

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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VET NEWS

January 2007

DATES TO REMEMBER

- 1st Veterans Affairs Office Closed for New Years
- 15th Martin Luther King holiday
- 16th Battle of the Bulge concluded in favor of the Allies; 77,000 Allied casualties (1945)
- 17th Operation Desert Storm began (1991)
- 20th International Military Tribunal established in Tokyo, Japan, for the prosecution of war crimes (1946)
- 22nd American army makes amphibious landing at Anzio and Nettuno, Italy (1944)
- 30th North Vietnam launches unsuccessful Tet offensive (1968)
- 31st Battle of Hue began (1968)

BLUE STAR MOTHERS COLLECT DONATIONS

The Blue Star Mothers are continuing to solicit items to be sent to military serving overseas. They will be making another shipment in January, 2007.

Popular items among the troops are DVDs, hand-held video games, orange listerine, twizzlers, Slim Jims, dried fruit (apples, raisins, bananas, pineapple, apricots, etc.), Ziploc bags (sandwich and one gallon size), large Braun coffee filters, teriyaki & spice beef jerky, small cereal multi-boxes, Old Spice brand body wash & clear gel deodorant, fingernail brush, hand sanitizers, Mike & Ike candy, fruit cups, pop tarts, chocolate, vanilla & tapioca pudding snack packs, tuna lunch packets, and cookies—any kind.

If you know some military person who would like to receive a package or if you can help through donations of these items or by providing a donation to assist them, contact the Blue Star Mothers at 808-6485 or 206-6088 or contact the VA office.

IN MEMORY OF GEORGE W. LeROY

Funeral services for George W. LeRoy were held on Thursday, December 7, 2006, at West Side Baptist Church. Interment followed at West Side Baptist Church with full military honors

Mr. LeRoy served on the Board of Directors for the Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers for six years. He served as director of Veterans Affairs for Lexington County for 16 years, from which he retired in 2001. He was voted County VA Officer of the Year in 1992, 1993, and 1994. He had been active in several veterans' organizations and was a lifetime member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8738 and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

In March of 2002, the American Legion Post 174 dedicated the Leroy/Ritchey Building in Irmo in his name.

GIRL SCOUT COOKIE SALES

The Girl Scouts will be selling cookies very soon. When the local Girl Scouts solicit you for cookie sales, please order an extra box or two for the soldiers overseas

The Blue Star Mothers will be shipping these cookies in mid-March.

JANUARY 8TH ADVISORY MEETING

The Lexington County Veterans Advisory Committee will meet in the Lexington County Veterans Office at 7:00 p.m. on January 8th. Please try to have a representative from your organization in attendance.



Lexington VFW Post #8738 Ladies Auxiliary stuff Christmas baskets for Veterans and Shut-ins on December 9th. From left to right: Linda Gunter, Betty Steele, and Edith Hylton.



Lexington VFW Post #8738 and their Ladies Auxiliary host the Veterans and families Christmas Party, December 10th. Each veteran or their family and each child received a Christmas basket.

Awards were presented as follows:

Lexington County Fireman of the Year –
Scott Roper

Lexington County Deputy of the Year –
Kevin Blackmon

VFW Post #8738 Patriot's Pen –
Alice Manning

VFW Post #8738 Voice of Democracy –
Aaron Manning

Teachers of the Year: Gincy Drakesford of Pelion Elementary and Kelly Crawford of Brooks-Cayce Elementary

SAVE THE DATE
February 5, 2007
 PLAN TO ATTEND
An Evening of Heroes and Legends
 Lexington School District One
 Educational Foundation
 Presents an Evening of Heroes and Legends
 Monday, February 5, 2007
 6:30 pm Silent Auction
 7:30 pm Keynote Address by the
Navajo Code Talkers of World War II fame
 Lexington High School Cafetorium

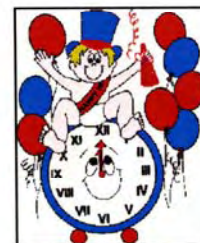
Lexington
 SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE
Where Children and Learning Are One

Please join the
 Lexington School District One Educational Foundation
 as we honor the fallen soldiers of
 Lexington School District One for an evening of
Heroes and Legends
 Monday, February 5, 2007 • 6:30 pm
 Lexington High School Cafetorium
Special recognition for Thomas D. Caughman, Joshua L. Torrence & Almar L. Fitzgerald
 The Foundation will also honor the late
Congressman Floyd Spence
 by naming the AFJROTC wing after him.
Navajo Code Talkers of World War II
 will present the keynote address.
 Please contact Lexington School District One Educational Foundation at
 803.808.4624 or cmcfarland@lexington1.net to reserve your ticket.

