



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

May/June 2021



Lexington, SC.

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At a Glance Calendar May/June

Weekly on Tuesdays in May	Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon See page 17 for more information
Sunday, May 9th	Mother's Day
Monday, May 10th	HOLIDAY—Confederate Memorial Day; County Offices Closed
Tuesday, May 11th	County Council Meeting
Saturday, May 15th	Armed Forces Day
Tuesday, May 25th	County Council Meeting
Monday, May 31st	HOLIDAY—Memorial Day; County Offices Closed
Weekly on Tuesdays in May	Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon See page 17 for more information
Tuesday, June 8th	County Council Meeting
Monday, June 14th	Flag Day
Sunday, June 20th	Father's Day Summer Begins
Tuesday, June 22nd	County Council Meeting

CALENDAR KEY

<p>Purple—Holidays/Special Days</p> <p>Blue—Outreach dates</p> <p>Red—County Offices Closed, and Special Notices</p> <p>Black—Director's appearances in the County</p>	<p>Brown—County Council Meetings</p> <p>Pink—Special Events throughout the County</p> <p>Orange—Director Out of Office</p> <p>Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings</p>
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From the Director...

It is good to be back producing our newsletter and I want to apologize for the absence of the January-February and the March-April issues. We were split as a team and worked on alternate days due to high Covid numbers in the county and it was all we could do to keep up with the demand of services needed on a daily basis. We hope that life can get back to normal at some point.

As spring is now among us with its warmer weather, along comes pollen, allergies and hopefully outside sports. Please let us be mindful of our children who are playing those sports

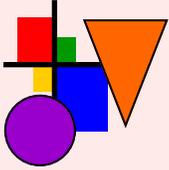
There are a couple of local Memorial Day ceremonial events and we encourage you to attend one, if possible. Please remember Covid protocols are in place for your safety at these events. Fort Jackson National Cemetery hosts a Memorial Day Ceremony at 9am on May 31, which is open to the public. Additionally, VFW Post 6740, located at 950 Rock N Creek Road in Leesville, hosts an emotional Memorial Day ceremony on May 31 at 10am and this event is also open to the public.

As we honor Memorial Day and those that lost their lives in defense of America, let us be reminded that freedom is not free. It is paid for with the sacrifice of our Armed Forces, past, present and future. Taking a walk in any military or VA cemetery are important reminders of our freedom.

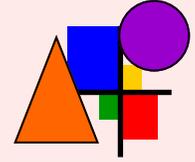
Have a great summer!

Enjoying the journey,





Education Benefits



The two most common education benefits for Veterans are Chapter 30—Montgomery GI Bill and Chapter 33—Post 9/11 GI Bill. Below are highlights of these two benefits.

Chapter 30—Montgomery GI Bill

Eligibility requirements are: Honorable discharge, high school diploma or equivalent, continuously served for at least three years and entered active duty for the first time after 6/30/1985.

Benefits include:

1. Provides up to 36 months of benefits (this is 36 months of total benefits in any combination of education benefits)
2. Have 10 years from the date of discharge to use
3. Payments are made directly to the Veteran from the first day classes start
4. Veterans must work with the school and pay tuition up front and then be reimbursed
5. No Housing allowance
6. No book stipend

Chapter 33—Post 9/11 GI Bill

Eligibility requirements are: Honorable discharge and served on active duty at least 90 aggregate days beginning on or after 9/11/2001.

Benefits include:

1. Provides up to 36 months of benefits (This is 36 months of total benefits in any combination of education benefits)
2. Have 15 years from date of discharge to use
3. Tuition and fees are paid directly to the school
4. Living allowance equal to basic allowance for housing amount payable an E-5 with dependents in the zip code of your school
5. A book stipend of \$1000/year based on enrollment

To apply for these benefits, you will need to complete a VA Form 22-1990. For more information on these benefits, please call the VA toll free at 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551), visit their website at www.vabenefits.vba.va.gov or call our office.

