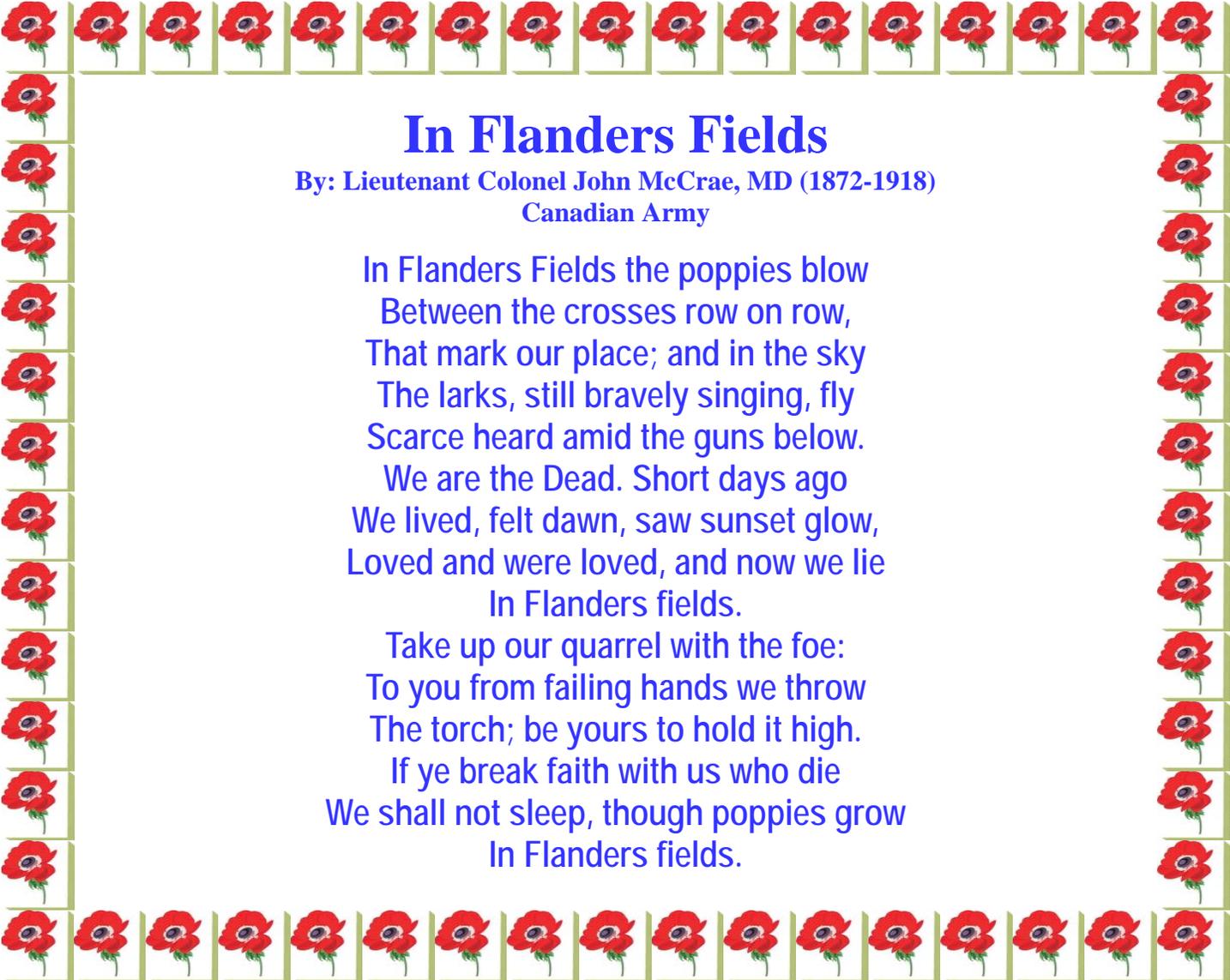
REGISTER ON LINE!

WWW.CelebrateFreedomFoundation.Org

For more information go to www.CelebrateFreedomFoundation.org

Environmental Exams

A free, complete physical examination with basic lab studies is offered to every Vietnam veteran exposed to Agent Orange and Gulf War veterans, whether or not the veteran is ill. Veterans do not have to be enrolled in VA healthcare to participate in registry examinations. Results of the examinations, which include review of the veteran's military service and exposure history, are entered into special computerized registries. The registries enable the VA to update veterans on research findings or new compensation policies through periodic newsletters. Registry participants are advised of the results of their examinations in personal consultations and by letters.



In Flanders Fields

By: Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD (1872-1918)
Canadian Army

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

History of Flanders Field Poem

Where are Flanders Fields? Some of the bloodiest battles of World War I took place in the areas of northern France and southwest Belgium known as Flanders and Picardy. The British front line was determined to keep the Germans from traversing Flanders and the Ypres river valley to reach the port of Calais. Troops from both sides were holed up in the *Ypres salient*, an outward projection of the battle line. Defending British troops were vulnerable on three sides; therefore this was a bloody and dangerous place for a soldier to be. The destruction from the battles in this area reached beyond the battlefield to the towns and roads of the area, and led to the demolition of buildings, roads, and all plant life, leaving only mud.

Where do the poppies come in? Noticed as early as the Napoleonic Wars, red poppies grew on the graves of dead soldiers in the fields of northern Europe. Evidently, poppy seeds will lie underground for years and bloom if they are plowed up. In the spring of 1915, red poppies flourished in the fields of the Ypres salient covering the newly dug graves.

Where does the poem come in? The scenes of the spring battles in the Ypres salient moved John McCrae, a Canadian doctor, to write "In Flanders Fields." He wrote the poem as he sat in the dressing area (where wounds were dressed) looking out at a field of graves. The poem was later published in *Punch Magazine*. McCrae died of pneumonia in 1918, a common killer of Great War soldiers. Inspired by McCrae's poem, American Moina Michael wore poppies to honor the war dead. She also began to sell poppies to raise money for disabled veterans. After meeting Moina Michael in 1920, Frenchwoman Madame E. Guerin started selling handmade poppies to raise money for poor children who were living in the aftermath of the Great War. Soon thereafter Field-Marshal Earl Haig, the former British Commander-in-Chief, encouraged the selling of paper poppies to raise funds for veterans. This tradition spread to Canada and then to the United States.