



# LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

*"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"*

March/April 2017



Lexington, SC.

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## At A Glance Calendar March/April

For a list of events in Lexington County for March and April

See page 18 - Happenings Around Lexington County

Weekly on Tuesdays in March

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Friday, March 10th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Saturday, March 11th

Dang-it Doll Workshop  
For more information see page 15

Sunday, March 12th

Daylight Savings Time Begins

Tuesday, March 14th

County Council Meeting

Friday, March 18th

St. Patrick's Day

Monday, March 20th

Spring Begins

Tuesday, March 28th

County Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 28th through Friday, March 31st

SCACVAO Conference - the office will be on a limited staff.

Weekly on Tuesdays in April

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Saturday, April 1st

April Fool's Day  
Midland's Heart Walk @ 9am - for more information see page 20

Thursday, April 6th

Gaston Outreach

Friday, April 7th

Chapin Outreach

Saturday, April 8th

Dang-it Doll Workshop  
For more information see page 15

Tuesday, April 11th

County Council Meeting

Sunday, April 16th

Easter

Saturday, April 22nd

Earth Day

Tuesday, April 25th

County Council Meeting  
Veterans Rally @ 9am - for more Information see page 8

Purple—Holidays/Special Days

Brown—County Council Meetings

Blue—Outreach dates

Pink—Special Events throughout the County

Red—County Offices Closed, No van scheduled and Special Notices

Orange—Director Out of Office

Black—Director's appearances in the County

Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings

**From the Director...**

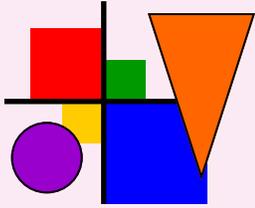
By the time you read this, construction on the renovations of our building will be in full swing. It is anticipated to take six months and will necessitate the movement of the VA office from where we are presently, to the front of the building. We are excited about this renovation because it will give us a state of the art office complex that will help us better serve Veterans and their survivors. In the history of the Lexington County VA Office, there has never really been an office designed specifically for the work we do and the people we serve. We have worked diligently with County leadership and the architect in order to get a workable design and once completed, we will have a ribbon cutting and officially open the new office. All are invited to the ribbon cutting!

The Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water issue that has been prevalent in the news lately will soon manifest itself in the awarding of VA compensation. We are ready to assist Veterans with claims for benefits that exposure to contaminated water might have caused. We expect several conditions on a compiled list to be included in the years ahead. These claims are being adjudicated in the Louisville Regional Office and a large volume of claims is expected in 2017.

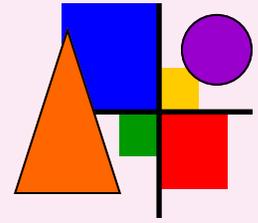
It is an honor to serve Lexington County!



***"THANK A VETERAN"***



# VA Healthcare



The Veterans Health Administration is America's largest integrated health care system with over 1,700 sites of care, including hospitals, community clinics, community living centers, domiciliaries, Vet Centers and various other facilities which serve 8.76 million Veterans each year. If you served in the active military, naval or air service and were separated under any condition other than dishonorable, you may qualify for VA health care benefits. Once enrolled, Veterans may receive health care at a VA health care facilities anywhere in the country. All enrolled Veterans receive the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA's) comprehensive Medical Benefits Package which includes preventive, primary and specialty care, diagnostic, inpatient and outpatient care services. Veterans may receive additional benefits, such as dental care depending on their unique qualifications. Enrollment assures Veterans that comprehensive health care services are available when they are needed.



The VA operates an enrollment system that helps to manage the provision of health care. The VA applies a variety of factors during the application verification process when determining a Veterans' eligibility for enrollment. Once a Veteran is enrolled, that Veteran remains enrolled in the VA health care system and maintains access to certain VA health benefits. Once your application is successfully processed, you will be assigned an enrollment priority group. The VA uses priority groups to balance demand for VA health care enrollment with their resources. Certain Veterans may be eligible for enrollment in more than one priority group. In that case, the VA will always place you in the highest priority group in which you are eligible. Under the VA Health Benefits Package, the same services are generally available to all enrolled Veterans. Once enrolled, you will receive a personalized Veterans Handbook, which will detail your VA health benefits and provide important information concerning your access to VA health care. Changes in available resources may reduce the number of priority groups VA can enroll. If this occurs, VA will publicize the changes and notify affected enrollees.

List of the different priority groups:

**GROUP 1:** Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or more and Veterans determined by VA to be unemployable due to service-connected conditions.

**GROUP 2:** Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 30 to 40 percent.

**GROUP 3:** Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 10 and 20 percent; Veterans who are former Prisoners of War (POW) or were awarded a Purple Heart Medal; Veterans awarded the Medal of Honor (MOH); Veterans awarded special eligibility for disabilities incurred in treatment or participation in a VA Vocational Rehabilitation program; and Veterans whose discharge was for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

**GROUP 4:** Veterans receiving aid and attendance or housebound benefits and/or Veterans determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled.

**GROUP 5:** Veterans receiving VA pension benefits or eligible for Medicaid programs, and non-service-connected Veterans and non-compensable, zero percent service-connected; Veterans whose gross annual household income and/or net worth are below the VA national income threshold and geographically adjusted income threshold for their resident area.