Memorial Day Happenings

9am

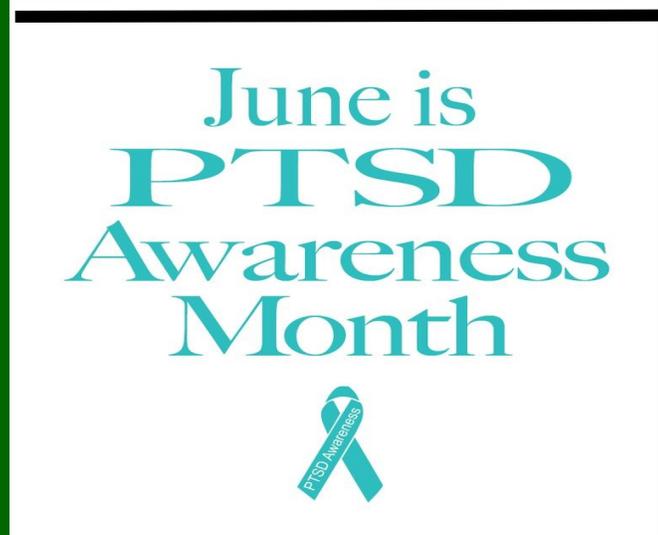
Memorial Day

Ceremony at Fort Jackson Cemetery. For more information contact the cemetery @ 866-577-5248. This event is open to the public.

10am

Memorial Day

Ceremony at VFW Post 6740 located at 950 Rock-n-Creek Road, Leesville. For more information contact Bob Caughman at 803-530-2368. This event is open to the public.



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 *Mike Gordon, Sam Owens, David Kerr, Lee Marshall & Ed Lundeen*. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of January, February, March & April.



ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of May & June?



May 1, 1931 – The Empire State Building officially opened.



May 5, 1961 - Alan Shepard became the first American in space.

May 6, 1937 - The German airship, the Hindenburg, burst into flames following a trans-Atlantic voyage.



May 7, 1915 - The British passenger ship, the Lusitania, was torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. The attack hastened neutral America's entry into World War I.



May 10, 1869 - The newly constructed tracks of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways were first linked at Promontory Point, Utah, with a golden spike.



May 14, 1607 - The first permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown, Virginia.

May 19, 1890 - Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh was born in the central Vietnamese village of Kim Lien (as Nguyen That Thanh).



May 21, 1881 - The American Red Cross was founded by Clara Barton.



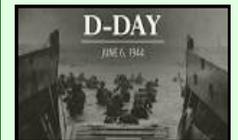
May 27, 1937 - The grand opening of the Golden Gate Bridge.



June 1, 1926 - Marilyn Monroe was born in Los Angeles, CA.



June 4, 1989 - The Chinese government ordered its troops to open fire on unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China.



June 6, 1944 - D-Day began in the early-morning hours as Allied forces landed in Normandy on the northern coast of France.



June 10, 1922 - Judy Garland was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.



June 14, 1777 - John Adams introduced a resolution before Congress mandating a United States flag. This anniversary is celebrated each year as Flag Day.



June 20, 1782 - The U.S. Congress officially adopted the Great Seal of the United States of America.



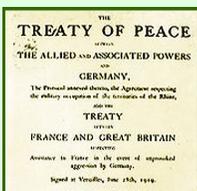
June 25, 1876 - General George A. Custer attacked an encampment of Sioux Indians near Little Bighorn River in Montana.



June 28, 1919 - The signing of the Treaty of Versailles formally ended World War I.



June 30, 1971 - The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted, granting the right to vote in all federal, state and local elections to American citizens 18 years or older.



Homeless Veterans

Opportunities to return to employment

VA's **Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)** is comprised of three unique programs which assist homeless Veterans in returning to competitive employment: Sheltered Workshop, Transitional Work, and Supported Employment. Veterans in CWT are paid at least the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is the higher.

The **Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program (HVSEP)** provides vocational assistance, job development and placement, and ongoing support to improve employment outcomes among homeless Veterans and Veterans at-risk of homelessness. Formerly homeless Veterans who have been trained as Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRSs) provide these services. Veterans can call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans hotline at 1-877-4AID-VET.



Safe Housing

The **Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program** provides grants and per diem payments (as funding is available) to help public and nonprofit organizations establish and operate supportive housing and service centers for homeless Veterans.



HUD-VA Supportive Housing (VASH) Program is a joint effort between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA. HUD allocated nearly 38,000 "Housing Choice" Section 8 vouchers across the country. These vouchers allow Veterans and their families to live in market rate rental units while VA provides case management services. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord on behalf of the participating Veteran. The Veteran then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

The **Acquired Property Sales for Homeless Providers Program** makes all VA foreclosed properties available for sale to homeless provider organizations—at a 20 to 50 percent discount—to shelter homeless Veterans.

