

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE  
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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# VET NEWS

March 2005

## VFW POST 8738 FLAG DISPOSAL

On February 5, 2005, VFW Post 8738 held their Flag Disposal Ceremony. They were assisted by Cub Master Kregg Corley and Cub Scout Pack 425 sponsored by Zion Lutheran Church of Lexington.



### MARCH OUTREACH PROGRAM

March 1<sup>st</sup>: 8-12, Batesburg-Leesville;

March 8<sup>th</sup>: 9-12 Chapin;

March 15<sup>th</sup>: 8-12, Swansea.

The Outreach programs have been effective with veterans taking advantage of the opportunity to meet locally with VA Office staff.

## THE SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT (Public Law 108-189)

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act updates and strengthens current civil protections enacted during World War II. In addition, the new law contains dozens of provisions to assist soldiers,

sailors, airmen, and marines to help manage their financial and legal obligations while they are away from home in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations around the world.

This law will help these brave men and women by strengthening and expanding the current civil relief statute.

## HANDICAP GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR SEVERELY DISABLED VETERANS— NEEDING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING/TRANSPORTATION

Active-duty personnel who have specific service-connected disabilities and require special housing needs may qualify for Department of Veterans Affairs monetary grants. The grants are part of the government's efforts to enable disabled veterans to enjoy an independent living status.

The Special Housing Adaptations Benefit grants, ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000, can be used for construction costs to adapt a dwelling for handicap accessibility. Qualifying for the grants depends on the severity of the disability.

Disabled veterans with blindness in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less or the anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands are eligible for \$10,000 grants. Those service-disabled veterans eligible for \$50,000 grants must have the loss or loss of use of both lower extremities; or blindness in both eyes plus loss or loss of use of one lower extremity; or loss or loss of use of one lower extremity together with other disabilities.

To find your local VA service center, one in, call the Veterans Service Center at 1-800-827-1000. More information on the program is available at [va.gov](http://va.gov) or VA office.

The VA also has benefits for service-disabled veterans needing handicap adaptations to a personal automobile. VA may pay up to \$11,000 to purchase a new or used vehicle. To qualify, the service-disabled individual must have loss of use of one or both hands or feet or permanent impairment of vision of both eyes with certain central visual acuity requirements.

**Note:** The VA is coordinating with DOD to process these benefits before an active-duty member is discharged.

### DELL DONATES \$17 MILLION

The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, of computer fame, pledged \$17 million to the *Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund* in December. The Fund gives \$11,000 to the spouse and \$5,000 to each dependent child of American and British military personnel killed in Afghanistan or Iraq.

The first payment of \$5 million was made in December with the remainder being made over the next four years. The Fund can be reached at [www.fallenheroesfund.org](http://www.fallenheroesfund.org) or at 1-800-340-4376.



Rock along rural Iowa road that was a popular target for graffiti until artist Ray "Bubba" Sorensen took hold of his paintbrush.

### ACCESSING MILITARY RECORDS

Veterans and their families have asked how to obtain copies of military records. Two means exist for veterans or their next-of-kin (if the veteran is deceased). formal authorization (date, signature and specific information sought) from the veteran or relative.

All requests for records can be done through the National Archives and Records Administration via the Internet or fax machine. Web site: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>. Fax: 314-801-9195. Or you can send a letter to the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.

When a veteran has died, eligible relatives include children, parents, siblings and unremarried spouses for purposes of access. Others, such as historians, must have and/or medals are made using a *Request Pertaining to Military Records* (SF-180) obtainable from MPRC at the above Web site/address or the VA office.

### 100,000 GULF VETS SICK

A committee created by former VA Secretary Anthony Principi concluded in November that toxic chemicals—not combat stress—were a likely cause of mysterious ailments plaguing Gulf War vets. In addition, the VA committee:

- estimated some 100,000 Gulf War vets (about one in seven) suffer war-related health problems;
- called for a reassessment of the use of pyridostigmine bromide (a drug used to protect soldiers against nerve gas);
- recommended \$60 million over four years to monitor and research the health of Gulf vets and their children; and
- noted that research into the cause of Gulf War illnesses had implications for homeland security in case of a domestic terrorist attack using chemical nerve agents.

