



# LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

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

July/August 2019



Lexington, SC.

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**At a Glance Calendar  
July/August**

For a list of events in Lexington County for July/August

See page 15 - Happenings Around Lexington County

Weekly on Tuesdays in July

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, July 4th

Independence Day  
County Offices Closed

Tuesday, July 9th

County Council Meeting

Friday, July 12th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Tuesday, July 23rd

County Council Meeting

Weekly on Tuesdays in August

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, August 1st

Gaston Outreach

Friday, August 2nd

Chapin Outreach

Friday, August 9th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Tuesday, August 27th

County Council Meeting

**CALENDAR KEY**

Purple—Holidays/Special Days  
Blue—Outreach dates  
Red—County Offices Closed, and Special Notices  
Black—Director's appearances in the County

Brown—County Council Meetings  
Pink—Special Events throughout the County  
Orange—Director Out of Office  
Green—Lexington County

**From the Director...**

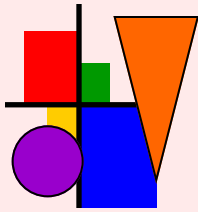
As the summer heats up for all of us in South Carolina, let us remember July 4<sup>th</sup> and what it represents. Many celebrate with family and friends because it is a Federal holiday. Many have barbecues, lake parties and beach parties and this is great. But numerous people died during the Revolutionary War in order for America to be free. When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he explained what our country is all about. Freedom is never free and it has been paid for by all of the heroes who gave their lives in battle for this country. I encourage all of us to remember this July 4<sup>th</sup> as we celebrate 243 years as a Nation, the sacrifices that have been made so we could all live in freedom.

Our office received an invaluable gift in May from local Boy Scout, Andrew Hughes. He approached us several months back with the idea of designing and building a flag container for the collection of unserviceable U.S. flags as his Eagle Scout project. He and his Boy Scout troop will maintain the container and also collect U.S. flags on a regular basis to dispose of in a proper flag disposal ceremony. The container is brilliant red and sits just outside our office and U.S. flags can be deposited 24 hours per day. This allows us to provide a new service to the citizens of Lexington County. We are proud of it! Thank you Andrew Hughes!

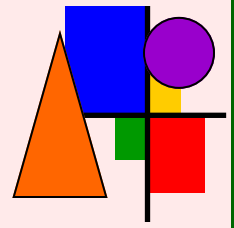
Have a great summer!

Enjoying the journey,



# *National Guard & Reservists Benefits*



## **Eligibility for VA Benefits**

Reservists who serve on active duty establish Veteran status and may be eligible for the full-range of VA benefits, depending on the length of active military service and a discharge or release from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable. In addition, reservists not activated may qualify for some VA benefits. National Guard members can establish eligibility for VA benefits if activated for federal service during a period of war or domestic emergency. Activation for other than federal service does not qualify guard members for all VA benefits. Claims for VA benefits based on federal service filed by members of the National Guard should include a copy of the military orders, presidential proclamation or executive order that clearly demonstrates the federal nature of the service.

## **Qualifying for VA Health Care**

Effective Jan. 28, 2008, Veterans discharged from active duty on or after Jan. 28, 2003, are eligible for enhanced enrollment placement into Priority Group 6 (unless eligible for higher Priority Group placement) for 5 years post discharge. Veterans with combat service after Nov. 11, 1998, who were discharged from active duty before Jan. 28, 2003, and who apply for enrollment on or after Jan. 28, 2008, are eligible for this enhanced enrollment benefit through Jan. 27, 2011. Activated reservists and members of the National Guard are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, and, have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. Veterans who enroll with VA under this “Combat Veteran” authority will retain enrollment eligibility even after their five-year post discharge period ends. At the end of their post discharge period, VA will reassess the Veteran’s information (including all applicable eligibility factors) and make a new enrollment decision. For additional information, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

## **Disability Benefits**

VA pays monthly compensation benefits for disabilities incurred or aggravated during active duty and active duty for training as a result of injury or disease, and for disabilities due to injury, heart attack, or stroke that occurred during inactive duty training.

## **Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve**

Members of reserve elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, and members of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard, may be entitled to up to 36 months of educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) – Selected Reserve. To be eligible, the participant must:

- Have a six-year obligation in the Selected Reserve or National Guard signed after June 30, 1985, or, if an officer, agree to serve six years in addition to the original obligation.
- Complete initial active duty for training.
- Have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate before applying for benefits.
- Remain in good standing in a Selected Reserve or National Guard unit.

Reserve components determine eligibility for benefits. VA does not make decisions about eligibility and cannot make payments until the reserve component has determined eligibility and notified VA.