The **Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program** provides grants and technical assistance to community-based, nonprofit organizations to help Veterans and their families stay in their homes.

Housing assistance for homeless Veterans and their families is available through several federal programs. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) partner to provide permanent, supportive housing and treatment services for homeless Veterans.

HUD allocated nearly 38,000 "Housing Choice" vouchers across the country, which allows Veterans and their families to live in market rate rental housing while VA provides case management services. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the local public housing authority on behalf of the participating Veteran. The Veteran then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program. The case management services facilitate the attainment of the Veteran's recovery goals. The HUD-VASH Program is for the most vulnerable Veterans, and provides special services for women Veterans, those recently returning from combat zones, and Veterans with disabilities.

Health care

VA's **Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program** offers outreach, exams, treatment, referrals, and case management to Veterans who are homeless and dealing with mental health issues, including substance use. At more than 135 HCHV sites, trained, caring VA specialists provide tools and support necessary for Veterans to get their lives on a better track.

VA's **Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams (H-PACTs) Program** provides a coordinated "medical home" specifically tailored to the needs of homeless Veterans that integrates clinical care with delivery of social services with enhanced access and community coordination. Implementation of this model is expected to address many of the health disparity and equity issues facing this population and result in reduced emergency department use and hospitalizations, improved chronic disease management, improved "housing readiness" with fewer Veterans returning to homelessness once housed.

VA's **Homeless Veterans Dental Program** provides dental treatment for eligible Veterans in a number of programs: Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment, VA Grant and Per Diem, Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (contract bed), and Community Residential Care. VA is working to expand dental care to all eligible Veterans within this program.

Project CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups) brings together providers, advocates, and other concerned citizens to identify the needs of homeless Veterans and work to meet those needs through planning and cooperative action. This process has helped build thousands of relationships between VA and community agencies so that together they can better serve homeless Veterans.



Continued on page 9

**May is National
Burger Month!**



**June is National
Dairy Month!**



**Are you a
Veteran in
crisis or
concerned
about one?**

Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line to reach caring, qualified responders with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them are Veterans themselves.

Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 or text 838255.

The Veterans Crisis line is a free, anonymous, confidential resource that's available to anyone, even if you're not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA healthcare. The Veterans Crisis Line does not charge for texting to 838255, but message and data rates may apply.



In the end, it's not the years

in your life that count.

It's the LIFE in your YEARS.

~Abraham Lincoln

"Why I Served Series"

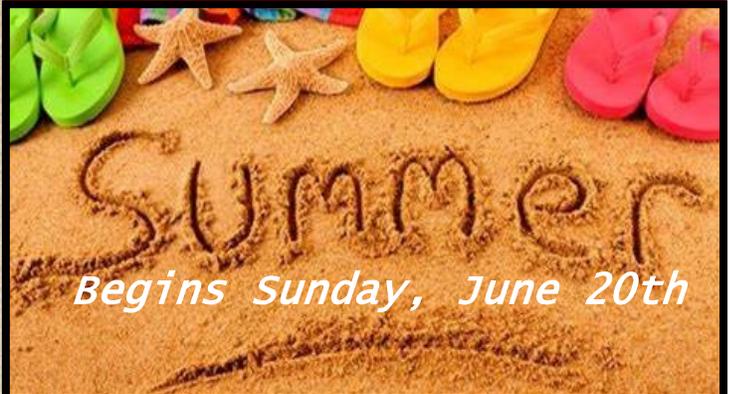
Our County Public Information Officer, Harrison Cahill, has started a "Why I Served Series." He would like to record some video stories of Veterans explaining why they served. If you are interested or know of a Veteran who would be, please call Harrison at (803) 212-5553 or email him at hcahill@lex-co.com to set this up. He records the interviews in our conference room, where you will have privacy and can take your time in being interviewed. Harrison usually pares down these interviews to three to five minute videos that are shown on the Lexington County Facebook page and the TV in our office.

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.





The History of the American Flag & Flag Day

The American flag is a symbol known worldwide. It has been the inspiration for holidays, songs, poems, books, artwork and so much more. The flag has been used to display our nationalism, as well as our rebellion, and everything else in between. The flag is so important that its history tells the story of America itself. It represents the freedom, dignity, and true meaning of being an American. It has been with us through our war times, our sad times, but also in times of our greatest joys and triumphs. The flag went through many variations before becoming the flag we all know and love. In fact, it took from January 1, 1776 to August 21, 1960.