Continued on page 4

## VA Healthcare continued from page 3



**GROUP 6:** Veterans of WWII; Veterans seeking care solely for certain conditions associated with exposure to ionizing radiation during atmospheric testing or during the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; for any illness associated with participation in tests conducted by the Department of Defense (DOD) as part of Project 112/Project SHAD; Veterans with zero percent service-connected disabilities who are receiving disability compensation benefits; Veterans who served in the republic of Vietnam between 1962 and 1975; Veterans of the Persian Gulf War that served between August 2, 1990 and November 11, 1998 and Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998 as follows: 1. Veterans discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003, who were enrolled as of January 28, 2008 and Veterans who apply for enrollment after January 28, 2008, for 5 years post discharge; 2. Veterans discharged from active duty before January 28, 2003, who apply for enrollment after January 28, 2008, until January 27, 2011.

**GROUP 7:** Veterans with gross household income below the geographically-adjusted income threshold (GMT) for their resident location and who agree to pay co-pays.

**GROUP 8:** Veterans, enrolled as of January 16, 2003, with gross household income and/or net worth above the VA national income threshold and the geographically-adjusted income threshold for their resident location and who agree to pay co-pays.

Note: Due to income relaxation rules implemented on June 15, 2009 Veterans with household income above the VA national threshold or the GHMT income threshold for their resident location by 10 percent or less, who agree to pay co-pays, are eligible for enrollment in Priority Group 8.

If you served in the active military service and were separated under any condition other than dishonorable, you may qualify for VA health care benefits. Current and former members of the Reserves or National Guard who were called to active duty by a Federal order and completed the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty may be eligible for VA health benefits as well. Combat Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998 are eligible to enroll in PG 6 within 5 years from the date of discharge and will receive free health care services and nursing home care for conditions possibly related to their military service. Veterans who served on active duty at Camp Lejeune for not fewer than 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987 are eligible for care for treatment of certain medical conditions regardless of enrollment status and will also receive free health care related to those illnesses or conditions.

The simplest way to apply for VA health benefits is by completing and submitting VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits online. You may also apply in person at your local VA medical facility, by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or you may mail the completed form to: VA Health Eligibility Center, 2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200, Atlanta, Georgia 30329.



VA has developed a Website - My HealtheVet - especially for Veterans. VA encourages Veterans, active duty Service members, their dependents and caregivers to register for a My HealtheVet account. Anyone who registers on My HealtheVet starts with a Basic Account which provides limited access to features in My HealtheVet that you self-enter. You may use the journals and other tools to track your health measures.

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# Changes in Medication Copayments

Veterans in Priority Group 1 or other exempted Veterans do not pay for medications. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) charges a copayment for each 30-day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a non-service connected condition. Effective early 2017, the copayment amounts are:

Priority Group	Outpatient Medication Tier	Copayment Amount		
		1-30 day supply	31-60 day supply	61-90 day supply
2-8	Tier 1 (Preferred Generics)	\$5	\$10	\$15
	Tier 2 (Non-Preferred Generics and some OTCs)	\$8	\$16	\$24
	Tier 3 (Brand Name)	\$11	\$22	\$33

An annual cap was established to eliminate financial hardship for Veterans enrolled in Priority Groups 2 through 8, who might require an unusually large amount of medications. Beginning in early 2017, the annual cap that can be charged is \$700. Veterans who exceed the annual cap will continue to receive medications without having to make further copayments.

Medication Copayments apply if you:

- You are a Veteran receiving outpatient treatment for a non-service connected condition and your annual income exceeds the applicable National Income Threshold (found at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits)). This threshold changes on an annual basis. For the current threshold amount, contact the Enrollment Coordinator at your nearest VA health care facility.
- You are a Veteran with a service-connected condition rated less than 50 percent disabled but are receiving outpatient treatment for a non-service-connected condition and your annual income exceeds the specified threshold.

There are exemptions from medication copayments:

1. Veterans rated 50 percent or more disabled with a service-connected condition.
2. Medication dispensed for service-connected conditions.
3. Veterans who are former Prisoners of War (POWs).
4. Medication for Vietnam-era herbicide-exposed, radiation-exposed, combat or Camp Lejeune Veterans, as authorized under 38 U.S.C. 17109(e).
5. Medication for treatment for military sexual trauma, as authorized under 38 U.S.C. 1720D.
6. Medication for treatment of cancer of the head or neck, as authorized under 38 U.S.C. 1720E.
7. Medication provided as part of a VA-approved research project, as authorized by 38 U.S.C. 7303.
8. Veterans with a low income (annual income lower than the applicable VA pension).
9. Veterans who VA determines to be catastrophically disabled, as defined in 38 CFR 17.36(e).
10. Veterans receiving care for psychosis or a mental illness other than psychosis pursuant to 17.110.

Veterans who have a service-connection rating of 40 percent or less and whose income is at or below the applicable National Income Threshold may complete a medical copayment exemption test.

Payment is encouraged, but not required, when you pick up your medications at your VA health care facility. If you are unable to pay at that time, an account will be established for you to be billed monthly. Prescriptions dispensed after hours, on weekends, on holidays, in emergency situations or through the Consolidated Mail Out Pharmacy (CMOP), will be billed to your account.

For more information about medication copayments call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit their website at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits).



## IMPORTANT DAV VAN INFORMATION

**The van runs on certain Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays taking Veterans to appointments at DORN VAMC for their scheduled appointments between 9am and 1pm.**



**If you need to schedule a ride on the DAV van, please call the office for dates and space availability at 803-785-8400.**



## **WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER VAN DRIVERS!!!**

**If you are 18 or older or know someone who may be interested in volunteering to drive the DAV van at least one day a month, please contact the office at 803-785-8400.**



The U.S. Department of Treasury, in partnership with the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority and SC Housing Corp., has made over \$295 million available to help eligible South Carolina homeowners avoid serious first mortgage delinquency and foreclosures.

