

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE  
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



**GARY R. BAKER**  
DIRECTOR

**BARBARA O'CONNOR**  
ASST. CSO

**BETTY J. CARSON**  
Editor

TELEPHONE: (803) 785-8400  
FAX: (803) 785-0115

605 WEST MAIN STREET  
SUITE 101  
LEXINGTON, S.C. 29072

# VET NEWS

January 2006

## **UNIFORMED SERVICE FAMILY MEMBERS AND SURVIVORS OVER AGE 75 RECEIVE PERMANENT IDENTIFICATION CARDS**

A permanent United States Uniformed Services Identification (ID) card was made available in September 2005 for all eligible Uniformed Services family members and survivors of deceased personnel, who are age 75 and over. Currently, Uniformed Services retirees are the only persons who receive a permanent ID card.

Beneficiaries currently in possession of a valid ID card should obtain the new permanent ID card within 90 days of expiration. If beneficiaries' cards are not due to expire for at least another year, they do not need to apply for the new ID card until their existing card is within 90 days of expiring.

The Military Health System requires all eligible beneficiaries to have an ID card in order to receive health care. Beneficiaries will continue to receive health care benefits and their claims will be processed with their current ID card until they receive the permanent ID card as long as their personal information is current in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).

Even though active duty and retired service members are automatically registered in DEERS, their family members are not. It is the sponsors' responsibility to register their family members into DEERS. Sponsors must also make any necessary updates in DEERS for themselves and their family members to ensure TRICARE benefits and claims processing will continue without interruption. Changes to spouse's status, home address and family status (marriage, divorce, birth and adoption)

are examples of information that needs to be properly maintained in DEERS.

It is important for surviving family members to update their personal information in DEERS when the active duty or retired sponsor dies. The DEERS Support Office can be reached at (800) 538-9552.

## **VETERANS' VAN**

Donations to the Veterans' Van Fund have reached approximately \$18,732.89. The van will be purchased through a program of the DAV at approximately \$13,000. The vans are titled to the VA Medical Center which then accepts responsibility for maintenance, fuel, and insurance. Volunteer drivers will be needed soon (see related article). Call Gary Baker at 785-8401.

The extra donation dollars will be used toward financing another van in a more remote area of the county. Why not remember your loved one or honor our veterans with a donation to the Lexington County Veterans Van Fund, 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC 29072.

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**January 9, 2006**

There will be an Advisory Committee meeting January 9, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office. Please try to have at least one representative from your organization in attendance.

Light refreshments will be served.

**If your address or Post Commander has changed,  
please notify us at 785-8400.**

**DRIVERS NEEDED FOR  
LEXINGTON COUNTY  
VETERANS' VAN**

A volunteer driver or volunteer drivers is/are needed for the Lexington County Veterans' Van. The van will be parked at the Lexington County Auxiliary Building at 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC. The van will be titled to the VA Medical Center which has the responsibility for maintenance, fuel, and insurance.

The designated driver(s) will be required to take a physical examination at the Dorn VA hospital and have a current driver's license. For more information call Gary Baker at 803-785-8401.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR VAN/POV DRIVERS**

**Need copy of current DRIVER'S LICENSE**

**Need copy of current AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE**

**Must view DRIVER SAFETY VIDEO  
If you are a DAV Van and/or POV Driver**

**Must sign SC Dept. of Public Safety Request  
for Drivers Information—Form MV-20**

**Must have a VAN DRIVER'S PHYSICAL EXAM**

**Must complete Van Drivers' Questionnaire  
VA Form May 1991-10-0043A**

**Must complete a DAV VAWS Form 20**

**TRAUMATIC INJURY RIDER TO BE  
ADDED TO SGLI EFFECTIVE  
DECEMBER 12, 2005**

T-SGLI is a rider that will be attached to Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance coverage, and will provide for insurance payments to members who suffer a traumatic injury.

***Who is covered under T-SGLI?***

Every member who has SGLI will also have T-SGLI effective December 1, 2005. This coverage will apply to active duty members, reservists,

funeral honors duty and one-day muster duty. Members with specific questions may call (800-419-1473).

***Who is not covered under T-SGLI?***

This coverage will not apply to spouses and children covered under Family SGLI.