When we think of the American Revolution, we think of it in terms of its final form, as independence from Britain, but the American Revolution was a “work in progress”. It did not start out as a movement for independence, but a movement to gain seats in Parliament. It evolved from a protest, to a full blown revolution into a move for independence...and our flag reflected the various stages of this.

The earliest use of stripes in flags in what was to become America is from the “Sons of Liberty” Flag. The Son's of Liberty were the original “Tea Party” members. Starting after the stamp act in 1765, the Sons of Liberty began their protesting. In 1775, at the Beginning of the Revolution, Independence had not yet been declared. The Continental Congress was meeting in Philadelphia when a somewhat obscure militia Colonel from Virginia came forward in his uniform and volunteered to take command of the troops outside of Boston overlooking Boston Heights. That Colonel was George Washington.

When he left Philadelphia, he took with him two flags. The Grand Union or The Continental as it was called was the first flag under which continental soldiers fought. It uses the alternating red and white stripe pattern only there are 13 stripes signifying the 13 colonies. However, instead of stars on a blue field, we have the “Kings Colors” also known as the “Union Jack”. This flag had a very specific meaning. It meant that we were fighting as 13 united colonies but under British Rule. Remember, at this time we had not yet declared our Independence. The other flag that Washington took with him is known as the Washington's Headquarters Flag. The entire field is BLUE. There are 13 stars arranged in a pattern known as the 3-2-3-2-3 pattern. 5 rows of alternating 6 point stars of 3 stars, 2 stars, 3 stars, 2 stars, 3 stars. A slight difference from the 5 pointed star on the current flag. This would be the first use of the star pattern on an American flag and today you can see a copy of this flag hanging in front of Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge.

A year later, on July 4, 1776, congress declared its independence from Great Britain. From that moment on, we were fighting for our independence. Yet the continental congress still did not design a new American flag. That flag came about on June 14, 1777 when congress passed the first of three major flag acts. The first act stated that “the flag of the US shall consist of 13 alternating stripes of red on white with 13 white stars on a blue field forming a new constellation. The first flag of the Revolutionary Period is referred to as “The Betsy Ross” flag...the pattern of stars on the blue field is known by three names, The Betsy Ross Pattern, The Philadelphia Pattern, or The Single Wreath Pattern. The blue field on the flag also goes by three names - the field, the union, or the canton.

Because congress did not set the specifics of where the field would be or how the star pattern should look like, or how many points the star would have, during this period, and up until 1912, the stars could be arranged in any manner that a flag maker would choose. When congress put together the notion of the flag, they blended the already established design of alternating stripes of red on white signifying the united colonies and a blue field with 13 stars (just like the Washington's Headquarters flag). This pattern is known as the Cowpens pattern.

After the Revolutionary War ended, our country writes a new constitution. We elect George Washington president and in 1792 we bring in two new states – Vermont and Kentucky. This begs the question, what do we do with the flag? Because the original flag act called for 13 stripes and 13 stars to represent the 13 colonies, what do we do to signify the adding of two new states to the Union? At this time, Congress passes the 2nd flag act and it states that from now on we would add one stripe and one star for each new state. This new 15 star and 15 stripe flag is known as The Star Spangled Banner. It is this flag that flew over Fort McHenry and inspired Francis Scott Key to write our national anthem. After the War of 1812 we were adding more states again and as we incorporated more stars and stripes into the design, our flag was starting to look a little funny.

So in 1818, Congress passed the 3rd of the three major flag acts. It stated that the design was to go back to the original configuration of 13 alternating stripes of red on white, representing the 13 original colonies, but that we would add one star for each new state. However, once again, it did not specify what pattern the stars should be arranged in or the amount of points that were to be on the star. So we had many variations of flag design during this time. Finally, in 1912 President Taft established the pattern of stars that we know today. The 48 star, 49 star and 50 star flag all conform to this pattern.



Continued on page 11

Lexington County Veterans Group

All Honorably Discharged Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon. They are currently meeting at the American Legion Post 7, 211 American Legion Drive, Lexington, SC 29072. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.



On the second Tuesday of each month, they meet at a different local restaurant for food and fellowship. Check their website for the location.

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.