**Period of Eligibility:** Benefits generally end the day a reservist or National Guard member separates from the military. Additionally, if in the Selected Reserve and called to active duty, VA can generally extend the eligibility period by the length of time on active duty plus four months for each period of active duty. Once this extension is granted, it will not be taken away if you leave the Selected Reserve. Eligible members separated because of unit deactivation, a disability that was not caused by misconduct, or otherwise involuntarily separated during Oct. 1, 1991, through Dec. 31, 2001, have 14 years after their eligibility date to use benefits. Similarly, members involuntarily separated from the Selected Reserve due to a deactivation of their unit between Oct. 1, 2007, and Sept. 30, 2014, may receive a 14-year period of eligibility. Payments: The rate for full-time training effective Oct. 1, 2010, is \$337 a month for 36 months. Part-time benefits are reduced proportionately. For complete current rates, visit [www.gibill.va.gov/](http://www.gibill.va.gov/). DOD may make additional contributions.

Continued on page 4

## National Guard and Reservists Benefits - continued from page 3

**Training:** Participants may pursue training at a college or university, or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; State licensure and certification; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training; correspondence courses; independent study programs; flight training; entrepreneurship training; remedial, deficiency or refresher courses needed to complete a program of study; or preparatory courses for tests required or used for admission to an institution of higher learning or graduate school. Accelerated payments for certain high-cost programs are authorized effective Jan. 28, 2008.

**Work-Study:** Participants who train at the three-quarter or full-time rate may be eligible for a work-study program in which they work for VA and receive hourly wages. Students under the work-study program must be supervised by a VA employee and all duties performed must relate to VA. The types of work allowed include: • VA paperwork processing at schools or other training facilities. • Assistance with patient care at VA hospitals or domiciliary care facilities. • Work at national or state Veterans' cemeteries. • Various jobs within any VA regional office. • Other VA-approved activities.

\***MGIB** – Selected Reserve work-study students may also assist with an activity relating to the administration of this education benefit at DOD, Coast Guard, or National Guard facilities.

### Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)

This program provides educational assistance to members of National Guard and reserve components – Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) – who are called or ordered to active duty service in response to a war or national emergency was declared by the President or Congress. Visit [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) for more information.

**Eligibility:** Eligibility is determined by DOD or the Department of Homeland Security. Generally, a service member who serves on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, for at least 90 consecutive days or accumulates a total of three or more of years of service is eligible.

**Payments:** Reserve or National Guard members whose eligibility is based upon continuous service receive a payment rate based upon their number of continuous days on active duty. Members who qualify after the accumulation of three or more years aggregate active duty service receive the full payment allowable.

### Reserve Educational Assistance Rates

<b>Active Duty, Reserves and National Guard members</b>	<b>Monthly Payment Rate for Full-Time Students</b>
90 days but less than one year	\$570.40
One year but less than two years	\$855.60
Two or more continuous years	\$1,140.80

\*Effective October 1, 2010

**Training:** Participants may pursue training at a college or university, or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; state licensure and certification courses; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training; correspondence courses; independent study programs; flight training; entrepreneurship training; remedial, deficiency, or refresher courses needed to complete a program of study; or preparatory courses for tests required or used for admission to an institution of higher learning or graduate school. Accelerated payments for certain high-cost programs are authorized.

**Period of Eligibility:** Prior to Jan. 28, 2008, members of the Selected Reserve called to active duty were eligible as long as they continued to serve in the Selected Reserve. They lost eligibility if they went into the Inactive Ready Reserve (IRR). Members of the IRR called to active duty were eligible as long as they stayed in the IRR or Selected Reserve. Effective Jan. 28, 2008, members who are called up from the Selected Reserve, complete their REAP-qualifying period of active duty service, and then return to the Selected Reserve for the remainder of their service contract, have 10 years to use their benefits after separation. In addition, members who are called up from the IRR or Inactive National Guard (ING), complete their REAP-qualifying period of active duty service, and then enter the Selected Reserve to complete their service contract, have 10 years to use their benefits after separation.

Continued on page 5

## **National Guard and Reservists Benefits - continued from page 4**

**Work-Study Program:** Reserve Education Assistance Program students in the work-study program may also assist with an activity relating to the administration of this education benefit at DOD, Coast Guard, or National Guard facilities.

### **Home Loan Guaranty**

National Guard members and reservists are eligible for a VA home loan if they have completed at least six years of honorable service, are mobilized for active duty service for a period of at least 90 days, or are discharged because of a service-connected disability. Reservists who do not qualify for VA housing loan benefits may be eligible for loans on favorable terms insured by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), part of HUD.

### **Life Insurance**

National Guard members and reservists are eligible to receive Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI), Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI), and Family Service members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI). They may also be eligible for SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection if severely injured and suffering a qualifying loss, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance if they receive a service-connected disability rating from VA, and Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance if approved for a Specially Adapted Housing Grant.

### **Burial and Memorial Benefits**

VA provides a burial flag to memorialize members or former members of the Selected Reserve who served their initial obligation, or were discharged for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, or died while a member of the Selected Reserve.