### **Qualifications**

SC Help is intended to assist borrowers who are facing first mortgage delinquency or possible foreclosure. There is no household income limit, the property must be an owner occupied primary residence, applicants must have a minimum 24 months homeownership history and applicants do NOT have to be delinquent.

### **How to Apply**

Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically at: [www.schelp.com](http://www.schelp.com). Applicants without the internet may call 1-855-435-7472, toll free number for assistance. There is NO FEE required at any point during the SC HELP process.

## **March is National Red Cross Month!**

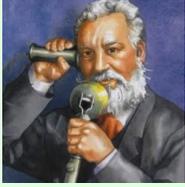


## **April is National Donate Life Month!**



# ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

*Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of March and April?*



**March 3, 1847** - Inventor Alexander Graham Bell was born in Edinburgh, Scotland.



**March 10, 1880** - The Salvation Army was founded in the United States.



**March 12, 1609** - The island of Bermuda was colonized by the British.

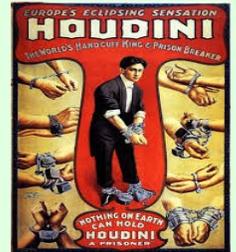


**March 15, 1767** - Andrew Jackson was born in a log cabin in Waxhaw, South Carolina.



**March 19, 2003** - The United States launched an attack against Iraq to topple dictator Saddam Hussein from power.

**March 24, 1874** - Harry Houdini was born (as Erik Weisz) in Budapest, Hungary.



**March 24, 1989** - One of the largest oil spills in U.S. history occurred as the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound off Alaska.



**April 3, 1860** - The Pony Express service began as the first rider departed Missouri.



**April 4, 1968** - Civil Rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was shot and killed by a sniper in Memphis, Tennessee.

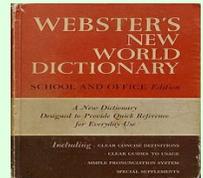


**April 6, 1917** - The U.S. entered World War I in Europe.



**April 9, 1865** - After over 500,000 American deaths, the Civil War effectively ended as General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House.

**April 14, 1828** - The first dictionary of American-style English was published by Noah Webster.



**April 19, 1995** - At 9:02 a.m., a massive car-bomb explosion destroyed the entire side of a nine story federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 persons, including 19 children inside a day care center.



**April 30, 1789** - George Washington became the first U.S. President.





# STAND UP! BE HEARD!

*You have fought for your Country,  
Now fight for your rights!*

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*Keynote Speaker:*

*Commander Alfred H. Agnew (Ret)*

*POW Vietnam War*

*“Honoring All Vietnam Veterans”*

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*“Rally for our  
Veterans”*

*Tuesday, April 25, 2017  
10am – 2pm North End  
State House Steps*



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*Organized by the South Carolina Veteran's Advocacy Council*

# Medical Expense Reports

For Veterans and Surviving Spouses not receiving the maximum Non-Service Connection Pension or Survivor Benefits, the VA may be able to pay you at a higher rate if you identify expenses the VA considers allowable. Medical and dental expenses paid by you may be deducted from the income the VA counts when determining your benefit entitlement. Any medical or dental expense that you paid for a member of your household (self, spouse, child, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed may also be counted. Expenses may be listed on a VA Form 21P-8416, **Medical Expense Report (MER)**, and submitted anytime for the previous year. For example: Medical Expense Reports for 2016 may be submitted anytime during the calendar year of 2017.

**You can contact our office at 803-785-8400 to schedule an appointment for us to help you complete your 2016 MER.**



Reports

**The Veterans Crisis Line** connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**; you can chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is also available.

**IT'S YOUR CALL**



For basic information, questions, and copies of our newsletters, please check out our webpage at [www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx)

A list of the Veterans Service Organizations in Lexington County are also on our webpage.

## Direct Deposit



What is the fastest way to enroll or make a change to your Direct Deposit? The fastest way is to call 1-800-827-1000. They will be able to change it over the phone. To enroll you will need to know your routing and account number along with the amount that is being deposited. If you are changing your direct deposit, you will need to know your old routing and account number along with your new information.

## Free counseling for war time Veterans & their dependents

The Columbia Vet Center offers a wide range of services to help you make a successful transition from military to civilian life. You have earned these benefits and there is no cost to you or your family members.

Services provided are:

- Individual & group counseling
- Family counseling for military related
- Bereavement counseling for families
- Military sexual trauma
- Outreach & education
- Substance abuse assessment & referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation & referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues

The Columbia Vet Center is located at 1710-A Richland Street, Columbia. Their telephone number is 803-765-9944.



## Job Hunting?

The VA medical center and regional office is hiring Veterans.

Visit [USAjobs.com](http://USAjobs.com) for more information.



# VA Study Finds EEG Can Help Tell Apart PTSD & Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

A recent VA study points to a possible breakthrough in differentiating between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), otherwise known as a concussion.

The two disorders often carry similar symptoms, such as irritability, restlessness, hypersensitivity to stimulation, memory loss, fatigue and dizziness. Scientists have tried to distinguish between mTBI and PTSD in hopes of improving treatment options for Veterans. Unfortunately, many of the symptom-based studies have been inconclusive because the chronic effects of the two conditions are so similar. If someone is rating high on an mTBI scale, for example, that person may also rate high for PTSD symptoms.