### PROPOSED 2006 FEDERAL BUDGET CHANGES

#### Veterans

Those with higher incomes but no service-connected illnesses or injuries would pay a \$250 annual fee for Veterans Affairs health care. Their prescription drug co-payments would go to \$15 from \$7 for a 30-day supply. Write your Congressman and Senator to oppose this budget change.

#### Legislation

#### **Wounded Vets Targeted by New Law**

President Bush enacted a new law on November 30 designed to create better treatment options for severely wounded GIs. All legislation centers will specifically focus upon developing new treatments for veterans with complex multi-trauma injuries suffered while in combat.”

*Public Law 108-422, the Veterans Health Programs Improvement Act of 2004*, also will:

extend VA's long-term care authority through 2005; permanently extends sexual trauma treatment programs; prohibits VA per diem payments to state veterans homes from offsetting other forms of aid; increase spending for the Grant and Per Diem program, which helps homeless veterans, from \$75 million to \$99 million in 2005; eliminate co-payments for vets receiving VA hospice care; authorize \$24 million for 16 leases of VA outpatient clinics; allow VA to use excess property for homeless vets programs; require VA to report on the status of its medical waste management systems; and allow all vets enrolled with VA to use the Veterans Canteen Service.

**POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an ailment resulting from exposure to an extreme stress involving direct or indirect threat of death, serious injury or a physical threat. The trauma may be experienced alone, as in rape or assault, or in the company of others, as in military combat.

The events that can cause PTSD are called "stressors." Symptoms include recurrent thoughts of a traumatic event, reduced involvement in work or outside interests, hyper alertness, anxiety and irritability. More than 185,000 veterans were listed by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2003 as having PTSD as a service-connected disability.

VA readjustment counseling is provided through 206 community-based Vet Centers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

The Vet Center mission features a mix of direct counseling and help accessing other programs, with psychological counseling for veterans exposed to war trauma or who were sexually assaulted during military service, family counseling, community outreach and education, and extensive social services and referral activities to help veterans.

Eligibility for Vet Center services includes all Vietnam theater veterans, other Vietnam era veterans who accessed Vet Center care prior to January 1, 1004, and any other veteran who served in any war, armed conflict or peace-keeping mission. Eligibility for sexual trauma counseling at Vet Centers is open to any veteran regardless of period of service.

Among its many educational programs, the National Center provides regular satellite broadcasts and publishes two newsletters, which highlights the latest developments in research and clinical practices for PTSD. The National Center maintains a nationally recognized Web site (<http://www.ncptsd.org/>) with information about trauma and PTDS.

| <b>Veterans Being Compensated for PTSD</b> |          |         |
|--|----------|---------|
| Period                                     | Sept. 04 | Sept.99 |
| Pre-WWII                                   | 3        | 1       |
| WWII                                       | 25,061   | 15,879  |
| Korea                                      | 10,016   | 5,412   |
| Vietnam                                    | 161,028  | 90,695  |
| Gulf War                                   | 13,524   | 5,592   |
| Peacetime                                  | 8,261    | 4,491   |
| Total                                      | 217,893  | 122,070 |

**S.13**

**Fulfilling Our Duty to America's Veterans Act of 2005 (Introduced in Senate)**

**SEC. 405. COMMENCEMENT OF 10-YEAR DELIMITING PERIOD FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS WHO ENROLL IN TRAINING PROGRAM.**

(a) VETERANS- In the case of an individual eligible for educational assistance under this chapter who, during the 10-year period described in subsection (a) of this section, enrolls in a program of training under this chapter, the period during which the individual may use the individual's entitlement to educational assistance under this chapter expires on the last day of the 10-year period beginning on the first day of the individual's pursuit of such program of training.