***Amount paid to members who suffer traumatic injury:***

T-SGLI payments will range from \$25,000 to a maximum of \$100,000 after suffering a traumatic injury.

***Premium for T-SGLI:***

The premium for T-SGLI will be a flat rate, regardless of coverage level. The table below outlines current rates for various categories of SGLI coverage:

Duty Status	Premium
Active duty members	\$1.00 per month
Reservists w/full time coverage	\$1.00 per month
Reservists w/part time coverage	\$1.00 per year
Funeral honors duty	no charge
1 day muster duty	no charge

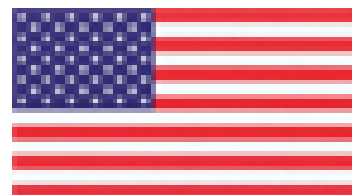
*Note: These rates are determined by VA and are subject to change based on claims experience.*

**To the troops**

We honor all our armed forces, the fallen & their loved ones.

May God bless each soldier and their families for their dedication and sacrifices.

May they all be home and SOON.



## THE FINAL INSPECTION

The soldier stood and faced God, Which  
must always come to pass. He hoped  
his shoes were shining, Just as brightly  
as his brass.

"Step forward now, you soldier, How shall  
I deal with you ? Have you  
always turned the other cheek ? To My  
Church have you been true?"

The soldier squared his shoulders and  
said, "No, Lord, I guess I ain't.  
Because those of us who carry guns, Can't  
always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays, And at  
times my talk was tough. And  
sometimes I've been violent, Because the  
world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny, That wasn't  
mine to keep... Though I worked a  
lot of overtime, When the bills got just  
too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help, Though  
at times I shook with fear. And  
sometimes, God, forgive me, I've wept  
unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place, Among the  
people here. They never wanted  
me around, Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord, It  
needn't be so grand. I never  
expected or had too much, But if you  
don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne,  
Where the saints had often  
trod. As the soldier waited quietly, For  
the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, you soldier, You've  
borne your burdens well. Walk  
peacefully on Heaven's streets, You've  
done your time in Hell."

~Author Unknown~

## YELLOW RIBBONS

Why do we put up yellow ribbons during wars? There are many different versions of how the yellow ribbon symbol began. The American Folklife Center states that the announcement that the yellow ribbon symbol had become the banner through which families could express their determi-

nation to be reunited started with Penelope Laingen, wife of former Iranian hostage—Bruce Laingen, in 1979.

How the yellow ribbon became a modern American symbol of safe return is pretty amazing. This ribbon is made up of thread from a couple of different places, woven together to make a symbol that was implanted in the popular culture by a movie and a couple of songs and turned into a reality by people with a need to express their feelings at a time of national crisis. People put them up to show support for our troops—and to express a hope that they return safely.



## SURVIVOR BENEFITS WEB SITE LAUNCHED

VA has created a new Web site for surviving spouses and dependents of military personnel who died on active duty and for survivors and dependents of veterans who died after leaving the military.

The Web site is organized into two broad categories: death in service and death after service. It provides visitors with information about a wide range of benefits for the surviving spouse, dependent children, and dependent parents of deceased veterans and active-duty personnel.

The new site, at [www.vba.va.gov/survivors](http://www.vba.va.gov/survivors), also has information from—and links to—other federal agencies and organizations that offer benefits and services to survivors and dependents.



## WHO IS A VETERAN?

For the purposes of title 38, United States Code, Veterans' Benefits, the basic definition of the word "veteran" is a person who served in the active military, naval or air service and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable. Some 25.6 million persons met this definition in 2002 and of those, 19.1 million meet a further definition of "veterans of any war" because they served in the active military, naval or air service during a period of war. This distinction is important because there are significant advantages specifically accruing only to veterans with wartime service. "Conditions other than dishonorable," "active military, naval or air service," and "period of war" are all defined in the law.

Prior to 1980, there were no minimum length of service requirements. To be eligible for some VA benefits, an individual who enlisted in the military service for the first time on or after September 8, 1980, is now required to complete a minimum period of service, either twenty-four months of continuous active duty or the "full period for which [the veteran] was called or ordered to active duty." There is no minimum period that a former service member must have served to apply for and receive an award of service-connected compensation. There are no other definitions of the term "veteran" to be found under title 38 of the United States Code.