The researchers used electroencephalogram, or EEG, a test that measures electrical activity in the brain. The size and direction of the brain waves can signal abnormalities.

The study linked mTBI with *increases* in low-frequency waves, especially in the prefrontal and right temporal regions of the brain, and PTSD with *decreases* in low-frequency waves, notably in the right temporoparietal region.

The differences in the levels of the waves may explain some of the symptoms of the two disorders, suggesting a decline in responsiveness for someone with mTBI, for example, and more anxiety for someone with PTSD.



## Funding Opportunity for Community Partners Working to End Veteran Homelessness



Building on President Obama's commitment to end Veteran homelessness, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing the availability of funding for non-profit organizations and other groups that serve Veterans through VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. The SSVF program assists very low-income Veteran families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These SSVF grants are available to current grantees seeking renewals and make new funding available for eight high-need communities.

The VA relies on strong, targeted collaborations in key areas at federal and local levels and engages community partners to develop innovative and forward-thinking solutions that can lead to scalable and replicable models of service. SSVF grantees currently operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam, working within their communities to end or prevent homelessness among Veteran families.

SSVF grantees typically serve Veterans with incomes below 30 percent of the area median income. Grantees must follow the housing first approach, which centers on permanently housing homeless Veterans quickly without preconditions and providing supportive services as needed. Additional SSVF requirements are that grantees engage in outreach to find and serve Veterans in need, provide Veterans with case management, and assist them in obtaining VA and other public benefits. SSVF served nearly 150,000 Veterans and their family members in fiscal year 2016. As a result of these and other efforts, Veteran homelessness is down significantly since the launch of the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in 2010. Since 2010, homelessness among Veterans had dropped by 47 percent.

For more information about VA's homeless programs, visit [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless)

## VA's Rule Establishes a Presumption of Service Connection for Diseases Associated with Exposure to Contaminants in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune

*VA to provide disability benefits for related diseases*

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published regulations to establish presumptions for the service connection of eight diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, N.C. The presumption of service connection applies to active duty, reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for a minimum of 30 days (cumulative) between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with any of the following conditions:

- adult leukemia
- aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- bladder cancer
- kidney cancer
- liver cancer
- multiple myeloma
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

Environmental health experts in VA's Technical Workgroup conducted comprehensive reviews of scientific evidence, which included analysis and research done by the Department of Health and Human Service's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Environmental Protection Agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the National Toxicology Program, and the National Academies of Science.

Veterans with 30 or more cumulative days of active duty service, at Camp Lejeune during the contamination period are already eligible for certain medical benefits, following passage of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012.

In the early 1980s, volatile organic compounds, trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser, and perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning agent, as well as benzene and vinyl chloride, were discovered in two on-base water supply systems at Camp Lejeune. The contaminated wells supplying the water systems were shut down in February 1985. The area included in this presumption is all of Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River, including satellite camps and housing areas.



The rule will be effective either 60 days after publication in the Federal Register, or following conclusion of the 60-day Congressional Review, whichever is later. More information will follow as to when we can start filing these claims.

“In war there is no second prize for the runner-up.”



– *General Omar Bradley*

There is a new number to call for billing issues through the VAMC for any private health care that was fee based out.

That number is  
1-877-881-7618  
9am to 5pm EST.



# The History of the Oklahoma City Bombing

The Oklahoma City bombing was a domestic terrorist car bombing in downtown Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on April 19, 1995. At 9:02 a.m., a rental truck packed with explosives detonated in front of the nine-story, Alfred P. Murrah, Federal Building. The powerful explosion blew off the building's north wall. Carried out by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the bombing destroyed over one-third of the building. The blast destroyed or damaged 324 other buildings within a 16-block radius, shattered glass in 258 nearby buildings, and destroyed or burned 86 cars, causing an estimated \$652 million worth of damage. Emergency crews raced to Oklahoma from across the country, and when the rescue effort finally ended two weeks later the death toll stood at 168 people, including 19 young children who were in the building's day care center at the time of the blast. More than 680 other people were injured in the bombing.



McVeigh, was a U.S. militia movement sympathizer who was also a Gulf War Veteran. McVeigh, Nichols and their associates were deeply radicalized by such events as the August 1992 shoot-out between federal agents and survivalist Randy Weaver at his Idaho cabin, in which Weaver's wife and son were killed, and the April 19, 1993, inferno near Waco, Texas, in which 75 members of a Branch Davidian religious sect died. McVeigh planned an attack on the Murrah Building, which housed regional offices of such federal agencies as the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Secret Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives, the agency that had launched the initial raid on the Branch Davidian compound. On the two-year anniversary of the disastrous end to the Waco standoff, McVeigh parked the Ryder rental truck loaded with a diesel-fuel-fertilizer bomb outside the Murrah Building and fled on foot to another parked car. Minutes later, the massive bomb exploded.

Within 90 minutes of the explosion, McVeigh was stopped by Oklahoma State Trooper Charlie Hanger for driving without a license plate and arrested for illegal weapons possession. Forensic evidence quickly linked McVeigh and Nichols to the attack; Nichols was arrested, and within days, both were charged. Michael and Lori Fortier were later identified as accomplices. McVeigh's co-conspirator, Nichols, had assisted in the bomb preparation. The bombers were tried and convicted in 1997. McVeigh was executed by lethal injection on June 11, 2001, and Nichols was sentenced to life in prison in 2004. Michael and Lori Fortier testified against McVeigh and Nichols; Michael was sentenced to 12 years in prison for failing to warn the United States government, and Lori received immunity from prosecution in exchange for her testimony.