Veteran Wives Support Group
Meets 1st Friday of each month, 2 to 4pm,
at Crossroads Counseling Center, 130A Whiteford Way,
Lexington, SC 29072

*For further information, please visit their website at
lex-coveteransgroup.com or
contact our office at 803-785-8400.*

Homeless Veterans Continued...from page 6

Mental health services

[Veteran Justice Outreach](#) provides eligible, justice-involved Veterans with timely access to VA's mental health and substance use services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.

VA's Substance Use Disorder Treatment Enhancement Initiative provides substance use services in the community to aid homeless Veterans' recovery.

[The Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Program](#) helps incarcerated Veterans successfully rejoin the community through support including those addressing mental health and substance use problems.

[The Readjustment Counseling Service's Vet Center Programs](#) feature community-based locations and outreach activities that help to identify homeless Veterans and match homeless Veterans with necessary services. To access the VA's services for homeless and at-risk Veterans, available 24/7 call 1-877-424-3838 or call the local VA Medical Center 1-800-776-4000 and ask for the Homeless Coordinator.



DANG-IT DOLL UPDATES

As of April 1, 2021, The Non-Profit OMSRD/Dang-it Doll project was suspended permanently. As you know, due to the Covid, they were not able to hold any workshops in over a year, nor were they allowed to ship any dolls to our Military. In Compliance with State of South Carolina Secretary of States Office Non-Profit Regulations, all remaining Dang-it Dolls are being donated to the Big Red Barn Veterans Retreat and remaining supplies are being donated to other non profits that will be using them to make neck pillows, lap quilts, shawls and other items for our veterans in nursing homes and the VA hospitals. What little cash that is left will be donated to the Wreaths Across America Fort Jackson National Cemetery.

Travel Benefits for VA Healthcare

If you meet the criteria below, you may be eligible for mileage reimbursement or special mode transport in association with obtaining VA health care services.

Mileage Rates

General Travel

\$0.415 (41.5 cents) per mile

Scheduled appointments qualify for round-trip mileage. Unscheduled visits may be limited to return mileage only.

Deductible

\$3.00 one-way (\$6.00 round trip)

Deductible requirement is subject to a monthly cap of \$18.00. Upon reaching \$18.00 in deductibles or 6 one-way (3 round) trips, whichever comes first in a calendar year, travel payments made for the balance of that particular month will be free of deductible charges.

Waiver of Deductible

A waiver of the deductible will be provided if you are eligible for travel and you:

1. are in receipt of a VA pension or;
2. are a NSC Veteran and your previous year's income does not exceed, or your projected current calendar year's income, in the year of application will not exceed the applicable VA pension rate, or
3. are a SC Veteran and your previous year's income does not exceed, or your projected current calendar year's income, in the year of application will not exceed the applicable national means test income threshold or,
4. are traveling for a scheduled compensation and pension exam

YOU QUALIFY IF:	YOU QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL MODE TRANSPORTATION (AMBULANCE, WHEELCHAIR VAN ETC.) IF:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. you have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or 2. you are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or 3. you receive a VA pension, or 4. your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or 5. you are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician, and <input type="checkbox"/> you meet one of the eligibility criteria in 1 through 5 above, and <input type="checkbox"/> the travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)

Updates on South Carolina VA State Nursing Homes

VA nursing homes in Gaffney and Florence are due to open sometime this summer. Ground breaking will begin soon for a new VA nursing home in Sumter. Additionally, a VA nursing home has been approved for Horry County and SC VA Secretary Grimsley has submitted a request for one in Aiken County. This would bring the total to nine South Carolina VA state nursing homes.



**All Lexington County Offices
will be closed
on the following days:**

**Monday, May 10th -
Confederate Memorial Day**

**Monday, May 31st -
Memorial Day**



***The History of the American Flag &
Flag Day continued from page 8***

Our flag is an inspiring symbol that unites us all as American citizens. The unique history of the American

flag follows the history of our country and reminds us of the triumphant beginning of the United States. Today the flag consists of 13 horizontal stripes, seven red alternating with six white. The stripes represent the original 13 Colonies and the stars represent our country's 50 United States. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well; red symbolizes hardiness and valor, white symbolizes purity and innocence, and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice. As our country grew and developed, so did our flag. It has followed the fate of the country itself and, in the future, our flag may even change again.