### **WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM ASSISTS SOLDIERS**

The Army is changing the name of the Disabled Soldier Support System or DS3—a program that assists severely wounded soldiers—to the U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program.

While the name has changed, the tenets of the program have not. The U.S. Army Wounded Program is designed to provide severely wounded soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy and follow-up with personal support to assist them as they return to duty, or to civilian life.

For additional information on the U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program, call (800) 833-6622.



### **CHAMPVA MEDS BY MAIL BRING GOOD NEWS**

For some disabled veterans and their families, the CHAMPVA Meds by Mail program is the spoonful of sugar that helps the medicine go down. The program provides free prescription drugs via the mail to 100% disabled veterans and their families who do not have prescription drug coverage.

The medications are delivered at no cost to patients from service centers in Cheyenne, Wyoming and Dublin, Georgia. More than 50,000 patients now receive their medication through the mail program. There are no co-payments, no deductible requirements, and no claims to file. Participants must submit a CHAMPVA Other Health Insurance Certification form (VA Form 10-7959C) that supports they do not have another health insurance plan with pharmacy coverage.

To be eligible, veterans must be 100% disabled. The program also covers spouses and dependent children of these veterans, or if the veteran died on active duty or died from a service connected disability.

Veterans and their families can enroll in the program by filling out Meds by Mail Order and Patient Profile forms. Maintenance medications taken over a long period of time are available through the program for treatment of blood pressure, heart, arthritis, and chronic pain.

Narcotic medications are not available and must be obtained from a local pharmacy. Over-the-counter medications that do not require a prescription are not covered by CHAMPVA and cannot be obtained through Meds by Mail. The only exception is insulin and insulin-related supplies. Most prescriptions are filled with the generic equivalent.

Urgent care medications or any that are not available through Meds by Mail can be obtained from a local pharmacy.

To apply for the program and to submit eligibility forms, veterans or their families should call 1-800-733-8387. (DAV, Sept/Oct 2005).



## PURPLE HEART VETERANS

*Paragraph 2-8, Army Regulation 600-8-22  
(Military Awards)  
25 February 1995*

The Purple Heart was established by General George Washington at Newburgh, New York, on 7 August 1782, during the Revolutionary War. It was reestablished by the President of the United States per War Department General Orders 3, 1932 and is currently awarded pursuant to Executive Order 11016, 25 April 1962, Executive Order 12464, 23 February 1984 and Public Law 98-525, 19 October 1984.

a. The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of an Armed Force or any civilian national of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with one of the U.S. Armed Services after 5 April 1917, has been wounded or killed, or who has died or may hereafter die after being wounded-

(1) In any action against an enemy of the United States.

(2) In any action with an opposing armed force of a foreign country in which the Armed Forces of the United States are or have been engaged.

(3) While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

(4) As a result of an act of any such enemy of opposing armed forces.

(5) As the result of an act of any hostile foreign force.

(6) After 28 March 1973, as a result of an international terrorist attack against the United States or a foreign nation friendly to the United States, recognized as such an attack by the Secretary of the Army, or jointly by the Secretaries of the separate armed services concerned if persons from more than one service are wounded in the attack.

(7) After 28 March 1973, as a result of military operations while serving outside the territory of the United States as part of a peacekeeping force.

Any member of the U.S. Army who believes that he or she is eligible for the Purple Heart, but through unusual circumstances no award was made, may submit an application through military channels, to Commander, PERSCOM, ATTN: TAPC PDA, Alexandria, VA 22332-0471. Application will include complete documentation, to include evidence of medical treatment, pertaining to the wound.

More information is available at the  
Military Order of the Purple Heart WWW site.

The Purple Heart Viola on your lapel is the evidence that YOU have not forgotten the price of liberty paid in the past and still being paid by those who have borne the brunt of battle in defense of America.