As a result of the bombing, the U.S. Congress passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, which tightened the standards for habeas corpus in the United States, as well as legislation designed to increase the protection around federal buildings to deter future terrorist attacks. In May 1995, the Murrah Building was demolished for safety reasons and on April 19, 2000, the Oklahoma City National Memorial was dedicated on the site commemorating the victims of the bombing. Annual remembrance services are held at the same time of day as the explosion occurred. It was the deadliest terrorist attack on American soil until the September 11th attacks, and it still remains the deadliest domestic terrorism incident in United States history.

## *VA Caregivers*

The VA knows your focus as a Family Caregiver is taking care of the Veteran you love. It can be an incredibly demanding job, and we want you to know you don't have to do it alone. VA offers a number of services that can provide you with the support that's right for you. Whether you and the Veteran you care for could use some help at home or you just need someone to listen, we're here to support you. You may know that VA provides benefits and services for Veterans, but did you know that VA also has a number of services designed specifically to support you in your role as a Family Caregiver? VA values your commitment as a partner in our pledge to care for those who have "borne the battle," and we have several support and service options designed with you in mind. The programs are available both in and out of your home to help you care for the Veteran you love and for yourself. Asking for help isn't always easy – especially if you're not exactly sure what kind of support would be the best fit for your needs. Learn more about how VA's trained professionals can help you find the services and support that are right for you and the Veteran you attend. Learn more about the support and services VA offers Family Caregivers by reading the descriptions below.

### **Caregiver Support Line**

With the VA's Caregiver Support Line – 1-855-260-3274 – assistance is just a quick phone call away. Whether you're in need of immediate assistance or have questions about what services you may be eligible for, the caring licensed professionals who answer the support line can: 1. Tell you about the assistance available from VA; 2. Help you access services; 3. Connect you with the Caregiver Support Coordinator at a VA Medical Center near you; or 4. Just listen, if that's what you need right now. If you're just getting started with VA, calling the Caregiver Support Line is a great first step to learn more about the support that's available to you. The VA's Caregiver Support Line is available Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 11:00 pm ET and Saturday 10:30 am to 6:00 pm ET.

### **Caregiver Support Coordinator**

Your local Caregiver Support Coordinator is a licensed professional who can support you by matching you with services for which you are eligible, and providing you with valuable information about resources that can help you stay smart, strong and organized as you care for the Veteran you love. Local contacts at William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center are Cristina (Cristy) Roberson, LISW-CP: 803-776-4000 ext. 7180; Christine Dowdy, RN: 803-394-0577 or Cheryl Geddings, LISW-CP: 803-776-4000 ext. 4084.

### **Caregiver Services**

Below are descriptions of various services available to Family Caregivers of Veterans. If you'd like additional information or are interested in signing up for any of the services listed below, contact VA's Caregiver Support Line or your local Caregiver Support Coordinator for assistance.

### **Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) Centers**

ADHC Centers are a safe and active environment with constant supervision designed for Veterans to get out of the home and participate in activities. It is a time for the Veteran you care for to socialize with other Veterans while you, the Family Caregiver, get some time for yourself. ADHC Centers employ caring professionals who will assess a Veteran's rehabilitation needs and help a Veteran accomplish various tasks so he or she can maintain or regain personal independence and dignity. The Veteran you care for will participate in rehabilitation based on his or her specific health assessment during the day (ADHC centers are generally open Monday through Friday during normal business hours). The ADHC Centers emphasize a partnership with you, the Veteran you attend and Centers' staffs.

### **Home-Based Primary Care**

Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC) is a program designed to deliver routine health care services to your home when the Veteran you care for has medical issues that make it challenging for him or her to travel. Home-Based Primary Care is staffed with medical professionals who will come to your home. Some of their services are primary care and nursing, managing medication, and helping plan and put together nutritious and tasty meals. Home-Based Primary Care can also include physical rehabilitation, mental health care for your Veteran, social work and referrals to VA and community services. This program can help ease the worry and stress of having to bring a Veteran to and from a VA medical center for routine medical appointments.

Continued on page 14

## **VA Caregivers continued from page 13**

### **Skilled Home Care**

The Skilled Home Care service provides a medical professional who comes to your home to help care for a homebound Veteran. Some of the care a Veteran can receive includes basic nursing services and physical, occupational, or speech therapies. To be eligible for this service, a Veteran must be homebound, which means he or she has difficulty traveling to and from appointments and so is in need of receiving medical services at home. The Skilled Home Care service is similar to Home-Based Primary Care, but it involves VA purchasing care for a Veteran from a licensed non-VA medical professional.

### **Homemaker and Home Health Aide Program**

Feeding and bathing another person can be very stressful, physically tasking, and time-consuming for you. Often times, taking care of a Veteran's needs leaves no time for you to take care of your own needs. The Homemaker and Home Health Aide Program is designed to help a Veteran with personal care needs. Your local VA medical center can help arrange for a home health aide who will come to your home on a regular schedule to allow you time to take care of your own needs. Caring for yourself helps you stay strong for yourself and your Veteran.

### **Home Tele-health**

We know how difficult or challenging it can be to get the Veteran you care for to a VA medical center for assistance. The Home Tele-health program is designed to give you ready access to a care coordinator by using technology (e.g., telephone, computers) in your home. The Home Tele-health program enhances and extends care management to you, the Family Caregiver. The program is typically offered to individuals who live at a distance from a VA Medical Center. Home Tele-health services can also include education and training or online and telephone support groups. Please contact your Caregiver Support Coordinator to discuss which tele-health programs are available at your VA.