### **Re-Employment Rights**

A person who left a civilian job to enter active duty in the armed forces is entitled to return to the job after discharge or release from active duty if they:

- Gave advance notice of military service to the employer.
- Did not exceed five years cumulative absence from the civilian job (with some exceptions).
- Submitted a timely application for re-employment.
- Did not receive a dishonorable or other punitive discharge.

The law calls for a returning Veteran to be placed in the job as if he/she had never left, including benefits based on seniority such as pensions, pay increases and promotions. The law also prohibits discrimination in hiring, promotion or other advantages of employment on the basis of military service. Veterans seeking re-employment should apply, verbally or in writing, to the company's hiring official and keep a record of their application. If problems arise, contact the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in the state of the employer. Federal employees not properly re-employed may appeal directly to the Merit Systems Protection Board. Non-federal employees may file complaints in U.S. District Court. For information, visit [www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/main.htm).

### **National Guard and VA Partnership to Assist Veterans**

The Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) program within the National Guard (NG) Office of Warrior Support places a NG/VA trained expert at the NG Headquarters in each of the 50 states and PR, GU, VI and District of Columbia, as an advocate for Guard members and their families as well as other geographically dispersed military members and families. In collaboration with state directors of Veterans Affairs and other state and local coalition partners, the Transition Assistance Advisor provides enrollment, referrals and facilitates access for Veterans through the overwhelming maze of programs, with the compassion of someone who knows what it's like to transition from Guard to active duty and to civilian status. Transition Assistance Advisors receive annual training by VA experts in VA health care and benefits to assist Guard members and their families' to access to VA health care facilities and TRICARE facilities in their network. To find a local Transition Assistance Advisor call 1 877 577-6691 or go to [www.taapmo.com/TAAprogram.htm](http://www.taapmo.com/TAAprogram.htm).

### **Outreach for OEF/OIF (New Dawn) Veterans**

VA's OEF/OIF New Dawn Outreach Teams focus on improving outreach to members of the National Guard and Reserve by engaging Guard members throughout the deployment cycle with targeted messages and face-to-face encounters with VA staff. These Teams are located at VA Medical Centers to help ease the transition from military to civilian life. Cost-free VA health care and medications may be provided for conditions potentially related to combat service, including full access to VA's medical benefits package.

**Did you know?**

**The VA has a new suicide hotline number. It is 1-855-948-2311.**

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We did not pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."



**--Ronald Reagan**

**"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](mailto:hcahill@lex-co.com) to set this up. He records the interviews in our new 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.

**JULY IS Sarcoma Awareness Month**

**National Immunization Awareness Month**



**SUMMER FUN!**



**Veterans Crisis Line**

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

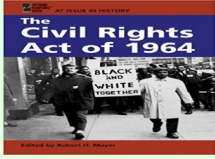
Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line to reach caring, qualified responders with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them are Veterans themselves.

**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.

# ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

*Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of July & August?*



**July 2, 1964** - President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



**July 4, 1882** - The "Last Great Buffalo Hunt" began on Indian reservation lands in North Dakota as 2,000 Teton Sioux Indians in full hunting regalia killed about 5,000 buffalo.

**July 10, 1943** - The Allied invasion of Italy began with an attack on the island of Sicily.

**July 11, 1817** - American philosopher Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts.



**July 16, 1945** - The experimental Atomic bomb, "Fat Boy", was set off at 5:30 a.m. in the desert of New Mexico, creating a mushroom cloud rising 41,000 ft.

**July 21, 1899** - Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois.



**July 27, 1953** - The Korean War ended with the signing of an armistice. The war had lasted just over three years.

**July 30, 1863** - Automotive pioneer Henry Ford was born in Dearborn Township, Michigan.



**August 1, 1779** - "Star-Spangled Banner" author Francis Scott Key was born in Frederick County, Maryland.

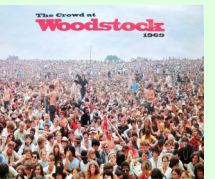
**August 4, 1901** - Jazz trumpet player Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans, Louisiana.



**August 9, 1974** - At noon, Richard M. Nixon resigned the presidency as a result of the Watergate scandal.

**August 13, 1961** - The Berlin Wall came into existence after the East German government closed the border between the east and west sectors of Berlin with barbed wire to discourage emigration to the West.

**August 15, 1969** - Woodstock began in a field near Yasgur's Farm at Bethel, New York.

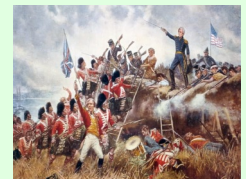
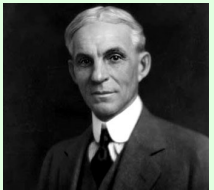
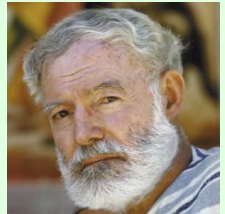


**August 18, 1780** - The Battle of Camden was fought in South Carolina.

**August 27, 1910** - Mother Teresa was born (as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu) in Skopje, Yugoslavia.