Today, our flag remains a vibrant symbol of the American principles of democracy, justice, and freedom, and of course the everlasting memory of those who have sacrificed their lives defending these intrinsic principles of the United States of America. Over two hundred years ago, the Second Continental Congress officially made the Stars and Stripes the symbol of America, going so far as to declare that the 13 stars gracing the original flag represented "a new constellation" with the ideal that America embodied a bright new hope and light for mankind. Today, our flag continues to carry the inspirational and fundamental convictions of our great nation, and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Flag Day is a celebration of the adoption of the American flag by Continental Congress in the First Flag Resolution of June 14, 1777. Although the 200-year anniversary of this date was celebrated by flying flags on public buildings and holding remembrances in several cities, Flag Day wasn't officially recognized until President Harry Truman signed it into law in 1949.

DID YOU KNOW...



Copies of all of our newsletters can be found on the Lexington County website at lex-co.com/departments/veteransaffairs/newsletters.

The newsletters are listed on the site by year.



**About Our Office
COVID-19
Updates**

The County of Lexington officials have reopened portions of the County's Administration buildings to the general public and are continuing to monitor the impact that COVID-19 is having on the Lexington County community and the services the County provides to its residents and visitors. Although County staff will work their normal 8am to 5pm schedule, the buildings will only be opened to the public between 9am to 4pm, so that thorough cleaning of public spaces can be conducted.

The VA office hours are from 8am to 5pm and we are open to the public on a limited basis. To comply with State and County social distancing guidelines, walk-ins will not be seen until further notice. Counselors are available to assist with claims and questions via the telephone, email, fax and US mail. Outreach at the libraries has been cancelled until further notice. For further information or to get help from a counselor, please call our office at 803-785-8400 and we will be glad to assist you. We are sorry for any inconvenience.

**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.**

Website

Featured Medal:

Distinguished Service Medal

Distinguished Service Medals are awarded for exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service in a position of great responsibility to the Government of the United States, and can be awarded for such service as part of a valorous act in combat, continuous acts of valor over a period of time, for distinguished service in non-combat positions of great responsibility, and even for a career of exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service in a position of great responsibility. As such, the Distinguished Service Medals are the HIGHEST awards for non-combat actions of the Department of Defense and the individual branches of service.

The DEFENSE Distinguished Service Medal became the NEWEST of these awards when it was authorized on July 9, 1920. It is presented by the Department of Defense, and as such, takes precedence over the DSMs of the branches of service.

Both the Army and Navy Distinguished Service Medals were established in 1918 and 1919 respectively, as part of the new Pyramid of Honor that came out of the Medal of Honor review of 1917. They were part of the program to authorize new awards for presentation to Veterans of World War I who performed heroically, gallantly, and/or meritoriously during the war but whose service and/or actions did not rise to the level demanded for award of the Medal of Honor. (Until 1942 the Navy DSM took precedence over the Navy Cross.)

During World War II, a Distinguished Service Medal was authorized to members of the United States Merchant Marines by Congressional Action in 1942 and was retroactive to September 3, 1939, encompassing the period of service of Merchant Mariners in the earliest days before the United States entered World War I. Since Merchant Mariners were auxiliary to the Navy and today are not employed under the Department of Defense, they are NOT eligible for the Medal of Honor (restricted to members of the U.S. Military), making it the USMM's highest award.

Members of the U.S. Coast Guard, unlike the Merchant Marines, were eligible for award of the Medal of Honor, and one Coast Guardsman was in fact posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in World War II. Members of the Coast Guard are also eligible for award of the Navy Cross (earning 55 in history), as well as the NAVY Distinguished Service Medal. In 1949, however, the Coast Guard was authorized its own unique, Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal. (The award has undergone variations as a result of the post-9/11 transfer of the Coast Guard to the Department of Homeland Security.)

Until 1947 members of the Air Service, Air Corps, and Air Forces were adjunct to the U.S. Army, and as such were awarded the Army Medal of Honor, Army Distinguished Service Cross, and Army Distinguished Service Medal. Subsequent to establishment of the U.S. Air Force as a separate branch of service, however, members of our newest branch of military continued to receive Army awards until the Air Force established its own Air Force Medal of Honor, Air Force Cross, and Air Force Distinguished Service Medal in 1960.



From left to right: Pictures of the Distinguished Service Medal and Ribbon for Defense, Army, Navy/Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force and Merchant Marines.

Coming in the Next Issue...
Agent Orange, MERs & Tri-Care.