### **Respite Care**

As a Family Caregiver, it can be hard to find time for a much-needed break from your daily routine and care responsibilities so that you have some time for yourself. Respite is time for relaxing and renewing your own energy, and respite care can provide you with the time to do that. If a Veteran requires a Caregiver, you are eligible to receive up to 30 days of respite care per year. The care can be offered in a variety of settings including at your home or through temporary placement of a Veteran at a VA Community Living Center, a VA-contracted Community Residential Care Facility, or an Adult Day Health Care Center. Respite care may also be provided in response to a Family Caregiver's unexpected hospitalization, a need to go out of town, or a family emergency. Staying strong for your Veteran means staying strong yourself. By taking an opportunity to be refreshed through respite care, you may be amazed at how your fresh outlook will help you and your Veteran.

### **Home Hospice Care**

During the advanced stages of a terminal disease, Home Hospice Care can offer comfort and supportive services for you and the Veteran you care for in your own home. The professionals who provide Home Hospice Care understand the challenges you face and are there to help you and the Veteran you care for ease into the final stages of life. An interdisciplinary team of health care providers and volunteers from a local community hospice agency provide the services during this sad and challenging time. The team is there for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Bereavement care (grief counseling) is also available for you and other immediate family members.

Under the "Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010," additional VA services are now available to seriously injured post-9/11 Veterans and their Family Caregivers through a new program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. VA is now accepting applications for these services.

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# Did you know...

A new VA state nursing home facility will be constructed in the next 2 to 3 years using the VA construction grant program. The facility will be located in Columbia on property already owned by the VA off of I-20 in Richland County. Another facility will be built in Gaffney and a third facility will be built in Florence near the Florence National Cemetery.

## DID YOU KNOW?



### Lexington County Veterans Group



All Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.

The Veterans group also participates in various social activities such as group lunches, group dinners with wives/significant other, boat trips on Lake Murray, participation in the Lexington County Veterans parade and other general group tours.

***Congratulations to the group as they will be celebrating their 10th anniversary on March 10th.***

*For further information, please contact the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office at 803-785-8400.*

### Dang-it Dolls Workshops



Saturday, March 11th and Saturday, April 8th from 10am to 3pm at the Cayce Masonic Lodge, 1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.

★ There is something for everyone to do and this is the one place where **THE MORE THE MERRIER** really counts. ★



Attention Commanders of Veterans Service Organizations in Lexington County, our office is looking for a contact name and number for all American Legion posts, DAV chapters, VFW's, etc. Please contact our office with this information.



## Spring Forward!



## Daylight Savings Begins

### Sunday, March 12th

## VA Caregivers continued from page 14

### Who Is Eligible?

Veterans eligible for this program are those who sustained a serious injury – including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma or other mental disorder – incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, on or after September 11, 2001. Veterans eligible for this program must also be in need of personal care services because of an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living and/or need supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological impairment or injury. To be eligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, Veterans must first be enrolled for VA health services, if not enrolled previously.

### Services Available to Family Caregivers through this Program

The law will provide additional assistance to primary Family Caregivers of eligible post-9/11 Veterans and Service members. Services for this group include:

- Monthly stipend
- Travel expenses (including lodging and per diem while accompanying Veterans undergoing care)
- Access to health care insurance (if the Caregiver is not already entitled to care or services under a health care plan)
- Mental health services and counseling
- Comprehensive VA Caregiver training provided by Easter Seals
- Respite care

If you think you fit the criteria for these services, please visit [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov) to answer some preliminary questions and download an application. The application enables Veterans to designate one primary Family Caregiver and up to two secondary Family Caregivers, if desired. Caregiver Support Coordinators are available at every VA Medical Center to assist Veterans and their Family Caregivers with the application process.



## Department of Defense Announces New Outreach Efforts Regarding Discharges and Military Records

The Department of Defense (DOD) has announced a renewed effort to ensure Veterans are aware of the opportunity to have their discharges and military records reviewed. Through enhanced public outreach; engagement with Veterans' service organizations, military service organizations, and other outside groups; as well as direct outreach to individual Veterans, the DOD encourages all Veterans who believe they have experienced an error or injustice to request relief from their service's Board for Correction of Military/Naval Records or Discharge Review Board.

With this announcement, the DOD is reaffirming its intention to review and potentially upgrade the discharge status of all individuals that are eligible and that apply.

In the past few years, the DOD has issued guidance for consideration of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as the repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and its predecessor policies. Additionally, supplemental guidance for separations involving victims of sexual assault is currently being considered. The DOD is reviewing and consolidating all of the related policies to reinforce the DOD's commitment to ensuring fair and equitable review of separations for all Veterans. Whether the discharge or other correction is the result of PTSD, sexual orientation, sexual assault, or some other consideration, the DOD is committed to rectifying errors or injustices and treating all Veterans with dignity and respect.

Veterans are encouraged to apply for review if they desire a correction to their service record or believe their discharge was unjust, erroneous, or warrants an upgrade.



### DID YOU KNOW...

The VAMC Dorn now has a food pantry. Any Veteran in need may participate in the program. He or she must contact Voluntary Services and they will direct you to the food pantry. To contact Voluntary Services call (803) 776-4000 extension 6780.