**August 31, 1997** - Britain's Princess Diana died at age 36 from massive internal injuries suffered in a high-speed car crash, reportedly after being pursued by photographers.



# ***VA Life Insurance***

As part of our mission to serve Service members, Veterans, and their families, the VA provides valuable life insurance benefits to give you the peace of mind that comes with knowing your family is protected. The VA's life insurance programs were developed to provide financial security for your family given the extraordinary risks involved in military service.



## **Benefit Descriptions, Eligibility Requirements, and How to Apply**

**Service Members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)** is a low-cost group term life insurance program for service members. Coverage can be extended for up to two years if the service member is totally disabled at separation. Coverage is automatic for most active duty service members, ready reserve and National Guard members scheduled to perform at least 12 periods of inactive training per year, members of the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Public Health Service, cadets and midshipmen of the U.S. military academies, and ROTC members. Use SGLV 8286 to designate beneficiaries, or reduce, decline, or restore SGLI coverage.

**Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI)** allows Veterans to convert your SGLI to a civilian program of lifetime renewable term coverage after separation from service. Service members with full-time SGLI coverage are eligible to convert SGLI to VGLI after separation from service. You would need to complete form SGLV 8714.

**Family Service Members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI)** insures spouses and children of Service members with SGLI coverage. Spousal coverage may not exceed the service member's coverage. Dependent children are automatically covered at no charge. The term life insurance coverage is automatically provided to spouses and dependent children of service members insured under SGLI. Use form SGLV 8286A to decline, reduce, or restore FSGLI coverage.

**Service Members' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI)** is an automatic feature of SGLI that provides payments to service members who suffer losses, such as amputations, blindness, and paraplegia, due to traumatic injuries that occur in service. All service members insured by SGLI are automatically covered by TSGLI. To file a claim for the TSGLI benefit, complete for SGLV 8600.

**Service-Disabled Veterans' Life Insurance (S-DVI)** provides life insurance coverage to Veterans who have been given a VA rating for a new service-connected disability in the last two years. Totally disabled Veterans are eligible for free coverage and have the opportunity to purchase additional life insurance. This insurance is available for service members who were released from active duty under other than dishonorable conditions after April 25, 1951, AND have been granted service connection for any disability (even 0 percent) within the last two years, AND are in good health except for any service connected conditions may be eligible. For this coverage you would need to complete VA form 29-4364.



**Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI)** provides mortgage life insurance protection to disabled Veterans who have been approved for a VA Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant. VMLI is available to Veterans who received a SAH grant, have a title to the home, and have a mortgage on the home. You would need to complete VA form 29-8636.



## The History of Independence Day

In 1775, people in New England began fighting the British for their independence. On July 2, 1776, the Congress secretly voted for independence from Great Britain. Two days later, on July 4, 1776, the final wording of the Declaration of Independence was approved, and the document was published. The first public reading of the Declaration of Independence was on July 8, 1776. Delegates began to sign the Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776. In 1870, Independence Day was made an unpaid holiday for federal employees. In 1941, it became a paid holiday for them.

The first description of how Independence Day would be celebrated was in a letter from John Adams to his wife Abigail on July 3, 1776. He described "pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations" throughout the United States. However, the term "Independence Day" was not used until 1791.

Interestingly, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, both signers of the Declaration of Independence and presidents of the United States, died on July 4, 1826 - exactly 50 years after the adoption of the declaration. It is also important to note that Native Americans lived in the country and each tribe had its own nation and government prior to the European settlers.



## The VA exceeds hiring goal of mental health providers by the thousands

The VA recently surpassed its original goal to hire mental health providers by more than 1,000, through the Mental Health Hiring Initiative, which aims to achieve higher standards of access and quality care. Since 2017, VA has filled nearly 4,000 mental health positions nationwide, which provides nearly 120,000 more Veterans access to high-quality mental health services each year, including those in underserved and rural regions of the country. Some of the success can be attributed to the VA hosting its first-ever external virtual trainee hiring fair, where 74 mental health professionals completed training and accepted positions at VA facilities. The department is currently planning a second, internal virtual-trainee hiring event focused on connecting, matching and retaining current VA psychology trainees and placing them into vacant positions at VA facilities. Staff were also empowered to develop facility-specific hiring and retention plans, which enabled them to hire as vacancies opened. Many facilities used national hiring announcements offering loan repayment and other incentives for attracting mental health professionals. To learn more about VA health care employment opportunities and hiring events, visit: [www.VAcareers.va.gov](http://www.VAcareers.va.gov).

### Watermelon Salsa

#### Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup orange marmalade
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/4 cup finely chopped jalapeno
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups chopped, seeded watermelon
- 1 cup chopped sweet onion
- 1 cup chopped oranges



#### Instructions:

In a bowl, stir together all ingredients. Chill for at least 30 minutes before serving.