WORLD WAR MOVIES

Clint Eastwood's "Letters from Iwo Jima," the second of his two World War II sagas this year, was picked as the top movie of 2006 by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association.

Set for release December 20, "Letters from Iwo Jima" stars Ken Watanabe and chronicles the battle from the perspective of Japanese soldiers defending the island against U.S. troops. The film comes just two months after Eastwood's "Flags of Our Fathers."



Heroes & Legends

A Star Spangled Evening

Presented By

The Lexington School District One Educational Foundation

Monday February 5, 2007
Lexington High School
Cafetorium

Silent Auction 6:30 pm
Keynote Address 7:30 pm
Tickets \$20

Special Guest Speakers

The Navajo Code Talkers of World War II

Honoring the fallen veterans of all wars from
Lexington School District One with a special tribute to

Thomas D. Caughman

★ ☆ ★ Joshua L. Torrence ★ ☆ ★
Almar L. Fitzgerald

And a dedication of the Air Force JROTC Wing of
Lexington High School in honor of

U.S. Representative Floyd Spence

For Tickets and Information contact the
Lexington One Educational Foundation Office 803 808-4624
or email: cmcfarland@lexington1.net

GIFT CARD SCAM

If you buy gift cards from a display rack that has various store cards, you may become a victim of theft. Crooks are now jotting down the card numbers in the store and then waiting a few days and calling to see how much of a balance THEY have on the card.

Once they find the card is “activated,” then they go on-line and start shopping.

You may want to purchase your card from a customer service person, or on-line, where they do not have the gift cards viewable to the public.

Please share this with all your family and friends. You may wish to read about it at:

<http://www.snopes.com/fraud/sales/giftcard.asp>



**Support Your Lexington County
VFW Post #8738
424 Cedarcrest Drive
Lexington, SC 29073
803-359-8738**

Sunday December 31 – New Year’s Eve Dance
Cash Bar at 7:00 p.m.
Band is "Smile" 9-12 midnight.
Breakfast 12:15 a.m.
\$15.00 single; \$25.00 couple.

UNCLE SHAM WANTS YOU

An officer worker and single mother needed a new roof on her house. She had been trying to get a federal housing grant by going to websites that claim they accept applications for such grants. She says even though she had an unlisted phone number, the caller, who identified herself, as an agent with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, was able to reach her, explaining that the “government has access to such information.”

The caller made it clear that the grant was for a new roof only and couldn’t be used to gamble or buy illegal drugs—words of caution, the agent stated, that were just as one would expect from a federal employee.

The caller requested \$349 to process the \$5,550 grant. The single mother was not surprised because most of the “grant” websites she’d seen charged processing fees. So she readily provided her bank account number for an automatic withdrawal.

A company in the British Virgin Islands withdrew the money from her account. But she never got the promised grant check. Each time she called, she got a different person. Each time they said the check was sent via bulk mail, and she should be patient.

Then the toll-free phone line, a company known as CGMS, Inc. was disconnected. The single mother’s bank held her responsible for the \$349 withdrawal, and her roof still hasn’t been replaced.

It’s amazing how many people think the government is contacting them about giving away money—to make a home repair, start a business, or help pay their taxes. The government does not do that.

In reality, federal grants aren’t available to individuals but are awarded to businesses and institutions—or to nonprofit groups and other agencies that distribute grant money. Nor does the government offer grants unsolicited.

If you are looking for government assistance for yourself or your family, to find out which programs you qualify for go to:

www.benefitscheckup.org. The benefits are generally administrated by local and state agencies.