Close relatives of Purple Heart recipients are eligible to belong to the Ladies Auxiliary of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, which does important work nationally and locally in Veterans' Hospitals. Further information about the Order and its auxiliary may be obtained from National Headquarters at: The Military Order of the Purple Heart, 5413-B Backlick Road, Springfield, VA 22151 (703-642-5360) FAX (703) 642-2054.



LAMOPH Gamecock Unit 402  
Lexington County Veterans Day Parade

If you are a recipient of the Purple Heart and would like to join The Military Order of the Purple Heart, please contact Commander Stanley Thornburgh (803) 957-1469



### ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION & MEDICAL EXPENSE REPORTS

Anyone who receives a Eligibility Verification (EVR) and Medical Expense Report or just a Medical Expense Report should call this office at (803) 785-8400 as soon as they receive these forms to schedule an appointment.

Please bring along the following for 2004: computer printout from pharmacy, paid receipts for the following: from hospital/doctor, for glasses, eye exams, hearing aids, dental, over the counter drugs, total mileage to doctor/hospital/pharmacy, private medical insurance, Social Security statement for 2006, income—interest/dividends/bank statement, checking account amount, IRA/stocks/bonds/mutual funds for 2005; method of payment for Aid & Attendance if applicable.

The U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs will **not** consider canceled checks as proof of payment. Explanation of Benefits or RX prescriptions will not be considered. All EVR's must be received by the Pension Maintenance Center in Philadelphia by March 1<sup>st</sup> or the check will be discontinued.

**WHERE THERE'S A WILL,  
THERE'S A WAY**

A last will and testament is the legal document which controls the disposition of your property at death and may provide for guardianship for your children after your death. A will is not effective until you die. As long as you are living, your will does not affect the property you own nor can rights to property be transferred by it.

Changes to a will are made by drafting a new will and destroying the old one, or by adding a "codicil." A codicil is a legal document which must be signed and executed in the same manner as your will.

Never make any changes to your will without consulting an attorney. Changes on the face of your original will could make it invalid.

Your legal residence is the state in which you have your true, fixed and permanent home. Voting, paying taxes, owning property, motor vehicle registration indicate one's legal residence.

Your estate consists of all of your property and personal belongings which you own or are entitled to possess at the time of your death. This includes real and personal property, cash, savings and checking accounts, stocks, bonds, real estate, automobiles, etc. Although the proceeds of insurance policies may be considered part of your estate in some states, a will does not change the designated beneficiaries. The proceeds of an insurance policy will normally pass to the primary or secondary beneficiary designated on the face of the policy.

A person who receives property through a will is known as a beneficiary. You may leave all of your property to one beneficiary or you may wish to divide your estate among several persons. You may state in your will that several different items of property or sums of money shall go to different persons.

In South Carolina, a married person cannot completely exclude a spouse. Most states have laws which entitle spouses to at least part of the other spouse's estate. This can range from one-third to one-half of the other spouse's estate.

Some states also provide shares of the estate to children of the decedent. If you have questions concerning the statutory share law in your home state, talk to a legal assistance attorney.

A guardian should be named in a will to ensure that the children and their estates are cared for in

the event that both parents should die. Your guardian should be chosen with extreme care as this person will be charged with the duty of raising your children and managing their legal affairs. Such factors as the age of the guardian, age of the children, religion, social status, economics and relation of the proposed guardian to the children should be considered in making your decision.

### **DON'T BITE ON FAKE IRS E-MAIL**

The Internal Revenue Service is warning taxpayers about an e-mail scam that claims to be from the IRS and tells them they are eligible for a tax refund. The e-mail has a link that seeks personal information such as your Social Security number.

If the taxpayer bites, the information is used to steal his or her identity. The e-mail claims to come from [tax-refunds@irs.gov](mailto:tax-refunds@irs.gov).

The IRS which does not ask for personal or financial information via unsolicited e-mail, says if you get an e-mail like this, do not open attachments to it. Instead, call the IRS at (800) 829-1040 to see whether the agency is trying to contact you.

### **PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED VETERANS**

If you have been rated by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to be permanently and totally disabled by reason of service-connected disability, you are eligible for property t

Tax exemption. You must have a P&T letter for the current year. The VA Regional Office will provide you with this letter upon request. Call them at: 1-800-827-1000.