## The History of the Battle of Camden

Fought on August 16, 1780, the Revolutionary War Battle of Camden, South Carolina, pitted American forces under Major General Horatio Gates against a small British field force commanded by Lieutenant General. Charles, Lord Cornwallis. Despite numerical superiority, the Patriot forces suffered a humiliating rout, one of the worse defeats in American military history.

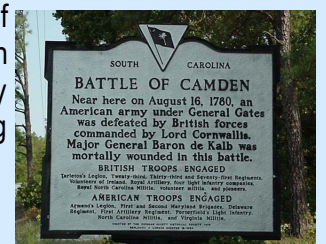
After capturing Charleston in May, 1780, British forces established a number of posts in the interior of South Carolina to exert control over the state and to quell rising Patriot militia activity. One of their main bases was at Camden, an important transportation and communications hub in the center of the state. Gates, who three years earlier had stopped another major British invasion at Saratoga, New York, commanded all these Patriot forces. The American force of about four thousand men included twelve hundred Veteran Continentals, augmented by three thousand state troops and inexperienced militia units. On August 15, Gates ordered a night march toward Camden, to begin at ten p.m. that night. Coincidentally, the British also set out from Camden at ten p.m., directly for Gates' camp. Cornwallis sought to attack the Americans on the march, as they approached his position. The armies blundered into each other early on the morning of August 16, and after a brief firefight, the two belligerents waited for daylight.

Gates seriously overestimated the number of soldiers he had available for combat; when he finally realized his mistake, it was too late to withdraw. In theory, the Continental forces numbered around 4,000 to General Cornwallis' some 2,200 Redcoats. However, in practice, only about 3,000 Patriots were well enough to take the field. When the British charged with their bayonets, the militia that made up the Patriot front line, who did not have bayonets, ran. The remaining Continental soldiers fought bravely, but utterly failed to make any headway in the face of the British assault. The final blow came when Cornwallis ordered Tarleton to attack the Patriot rear. Under the cavalry charge, the Patriots finally broke. Some managed to escape through the swamp. Tarleton pursued the fleeing Patriots for over 20 miles before finally turning back. Gates, mounted on a swift horse, was 60 miles away in Charlotte, North Carolina, by that evening. About 60 Continentals rallied as a rear guard and managed to protect the retreating troops through the surrounding woods and swamps.



After the disastrous loss at Camden, Gates was removed from command and replaced by Nathanael Greene. A second clash at Camden, the Battle of Hobkirk's Hill, took place on April 25, 1781. Although a technical victory for the British, they abandoned Camden the following month. All told, more 900 Americans died and another 1,000 were captured. Additionally, more than 20 wagonloads of equipment, along with 2,000 muskets and a large amount of ammunition, fell into British hands. This loss left the American morale in the South at a low and the region firmly under British control until Greene built the Continental forces back up in early 1781.

The Camden Battlefield is located about 5.5 miles north of Camden. Approximately 479 acres of the core of the battlefield is owned by the Palmetto Conservation Foundation, and is undergoing preservation in private-public partnership. The site was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1961, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. Aspects of the battle were included in the 2000 movie *The Patriot*, in which Ben and Gabriel Martin are seen watching a similar battle. The film is not historically accurate, depicting too many Continental troops relative to the number of militia, and showing the Continentals and militia retreating at the same time.





Appointments are strongly encouraged to meet with our Veterans Benefits Counselors. You can call 803-785-8400 to schedule an appointment. Please allow 48 hours for a return call.

## Reminder

### 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 JW Hester, Linda Campbell, Mike Smith and Mike Gordon. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of May & June.



**THANKS**



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

*Thursday, July 4th*



## Dang-it Dolls Workshops

**THERE WILL BE NO WORKSHOPS IN JULY & AUGUST!!**

### Did you know...

Any National Guard member or Reservist who is entitled to retired pay for non-regular service or, would be entitled to retired pay for non-regular service, now has Veteran status. To see if you qualify for any benefits, check with your local VA regional 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.



July is National Pickle Month!



August is National Peach Month

## The VA launches new health care options under the MISSION Act

The VA launched its new and improved Veterans Community Care Program on June 6, 2019, implementing portions of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act), which both ends the Veterans Choice Program and establishes a new Veterans Community Care Program. The MISSION Act will strengthen the nationwide VA Health Care System by empowering Veterans with more health care options. Under the new Veterans Community Care Program, Veterans can work with their VA health care provider or other VA staff to see if they are eligible to receive community care based on new criteria. Eligibility for community care does not require a Veteran to receive that care in the community; Veterans can still choose to have VA provide their care. Veterans may elect to receive care in the community if they meet any of the following six eligibility criteria:

1 - A Veteran needs a service not available at any VA medical facility.

2 - A Veteran lives in a US state or territory without a full-service VA medical facility. Specifically, this would apply to Veterans living in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire and the US territories of Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Virgin Islands.

3 - A Veteran qualifies under the “grandfather” provision related to distance eligibility under the Veterans Choice Program.