### County Council Needs You!



Veterans are still needed to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at County Council meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. County Council meetings start at 4:30pm, so please be present around 4:15pm. Contact the office at 803-785-8400, if you are interested.

The office would like to thank David Kerr, Chris Murrin, John Sligh and Dean Crepes. These gentlemen volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of January and February.



### OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES



**Batesburg/Leesville Outreach** is the 2nd Friday of the month at the Batesburg/Leesville Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



**Chapin Outreach** is the 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



**Gaston/Swansea Outreach** is the 1st Thursday of the month at the Gaston Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

*Appointments are strongly encouraged.  
Call the office at 803-785-8400  
to schedule a time.*

### PLEASE NOTE

*There will be no Gaston or Chapin Outreach during the month of March and there will be no Batesburg/Leesville outreach during the month of April.*



*The flowers are blooming in all their might  
Everywhere there is a pretty sight.  
You know its spring, when you feel so good  
You know its spring with colors of hope.  
Spring is the time to start afresh  
It is the time when you feel refreshed.  
Spring is finally here.*

*Happy spring season!*



## Happenings Around Lexington County

### During the Months of March & April

Sunday, March 12<sup>th</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual St. Patrick's Parade  
Downtown Lexington @ 3pm  
For more information, visit their website at [goblowfishbaseball.com/community](http://goblowfishbaseball.com/community).



Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>  
through  
Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>

Midlands Plant & Flower Show  
at the State Farmers Market  
Thursday – Saturday 8am to 6pm  
Sunday 10am to 4pm  
For more information, contact Brad Boozer at  
803-734-2210 or [bboozer@scda.sc.gov](mailto:bboozer@scda.sc.gov).



Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Springtime at the Garden  
Plant Sale @ Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens  
9am to 12pm  
Botanical Garden Parking Lot  
For more information, visit their website at  
[riverbanks.org/events/spring-plant-sale](http://riverbanks.org/events/spring-plant-sale).



Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup>

Wine Tasting at Riverbanks Botanical Gardens  
7 to 9:30pm  
For more information, visit their website at  
[riverbanks.org/events](http://riverbanks.org/events).



## VA Healthcare continued from page 4

With a Basic Account you may use My HealtheVet to:

- Add information to a personal health journal about over-the-counter medications, military health history, medical events, tests and allergies
- Record and track personal information such as contact information, emergency contacts, health care providers and doctors, and health insurance information
- Record and track personal health measurements (blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, heart rate, body temperature, weight, pain level, etc.) in Vitals & Readings
- Print a wallet ID card with the personal information entered into the personal health record
- Set personal goals. **My Goals** makes it easy for you to set goals, identify your strengths and tasks, to overcome obstacles, and track your progress. **My Goals** can be used to help your health care team understand what is important to you

If you have questions:

- Call 1-877-222-VETS (8387)
- Visit the Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS) website to search Frequently Asked Questions or ask a question on-line
- Call 1-800-829-4833, if you are hearing impaired

## HELP NEEDED

Help is needed at Lexington Interfaith Community Services (LICS). They are in particular need for folks to assist at the donation door. They have staff members who would work with them and supervise.

This position entails customer service by greeting community members as they drive up to donate items, assisting them with carrying in their items, possibly giving receipts, and then sorting the items. It is physical work, but they can work around any slight limitations. Lifting is often required and they may also be asked to load items onto a truck.

If you are interested, contact: Kitti Clayton, Volunteer Coordinator, at 803-957-6656 ext: 227.



## News Tidbits from the VA

The VA now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program

U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery  
Administration

individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery. Interested individuals may submit VA form 10-10007 to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling office by fax at 1-855-840-8299 or mail at PO Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.



The VA has cut the ribbon for its new Veteran Crisis Line (VCL) satellite office in Atlanta allowing the life-saving hotline to expand capacity by nearly 600 Veterans each day essentially doubling VA's ability to help Veterans in need. Atlanta offers 200 call responders and 25 social service assistants and support staff,

A VA database study shows that new drug regimens for hepatitis C have resulted in "remarkably high" cure rates among patients in the VA's national health care system. Of the more than 17,000 Veterans in the study, all chronically infected with the hepatitis C virus at baseline, 75% to 93% had no detectable levels of the disease in their blood for 12 or more weeks after the end of treatment. The therapy regimens lasted 8 to 24 weeks, depending on patient characteristics.



Veterans receiving care at VA Medical Centers will now be able to schedule routine ear and eye appointments at local VA Audiology and Optometry clinics without a primary care referral – a move that



eliminates multiple steps and gets Veterans into appointments quicker. Before now, Veterans seeking appointments with audiologists or optometrists had to first make an appointment with a primary care physician for a referral for a routine clinic consult visit. The Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative is expected to be fully operational within all VA Medical Centers by the end of 2016.



## About Our Office

This office is employed by Lexington County not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for VA medical care. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: service connected disabilities and non-service connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits but can assist with some of these forms.

**The VA has a website anyone can access for all VA questions, SEP user guides, regulations, policies, laws and any other VA resources. The website is:**  
**[www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov)**

**Website**



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# 2017 Midlands Heart Walk 4.1.2017



Activities Begin  
**8AM**

Race Begins  
**9AM**

**Colonial Life Arena**

**MidlandsHeartWalk.org**

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## ***Emergency Care in Non-VA Facilities***

At some time in your life, you may need emergency care. When it is not possible for you to go to a VA medical center, you should go to the nearest hospital that has an emergency room. If you are in an ambulance, the paramedics will usually take you to the closest emergency room. Here is what you should know...