For protection from grant scams:

- Don’t believe anyone who claims to be from the government and offers you a grant or assistance getting one.
- If you’re seeking a federal grant for your organization, e-mail support@grants.gov or call 1-800-518-4726 to check its authenticity.
- Never pay anything in exchange for a grant.

If you believe you’ve been a victim of a government grant scam, contact your state attorney general or go to the Federal Trade Commission website at www.ftc.gov and click on “File a Complaint.” (AARP *Bulletin*, December 2006)

A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS POEM

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,

I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.
The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, Then the
sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.
"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts..
To the window that danced with a warm fire's light
Then he sighed and he said "Its really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night." "It's my
duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.
My Gramps died at ' Pearl on a day in December,"
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always
remembers."
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of ' Nam ',
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.
I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.
I can live through the cold and the being alone,
Away from my family, my house and my home.
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.

I can carry the weight of killing another,
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother..
Who stand at the front against any and all,
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."
Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.
For when we come home, either standing or dead,
To know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

NAVAL ORDER LEADS DRIVE FOR U.S. NAVAL MONUMENT

The Normandy invasion is considered the largest naval operation in military history. Yet, more than 60 years after the amphibious assault, monuments and plaques along the French coast-line commemorating D-Day focus little on the contribution of U.S. sailors. In fact, the Navy is the only branch of the U.S. military with no monument at Normandy.

The Naval Order of the United States has embarked on a project to correct this oversight. Working with French monument authorities and a sculptor, the Naval Order plans a Utah Beach monument commemorating the Navy's participation. The goal is to dedicate the monument on June 6, 2008—the 64th anniversary of the operation.

Construction of the monument will be privately funded with the cost estimated at \$500,000. To donate or learn more, go to the Naval Order Web site, or call toll-free:

www.navalorder.org or (866) 794-3329



Aurora, live falcon mascot for the U.S. Air Force Academy, was on hand for the dedication ceremony of the United States Air Force Memorial.

The memorial's 270-foot-high stainless steel spires depict the precision "bomb burst" flying maneuver.

The long-awaited U.S. Air Force Memorial was dedicated on October 14th. Perched on a 3-acre site overlooking Arlington National Cemetery, it soars 270 feet skyward at its peak. The memorial's centerpiece is a constellation of three stainless-steel spires, which represent a precision flying maneuver known as the "bomb burst."

The memorial honors the 54,000 airmen killed since America's air arm began flying in combat in WWI in 1917. The 10-foot-tall Contemplation Wall, consisting of multiple layers of laminated glass, is etched with an image of the "missing man" formation and is illuminated from below.

The South Inscription Wall, actually two 56-foot-long black granite walls, lists the Air Force's air campaigns. The North Inscription Wall honors heroism and sacrifice. It contains the names of the service's 17 Medal of Honor recipients.

Other elements represent airmen. "We can have all the metal and all the machinery you want, but without the human element, it doesn't get done," said retired Maj. Gen. Edward F. Grillo, Jr., president of the Air Force Memorial Foundation.

Architect James Ingo Freed designed the \$30 million memorial. Some 140,000 people donated to the memorial. However, the largest single

donation, \$5.5 million, came from Lockheed Martin.

Such memorials serve a valuable purpose in culture. "Since ancient times, societies have sought to communicate their values, ideals and heroic personalities to succeeding generations through the medium of sculpture," concluded historian James Peroco.

Blue Star Mothers Of America;



Thanks from our troops.

We received your heart felt package today in the mail. The popcorn was scrumptious, and enjoyed by all.

I had been expecting some books in the mail, and your package caught me completely by surprise. Thank you all, we servicemen are truly blessed to have your support.

Please send special thanks out to Carleigh. Her Flag and words of love are inspiring.