There are other benefits to which you might be eligible. Call 803-785-8400 and make an appointment to check them out.

### **VETERANS PREFERENCE**

Preference will be granted to eligible members for employment and/or an appointment in public

departments or public works operating on a merit system.

#### *Eligible Members*

- Must be honorably discharged from the Armed Forces of the U.S.
- 
- Must possess the skills and knowledge required for the position involved.

### **Veterans Reemployment Rights**

Employees of the State or any political subdivision thereof, who have been, or will be, commissioned, enlisted/selected for service in the Armed Forces of the U.S. shall be entitled to a leave of absence from his/her duties as an employee of the State/any political subdivision thereof, without loss of seniority or efficiency or register rating.

### **Credit of State Retirement for Military Service**

A person leaving employment with the State for military duty may continue with the State's Retirement Program if he/she continues to make payments based on the salary he/she was receiving when employed by the State.

An employee of the State with two (2) or more years of credited service with the South Carolina Retirement System may also purchase additional credit, up to six years, for military service towards his/her State retirement.

### **Income Tax Exemption on Retirement Pay**

Any person retired from the uniformed services or their surviving spouse, shall be allowed an exemption from the S.C. Income Tax of \$3,000 until age 65. At age 65, \$10,000 of retirement pay is exempt.

### **Property Taxes—Homestead Exemption**

All persons who have been declared permanently and totally disabled by the Social Security Administration, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, or other state or federal agencies, are eligible for a homestead exemption in an amount set by the General Assembly. This also applies to persons over age 65 after one year of residency.

### **Special Adapted Housing**

State law provides for the exemption of state, county, and municipal taxes on the residence of veterans who have lost the use of their lower extremities or who have paralysis of one lateral half of the body resulting from injury to the motor centers of the brain.

### **Free Hunting and Fishing Licenses**

The State provides free hunting/fishing licenses to veterans who are totally disabled. Licenses must be applied for directly from SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) showing proof of disability. The SCDNR phone number is (803) 734-3838.

### **Special License Plates**

Upon establishing proof of eligibility to entitlement, the S.C. Department of Public Safety, (803) 737-4000, may issue special motor vehicle license plates to the following:

- National Guard
- National Guard Retirees
- Purple Heart Recipients
- Disabled Veterans
- U.S. Armed Forces Retirees
- Ex-Prisoners of War
- Medal of Honor Recipients
- Pearl Harbor Survivors
- Normandy Invasion Survivors
- Marine Corps League

**SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Office of Veterans' Affairs is to thoroughly and expeditiously provide individual client assistance to all Veterans, their dependents or survivors, in filing, developing, presenting and prosecuting to final determination all claims for benefits under terms of federal and state legislation; to provide an ongoing quality training program to all 46 County Veterans' Affairs Officers; and to serve the needs of South Carolina veterans by supporting programs, both public and private.

Individuals may contact the South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs by writing or calling:

**South Carolina Office of Veterans Affairs  
1205 Pendleton St., Suite 369  
Columbia, SC 29201  
(803) 734-0200  
or  
the Lexington County Veterans Affairs  
(803) 785-8400**

**PRESENTATION OF THE STATE FLAG  
TO FAMILIES OF DECEASED MEMBERS  
OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA  
NATIONAL GUARD**

The State Adjutant General's Office shall present to the family of each deceased member of the South Carolina National Guard a flag of the State of South Carolina, appropriate for use as a burial flag, upon application of a member of the family of the deceased.

**RECORDING OF DISCHARGES**

Any veteran or survivor of a veteran desiring a copy of any discharge (DD-214) certificate or certificate of lost discharge, may apply to the County Veterans Affairs Officer in which the discharge or certificate or lost discharge is registered.

If you have not registered your DD-214 with your county office, you should do so as soon as possible. That will ensure that you or your survivors will have access to a certified copy at all times.

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

**The Veterans Affairs Office will be closed  
January 2<sup>nd</sup> for New Year's Day  
and January 16<sup>th</sup> for Martin Luther Day**

**JANUARY OUTREACH PROGRAM**

January 3rd	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
January 10th	9-12	Chapin
January 17th	8-12	Swansea

**NEW OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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

**These are toll-free calls**