4 - The VA cannot furnish care within certain designated access standards. The specific access standards are described below:

A - Drive time to a specific VA medical facility

\* - Thirty-minute average drive time for primary care, mental health and non-institutional extended care services.

\* - Sixty-minute average drive time for specialty care.

(Please note: Drive times are calculated using geo-mapping software.)

B - Appointment wait time at a specific VA medical facility

\* - Twenty days from the date of request for primary care, mental health care and non-institutional extended care services, unless the Veteran agrees to a later date in consultation with his or her VA health care provider.

\* - Twenty-eight days for specialty care from the date of request, unless the Veteran agrees to a later date in consultation with his or VA health care provider.

5 - The Veteran and the referring clinician agree it is in the best medical interest of the Veteran to receive community care based on defined factors.

6 - The VA has determined that a VA medical service line is not providing care in a manner that complies with the VA’s standards for quality based on specific conditions.

In preparation for this landmark initiative, senior VA leaders will visit more than 30 VA hospitals across the country to provide in-person support for the roll-out.

The VA MISSION Act:

- Strengthens the VA’s ability to recruit and retain clinicians.
- Authorizes “Anywhere to Anywhere” telehealth across state lines.
- Empowers Veterans with increased access to community care.
- Establishes a new urgent care benefit that eligible Veterans can access through the VA’s network of urgent care providers in the community.

The VA serves approximately 9 million enrolled Veterans at 1,255 health care facilities around the country every year. For more information, visit [www.missionact.va.gov](http://www.missionact.va.gov).

## 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 in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. 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**

**Crossroads Counseling Center**

**130A Whiteford Way**

**Lexington, SC 29072**

*For further information, please visit their website at [lex-coveteransgroup.com](http://lex-coveteransgroup.com) or contact our office at 803-785-8400.*

## VA health care facilities to go smoke-free

As part of the VA's commitment to provide excellent health care for Veterans, the department will implement a new policy restricting smoking by patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors and vendors at its health care facilities by October. Although the VA has historically permitted smoking in designated areas, there is growing evidence that smoking and exposure to secondhand and third hand smoke creates significant medical risks, and risks to safety and direct patient care that are inconsistent with medical requirements and limitations. Accordingly, the VA's Veterans Health Administration has collaborated with key stakeholders to update and recertify the policy to be consistent with the department's commitment to Veterans and the community. A recent VA survey revealed that approximately 85% of responding facility leadership support smoke-free campuses, and this new policy for patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors and vendors allows VA to ensure the health and well-being of VA staff, patients and the public. The VHA's new smoke-free policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, any other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration approved electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

**NO  
SMOKING OR VAPING**



# List of Common Allowable (Recurring) Medical Expenses for an Initial Claim Application

The list below shows recurring VA allowable medical expenses for the initial claim application for pension benefits. The list is not all-inclusive and must be unreimbursed by insurance. They must be paid for by the applicant and are used to reduce income that exceeds the VA income limit.

1. Medicare Part B Premiums
2. Medicare Part D Premiums
3. Insurance Premiums for supplemental medical insurance
4. Home Health Services
5. Assisted Living Facility Services
6. Nursing Home Services
7. Long Term Care Insurance
8. Medical Monitoring Program (like Life Alert)



There is a new number to call for billing issues through the VAMC for any private health care that was fee based out. That number is 1-877-881-7618 9am to 5pm EST.



## SC Hunting and Fishing Licenses for Disabled Veterans

Residents of SC may apply for a disability license by mail or in person at a DNR Regional Office. Offices are located in Columbia, Charleston, Clemson, Florence, York, and DNR at the Market, located at the SC State Farmer's Market in West Columbia. In order to qualify for a disability license you must be declared disabled and receiving disability benefits from one of the following agencies:

- Federal Civil Service
- Medicaid or Railroad Retirement
- SC State Retirement System
- Social Security Administration
- Veterans Affairs (the VA)



In order to qualify for a Disability license you must have been a SC resident for 365 days. DNR must have a completed application, a photocopy of your SC driver's license or SC state issued ID card and current proof (dated within the past 12 months) stating you are disabled and receiving benefits.

The license will be valid for 3 years and includes privileges of hunting, big game, WMA permit, migratory waterfowl permit and fresh and saltwater fishing.

For more information, you can contact DNR at 803-734-3833 or by visiting their website at [dnr.sc.gov/regs/pdf/disabilitylicense.pdf](http://dnr.sc.gov/regs/pdf/disabilitylicense.pdf).

## Did You Know...



**Veterans can obtain advance directives through the Dorn VAMC. For more information contact Cheryl Geddings at 776-4000 ext. 4084.**



## Happenings Around Lexington County

### During the Months of July & August

Thursday, May 30th  
through  
Saturday, August 3rd

#### **Lexington Blowfish Baseball Season**

Lexington County Baseball Stadium; Games start at 7:05pm - fireworks after each home game. For more information, visit their website at [goblowlfishbaseball.com](http://goblowlfishbaseball.com).