**What is an emergency?** A medical emergency is when you have an injury or illness that is so severe that without immediate treatment, the injury or illness threatens your life or health.

**How do I know my situation is an emergency?** Use your best judgment. If you believe your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

**If I believe my life or health is in danger, do I need to call the VA before I call for an ambulance or go into an emergency room?** No. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

**Do I need to notify the VA after an ambulance takes me to an emergency room, or when I am treated and released?** Yes. You, your family, friends or hospital staff should contact the nearest VA medical center as soon as possible—preferably within 72 hours, so you are better aware of services in which VA payment may be limited. Provide the VA with information about your emergency event and services being provided to you. Ask the VA for guidance on how they will consider reimbursing these emergency charges on your behalf, so you can plan accordingly.

**If the doctor then wants to admit me to the hospital, must I obtain advance approval from the VA?** If the admission is an emergency—NO, although prompt notification of the VA is necessary.  
If the admission is not an emergency—YES.

**If a VA bed is available and I can be safely transferred, do I have to move to the VA hospital?** Yes. If you refuse to be transferred, the VA will not pay for any further care.

**If I am admitted to the hospital as a result of an emergency, how much will VA pay?** This depends on your VA eligibility. The VA may pay all, some, or none of the charges. Ask your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor about what is allowed under non-VA emergency care programs for service-connected conditions and non-service-connected conditions.

**Will I have to pay for any part of my emergency care?** It is possible. Sometimes co-pays are required based on your VA enrollment. Sometimes the extent of healthcare services reimbursable by the VA are limited by federal law.

**Will VA pay for the ambulance and any possible emergency room charges if I leave the emergency room before being treated by a doctor?** Possibly not. If you leave the emergency room prior to being treated by a physician, the VA may not consider claims for that emergency event. You may be liable for some or all resulting ambulance and emergency room charges, regardless of your Veteran eligibility.

**Does my enrollment in the VA Health Care System affect my eligibility for emergency care at VA expense?** Yes. Your local VA medical center's benefits counselor can explain how enrollment (or other special status categories) affect your eligibility.

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**Emergency Care in Non-VA Facilities continued from page 21**

**If I have other insurance (TRICARE, Medicare, Medicaid, Blue Cross, etc.), will it affect whether claims for emergency services will be paid at VA expense?** Yes, it may. Your local VA medical center's benefits counselor can explain how other insurance can affect whether the VA can pay for your non-VA medical claims.

**Will VA pay for emergency care if I am in jail?** No. The VA is prohibited, by federal law, from paying for the medical claims of incarcerated Veterans (or fugitive felons).

**How long do I have to file a claim for reimbursement for emergency medical care?** File your claim with the nearest VA medical center quickly. Time limits of 90-days usually apply. Contact your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor for more information on the timely filing requirements for non-VA care programs.

**Will VA pay for emergency care received outside the United States?** Yes, in certain cases. VA will only pay for emergency care outside the US if your emergency is related to a service-connected condition. For more information, contact the VA Health Administration Center at (877) 345-8179 or consult this web site: <http://www.va.gov/purchasedcare>

The VA may be able to arrange and pay for the health care of eligible Veterans outside of VA medical facilities — but only in certain, limited circumstances. Those are, 1. When the Veteran meets eligibility criteria; 2. When there is a medical need; or 3. When VA medical facilities (or 'sharing agreement' facilities) are not available.

The VA's ability to pay for the medical care of Veterans provided by the community is regulated by federal law. Non-VA medical care programs for eligible Veterans, include: 1. Fee Basis, pre-authorized health care for the medical needs of Veterans continued outside of the VA; 2. Fee Basis emergency health care, while usually not requiring pre-authorization, may be furnished by a non-VA provider when emergency criteria are met; or 3. Purchased care services, administered by Fee Basis, include community nursing home, home structural alterations for the disabled, and more — may be available to eligible Veterans.

For more information on the National Fee Program of Non-VA Medical Care go to [www.nonvacare.va.gov](http://www.nonvacare.va.gov).



**Did you know...**

Any National Guard member or Reservist who is entitled to retired pay for non-regular service or, would be entitled to retire pay for non-regular service, now has Veteran status.

To see if you qualify for any benefits, check with your local VA regional office.

# ***Featured Medal: Good Conduct Medal***

The Good Conduct Medal is one of the oldest military awards of the United States military. The Good Conduct Medal is awarded to any active-duty enlisted member of the United States military who completes three consecutive years of "honorable and faithful service". Such service implies that a standard enlistment was completed without any non-judicial punishments, disciplinary infractions, or court martial offenses. If a service member commits an offense, the three-year mark "resets" and a service member must perform an additional three years of service without having to be disciplined, before the Good Conduct may be authorized.

During times of war, the Good Conduct Medal may be awarded for one year of faithful service. The Good Conduct Medal may also be awarded posthumously, to any service member killed in the line of duty.

Service for the Good Conduct Medal **must** be performed on active duty; it is not awarded to members of the military reserve or National Guard for reserve duty (though reservists are eligible if they complete sufficient active service). The various services have established a Reserve Good Conduct Medal as a comparable award available to Reserve and Guard members who satisfactorily perform annual training and drill duty.

Pictures of the Good Conduct Medal by Branch of Service



**March is National Celery Month!**

**April is National Pecan Month!**



***Coming in the Next Issue...***

National Guard/Reservists benefits; VA life insurance; & recurring medical expenses