Thomas, Nathan, Mark, Burton, Alphonzo, Jeff, Carl, Luis, Christina, Jorge, Narciso, Myron, Thomas, Miguel, Lee, Antonio, Richard, John, David, Craig, Miguel, Javice, Matthew, Chun, Kevin, Noah, Steve, Jason, Michael, William, and Jennifer

MORE THANK YOU LETTERS FROM TROOPS

Hello,

My Name is Warren Daniel Kirkland. I am an International Police Liaison Officer quartered in Al

Asad Iraq. I am not sure how you got my name and address, but I wanted to drop you a note and let you know how much I appreciated the care package that you sent. I am sure you know how hard to get some things are out here. The sight of fresh gum, candy, and breakfast bars almost brought me to tears. God will bless each and everyone of you for what you are doing. There are guys here in my camp that very rarely receive letters or even emails from home, with your permission, I am going to share the items as well as the words of encouragement. It means a lot to us to know that there are people at home who support us.

Psalm 91

Thank you

Danny

Dear SC Midlands Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America,

Thank you very much for the wonderful care packages! The terrific goodies and treats really brought smiles to our faces and brightened our day. What a wonderful, thoughtful surprise!

Knowing that we are in your thoughts and prayers has made this time away from our families and friends much easier to bear. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

CPT Michele Soltis and the CJTF-76

Surgeon Cell

Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan

ONE-THIRD OF GULF VETS GRANTED CLAIMS

Some 30% of the nearly 700,000 U.S. troops who served in the Gulf War zone have been granted service-connected VA claims, according to a September VA report. Specifically, 205,911 of the 696,482 GIs who deployed to Southwest Asia from August 2, 1990 through July 31, 1991, have received VA disability ratings ranging from 0% to 100%.

VA defines Southwest Asia as Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the airspace above these locations.

The VA's September 2006 Gulf War Veterans Information System report, which tracks the 6.6 million vets who served in the U.S. armed forces during the Gulf War included this information.

The VA report shows that of the nearly 700,000 who served in the war zone:

- 613,526 are living.
- 271,192 have filed VA claims.

- 236,293 have had claims processed.
- 34,899 have claims pending.
- 30,382 have had claims denied.

The most prevalent service-connected condition claimed is knee pain, followed by bone and joint disabilities, lower-back strain, trauma-induced arthritis, scars, hearing loss, hypertension, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), and osteoarthritis (joint cartilage degeneration).

VETS COMMISSION ADDS NINE EXPERTS

A coalition of the nation's five major veterans organizations announced in October that it has formed an independent panel to develop a long-range strategic plan for providing benefits and services to future generations of veterans.

Created by the Veterans Coalition—comprising VFW, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), AMVETS and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)—the new Commission on the Future for America's Veterans is staffed by none "nationally recognized experts on veterans issues," according to Veterans Coalition President Harry N. Walters.

"This commission will be unlike any commission or task force in the past. These individuals were chosen for one reason; because they are recognized experts in veterans policy, with experience that covers the gamut of veterans issues from budget, to health care, to benefits, to Guard and Reserve Matters," Walters said.

The nine members will remain independent from the Veterans Coalition. Their first meeting was scheduled for November 9 in Washington, D.C. Over the next 18 months, the commission is to hold public meetings and forums, conduct independent research, and "discuss, debate, and develop comprehensive recommendations to guide VA's future." Its final report will be released "around Memorial Day 2008," according to the Veterans Coalition. (*News From VFW's Washington Office*, December 2006)

**NATIONAL CEMETERY TO
LOCATE AT FORT JACKSON**

Fort Jackson has been selected as the site for a new national cemetery to be established as a result of the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003.

Construction is slated to begin in fiscal year 2008, with interments beginning about a year after that. The planned location of the cemetery is the northern point of Fort Jackson near Percival Road, near I-20, but far enough away without the noise of the traffic.

Brig. Gen. James H. Schwitters, Fort Jackson commanding general, stressed the importance of the Army's Warrior Ethos, particularly that a soldier should never leave a fallen comrade.

William F. Tuerk, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs said his goal is to get the cemetery open while members of his dad's generation, World War II, are still with us.

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

JANUARY OUTREACH PROGRAM

January 2 nd	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
January 9 th	9-12	Chapin
January 16 th	8-12	Swansea

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

**DEPLOYED SOLDIER'S
PERSPECTIVE**

The deployed soldier is the ones who