Saturday, June 29th

#### **Lake Murray Boat Parade**

Parade begins @ 12 noon at Bombing Island heading towards the dam. For more information call (803) 781-5940.



Saturday, June 29th

#### **Lake Murray Fireworks display**

Starts at dusk (approximately 9:15pm)  
Fireworks will be set off from two great locations: Spence Island and Dreher Island State Park. The show is choreographed to a patriotic concert that will air simultaneously on B106.7; 98.5; or Z93.1. The best places to view the fireworks are Dreher Island State Park and both parks at the dam.



Wednesday, July 3rd

#### **Star Spangled Symphonic Salute**

Saluda Shoals Park  
Concert is from 7 to 9pm - \$5 admission  
For more information call (803) 772-1228.



Thursday, July 4th

#### **Lexington County Peach Festival**

Gilbert, South Carolina  
Parade starts @ 9:30am; Fireworks start @ 10pm  
For more information go to [www.lexingtoncountypeachfestival.com](http://www.lexingtoncountypeachfestival.com).

Friday, August 2th

#### **Brew at the Zoo @ Riverbanks Zoo**

7 to 9:30pm  
For more information go to [www.riverbanks.org/brew-at-the-zoo](http://www.riverbanks.org/brew-at-the-zoo).



The young man's name is Andrew Hughes of local boy scout troop number 307. He designed, painted, built and delivered the US Flag Retirement Drop Box for this office. It is located just outside of our office and allows for unserviceable US flags to be deposited 24 hours per day and then collected by the boy scout troop on a regular basis for a proper flag disposal ceremony.



# VA Home Loans

The VA helps service members, Veterans, and eligible surviving spouses become homeowners. As part of their mission to serve you, they provide a home loan guaranty benefit and other housing-related programs to help you buy, build, repair, retain, or adapt a home for your own personal occupancy. The VA home loans are provided by private lenders, such as banks and mortgage companies. The VA guarantees a portion of the loan, enabling the lender to provide you with more favorable terms.

## Benefits

**Purchase Loans:** helps you purchase a home at a competitive interest rate often without requiring a down payment or private mortgage insurance. Cash Out Refinance loans allow you to take cash out of your home equity to take care of concerns like paying off debt, funding school, or making home improvements.

**Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan (IRRRL):** also called the Streamline Refinance Loan can help you obtain a lower interest rate by refinancing your existing VA loan.

**Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Program:** helps eligible Native American Veterans finance the purchase, construction, or improvement of homes on Federal Trust Land, or reduce the interest rate on a VA loan.

**Adapted Housing Grants:** helps Veterans with a permanent and total service-connected disability purchase or build an adapted home or to modify an existing home to account for their disability.

**Other Resources:** many states offer resources to Veterans, including property tax reductions to certain Veterans.

## Eligibility Requirements

The length of your service or service commitment and/or duty status may determine your eligibility for specific home loan benefits.

**Purchase Loans and Cash-Out Refinance:** VA-guaranteed loans are available for homes for your own personal occupancy. To be eligible, you must have a good credit score, sufficient income, a valid Certificate of Eligibility (COE), and meet certain service requirements.

**Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan (IRRRL):** The IRRRL is a "VA to VA" loan, meaning it can only be applied to refinance an existing VA loan. An IRRRL can be done only if you have already used your eligibility for a VA loan on the property you intend to refinance.

**Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Program:** The NADL program helps Native American Veterans purchase, construct, improve, or re-finance a home on Native American trust lands. Your tribal organization must participate in the VA direct loan program. You must have a valid Certificate of Eligibility (COE) and meet certain service requirements.

**Adapted Housing Grants:** The VA helps Veterans with certain total and permanent disabilities related to your military service obtain suitable housing with either a Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) or Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant.

## How to Apply

**Purchase Loan & Cash-Out Refinance:** VA loans are obtained through a lender of your choice once you obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). You can obtain a COE through eBenefits, by mail, and often through your lender.

**Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan:** A new Certificate of Eligibility (COE) is not required. You may take your Certificate of Eligibility to show the prior use of your entitlement or your lender may use the VA's e-mail confirmation procedure in lieu of a certificate of eligibility.

**Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Program:** First, confirm that your tribal organization participates in the VA direct loan program. NADL loans are obtained through a lender of your choice once you obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). You can obtain a COE through eBenefits, by mail, and often through your lender.

**Adapted Housing Grants:** You can apply for an SAH or SHA grant by either downloading and completing VA Form 26-4555 and submitting it to your nearest Regional Loan Center, or completing the online application.

If you have specific questions regarding VA home loan eligibility, please contact the Eligibility Center, located at the Atlanta Regional Loan Center, at the following address: Atlanta Regional Loan Center, Attention: COE (262), PO Box 100034, Decatur, GA 30031. Their toll-free number is: 1-888-768-2132.