(b) ELIGIBLE CHILDREN- if the person enrolls in a program of special restorative training under subchapter V of this chapter, such period shall begin on the first day of the person's pursuit of such program of special restorative training.

The back page contains information on the South Carolina Tuition Program for Children of Certain War Veterans.

**SOUTH CAROLINA TUITION PROGRAM  
FOR CHILDREN OF CERTAIN WAR VETERANS**

**Offered by** - The State of South Carolina

**Description** - No funds are appropriated for this program by the State of South Carolina since the benefit is simply tuition waiver at any state supported university, college, or post-high school technical education institutions. All children who qualify may receive these benefits, regardless of financial need, up to and including their twenty-sixth birthday.

**Value** Free Tuition

**Eligibility** - A child of a wartime veteran, upon application to and approval by the South Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs, may be admitted to any state supported college, university, or post high school technical education institution free of tuition so long as his work and conduct is satisfactory to the governing body of the institution if the veteran was a resident of this state at the time of entry into service and during service or has been a resident of this state for at least one year and still resides in this state, or if the veteran is deceased, resided in this state for one year before his death, and provided the veteran served honorably in a branch of the military service of the United States during a war period, as those periods are defined by Section 101 of Title 38 of the United States Code and:

1. was killed in action;
2. died from other causes while in the service;
3. died of disease or disability resulting from service;
4. was a Prisoner of War as defined by Congress or Presidential proclamation during such war period;
5. is permanently and totally disabled as determined by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from any cause;
6. has been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor;
7. has been awarded the Purple Heart Medal;
8. is missing in action; or
9. the applicant is the child of a deceased veteran who qualifies under items 4 and 5.

**The provisions of this section apply to a child of a veteran who meets the residency requirements of Chapter 112 of this title, is twenty-six years of age or younger, and is pursuing any type of undergraduate degree.**

**Basis of Award** Proof of qualifications for the benefits. Our primary source of verification is with the Veterans Claims Folder and certified copy of the veteran's DD 214 if application is based on award of the Purple Heart or Medal of Honor.

**Application Procedures** - Obtain applications forms from any County Veterans Affairs Office or write The Governor's Office, Division of Veterans Affairs, VA Regional Office, Room 141, 1801 Assembly Street, Columbia, SC 29201. Telephone (803) 255-4255, (803) 255-4256 or (803) 255-4317. Collect calls can not be accepted.

**LIST OF STATE SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS**

**Universities:**

Citadel  
Clemson University  
College of Charleston  
Coastal University  
Francis Marion University  
Lander University  
University of South Carolina (all campuses)@ Aiken, Beaufort, Columbia, Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Spartanburg, Sumter, Union, and Medical University of South Carolina, Columbia, and Charleston  
SC State University  
Winthrop University

**Technical Colleges:**

Aiken Technical College  
Central Carolina Technical College  
Denmark Technical College  
Florence Technical College  
Greenville Technical College  
Horry-Georgetown Technical College  
Low Country Technical College  
Midlands Technical College  
Northeastern Technical College  
Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College  
Piedmont Technical College  
Spartanburg Technical College  
Tri-County Technical College  
Trident Technical College  
Williamsburg Technical College  
York Technical College



## **OPERATION PHONE HOME**

A call home is one of a soldier's high points of his entire week. A 60 minute phone card only gives a soldier a 6 minute call to his loved one, but in that time he might be able to hear his new born baby cry for the first time, or he may be able to tell his girl friend or his mother that he loves them. Please open opportunities for our troops to connect to a loved one. Military Support Ministry is supporting a drive to send phone cards to our troops. Please send at least a 60 minute phone card, which is really 6 minutes, and make sure they have international minutes. Send cards to the following address:

Military Support Ministry  
P.O. Box 2383  
Lexington, SC 29071

For information on Military Support Ministry look at our website:  
[www.MilitarySupportMinistry.com](http://www.MilitarySupportMinistry.com)