## July Birth Month Flower: Water Lily

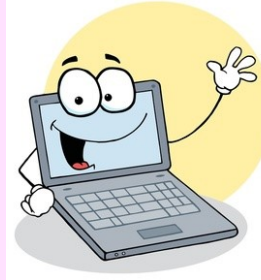
Which signifies purity and majesty. Aside from being lovely in their own right, water lilies are often used in ponds to deter the growth of algae and to shade and cool the water for resident fish and frogs.

## August Birth Month Flower: Poppy

A red poppy signifies pleasure; a white poppy is given for consolation; and a yellow poppy wishes wealth and success.



### ***DID YOU KNOW...***



Copies of all of our newsletters can be found on the Lexington County website at [lex-co.com/departments/veteransaffairs/newsletters](http://lex-co.com/departments/veteransaffairs/newsletters).

The newsletters are listed on the site by year.



## About Our Office

On March 22, 1945 the SC General Assembly adopted a bill creating a VA office in each of the state's 46 counties. The Lexington County VA Director is appointed by the Lexington County delegation. This office is employed by Lexington County; not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for VA medical care. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: service connected disabilities and non-service connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits but can assist with some of these forms. Our office also provides off-site appointments at three of the County libraries once a month and we can provide home visits on a case by case basis.

### ***OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES***



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

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



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

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

**There will be no outreach in Gaston or Chapin during the month of July.**

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

**Website**



**VETERANS NIGHT / AMERICAN LEGION POST 7 100TH BIRTHDAY  
LEXINGTON COUNTY BASEBALL STADIUM  
FRIDAY, JULY 5TH, 2019**

## **Lexington County Blowfish Salute to the Service of Veterans of Foreign Conflict**

Enjoy America's pastime at "The Lex" on Friday July 5th as the Blowfish salute the service of our Veterans and celebrate the 100th birthday of Lexington American Legion Post 7 in a good old-fashioned "baseball war" with the Macon Bacon!!!

### **DETAILS:**

- Complimentary admission for each Veteran & 1 Guest
- Reserved Air Conditioned Stadium Club Room
- Hamburgers/Hotdogs/Chips/Drink Buffet
- Pregame on the field Veterans Group Recognition
- Group Photo Opportunity with LC Blowfish players
- "Fallen Comrade" table display with explanation
- Color Guard: Pledge/National Anthem/TAPS
- Veteran Representative
- In Game announcements throughout the game
- Reserved media table on the concourse
- Television/Radio/Print media publicity



### **Postgame Fireworks**

In honor of the 4th of July, a postgame Fireworks show will take place just after the final out is recorded in the game!



**RSVP:** Veterans reserve your complimentary tickets by contacting: Kyle Calhoun, LC Blowfish Office: 803-254-3474 or by email at: [kyle@blowfishbaseball.com](mailto:kyle@blowfishbaseball.com)

## ***Featured Medal:***

# ***Navy Cross***

The Navy Cross is the second highest military decoration for valor that may be awarded to a member of the United States Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard (when operating under the Department of the Navy) for extraordinary heroism in combat. It is equivalent to the Army's Distinguished Service Cross, the Air Force's Air Force Cross and the Coast Guard's Coast Guard Cross.

The Navy Cross is bestowed by the Secretary of the Navy and may also be awarded to members of the other armed services, and to foreign military personnel while serving with the U.S. naval services. The Navy Cross was established by Act of Congress (Public Law 65-253) and approved on February 4, 1919.

The Navy Cross was instituted in part due to the entrance of the United States into World War I. Many European nations had the custom of decorating heroes from other nations, but the Medal of Honor was the sole American award for valor at the time. The Army instituted the Distinguished Service Cross and Distinguished Service Medal in 1918, while the Navy followed suit in 1919, retroactive to April 6, 1917. Originally, the Navy Cross was lower in precedence than the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, because it was awarded for both combat heroism and for "other distinguished service." Congress revised this on August 7, 1942, making the Navy Cross a combat-only award and second only to the Medal of Honor. Since its creation, it has been awarded more than 6,300 times. It was designed by James Earle Fraser.

The first actual recipient of the Navy Cross is unknown because initial awards were made from a lengthy list published after World War I.

The Navy Cross may be awarded to any member of the U.S. Armed Forces while serving with the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard (in time of war only) who distinguishes himself or herself in action by extraordinary heroism not justifying an award of the Medal of Honor. The action must take place under one of three circumstances:

- \* While engaged in action against an enemy of the United States
- \* While engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force
- \* While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

The act(s) to be commended must be performed in the presence of great danger or at great personal risk and must be performed in such a manner as to render the individual highly conspicuous among others of equal grade, rate, experience, or position of responsibility. An accumulation of minor acts of heroism does not justify an award of the Navy Cross. As originally authorized, the Navy Cross could be awarded for distinguished non-combat acts, but legislation of August 7, 1942 limited the award to acts of combat heroism



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

**Appeals Modernization Process, Pension Benefits for Veterans and Fugitive Felon/Incarcerated Veterans**