Spring Edition 2024



Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office



"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

Lexington County Veterans' News





As a department in Lexington County government, we value honesty, respect, and service to country, patriotism, sacrifice and personal excellence. We acknowledge, respect and honor all Veterans for their service to America no matter how, when or where they served. We proudly pledge ourselves to creating and maintaining a customer service environment for Veterans and their survivors. We hold ourselves accountable to our customers, partners and each other. We have a passion for Veterans and firmly 1 believe that excellence is not a goal, it is the standard.

Your VA Office Family

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From the Director

Happy spring! This is a great time of year with all of the blooming and regrowth all around us. Your VA team has been diligently working to serve Veterans and their survivors throughout the winter months. There are six of us here on a full time basis and we consider it our honor to serve those who served our great Nation.

This edition includes our biography template for those Veterans who would like to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of a scheduled Lexington County Council meeting. If you are interested, or you know someone who is, please let us know. The Veteran only needs to complete as much or as little as they like on this form and send it to us and our Administrative Assistant, Annastasia will contact you for further details. We have been doing this for 13 years now and have not missed a regularly scheduled Council meeting.

The South Carolina Legislature is in session and working on a few Veterans bills that will have a positive impact on our Veterans. House Bill 3116 will allow for a 100% permanent and total Veteran to receive property tax exemption in the year it is awarded, rather than wait the one year required by current SC law. We anticipate this bill to be signed by the Governor before the session is over in May. This is a landmark bill for Veterans!

Lastly, we appreciate the kind comments we receive when you come to visit us in our office for an in person appointment. Many of you have been coming here for years and we are grateful for your friendship. We endeavor to do more than we did in 2023 and make 2024 a banner year for serving Veterans!

Enjoying the journey, Ed Lundeen

War Time Dates

World War II: Dec. 7, 1941 through Dec. 31, 1946

Korean War: June 27, 1950 through Jan. 31, 1955

Vietnam War: Aug. 5, 1964, (Feb. 28, 1961 for Veterans who served "in country" before Aug. 5, 1964) through May 7, 1975

Gulf War: Aug. 2, 1990, through a date to be set

<u>Links</u>

https://scdva.sc.gov/

https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home

https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage

https://benefits.va.gov/columbia/

https://www.fisherhousecolumbiasc.org/

Numbers

- Veterans crisis line 24/7, 800-273-8255, press 1
- Vet Center counseling 803-765-9944
- Women Veterans Hotline 855-829-6636
- Homeless Veteran call center 877-424-3838
- VA pharmacy refills 800-293-8262
- VA claims self-help line 800-827-1000
- Mission Lexington (803) 785-6930



Ed Lundeen will be at the libraries below:

Gaston library – 1st Thursday of each month between 10am – 12pm

Chapin library – 1^{st} Friday of each month between 10am – 12pm

Cayce library – 2^{nd} Thursday of each month between 10am - 12pm

Batesburg library – 2^{nd} Friday of each month between 10am - 12pm



To all of you with birthdays during the months of March, April, & May !

Thank you to everyone who Volunteered to say the Pledge!

- David Eisenhauer
- Karen Diefendorf
- George Plunkett
- Christopher Bohl
- Benjie Banning

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.

> We Will Be **CLOSED** Confederate Memorial

> > <u>Day!</u> 5/10/2024

> > > <u>And</u>

<u>Memorial Day!</u> <u>5/27/2024</u>

Biography Template

Pledge of Allegiance County Council Meeting



(Please fill out and return to the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office)

Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office 605 West Main Street, Suite B Lexington, SC 29072 803-785-8400 803-785-0115 fax ablake@lex-co.com

The County Council Meetings are held in the Council Chambers located on the second floor of the County Administration Building 212 South Lake Drive The meeting starts at 4:30, and we will meet you inside the chamber at 4:15 on the right hand side close to the podium.

Bio Template

Name:

Contact Information (number and/or email address):

Served in Branch and Dates of Service:

Veteran of Wars:

Military Medals and Awards:

Lives where:

Works at or retired from: (if retired – number of years worked)

Volunteer work or organization:

Married to:

Number children:

Number grandchildren:

Number great-grandchildren:



Badge of Military Merit

The tradition of awarding medals to America's military men and women dates to the American Revolution. On Aug. 7, 1782, Gen. George Washington established the first authorized US military decoration—the Badge of Military Merit. It was a piece of cloth in the shape of a heart. The nation used it to recognize unusual gallantry or extraordinary fidelity.

During the Revolutionary War, the Badge of Military Merit was awarded to only three soldiers, in recognition of their singular meritorious actions. The wearers were allowed to pass guards and sentinels without challenge.

- Sergeant Elijah Churchill: 2nd Regiment, Light Dragoons. Awarded the badge for his part in two successful raids behind British lines in Nov. 1780 and in October of 1781.
- Sergeant William Brown: 5th Connecticut Regiment. Awarded the badge for leading an advance party with only bayonets penetrating the British lines at Yorktown, VA on 14 October 1781.
- Sergeant Daniel Bissell: 2nd Connecticut Regiment. Awarded the badge for masquerading as a British soldier from August 1781 to September 1782. (The information he gathered helped the Continental Army prepare for an attack on the British at the city of New York.)

No more awards of this type were made until February 22, 1932, when the practice was revived by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, then Army Chief of Staff, who proposed a new medal to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington.

Washington's profile adorned the heart that formed the body of the medal. It became known as the Purple Heart.

The revised award still was given for meritorious acts. However, new Army regulations said that war wounds would qualify as evidence of such acts. Thereafter, the Purple Heart became associated with combat injuries and fatalities.

South Carolina Legislature House Bill 3116

Summary: Disabled Veterans Property Tax

A bill to amend the South Carolina Code of Laws by Amending Section 12-37-610, relating to persons liable for taxed and assessments on real property, so as to provide that certain disabled Veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States are exempt from property tax in the year in which the disability occurs.

General Bill Sponsors: Reps. Felder, Carter, Pope, Guffey, O'Neal, Hart, Caskey, Williams, Blackwell and Gilliam Introduced in the House on January 10, 2023 Introduced in the Senate on May 11, 2023 Last Amended on February 1, 2024

Currently residing in the House

Statement of Estimated Fiscal Impact

This bill allows a Veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States who is permanently and totally disabled because of a service-connected disability to immediately claim a property tax exemption for his owner-occupied property in the year in which the disability occurs. The Veteran must file DOR certifying the disability to receive this exemption. Currently, a Veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States, who is permanently and totally disabled as a result of a service-connected disability, may claim a property tax exemption of his owner-occupied property. However, the exemption does not take effect until the year following the approval from DOR.

This bill would require DOR to update its computer programing to allow the exemption to be approved in the year of application. DOR would also need to update its application form for the exemption. We anticipate DOR can manage these updates within existing appropriations. We will update this fiscal impact if the agency provides information indicating otherwise.

<u>Governor Henry McMaster unveils 2024-2025 Executive Budget;</u> <u>includes millions for Veterans and military communities</u>

COLUMBIA, S.C. - On Friday, January 5, Governor Henry McMaster announced his Executive Budget for fiscal year 2024-2025. The budget includes more than \$81 million in support of Veterans nursing homes, \$5 million to the Military Enhancement Grant Program, and \$1.3 million for improvements to the M.J. Dolly Cooper Veterans Cemetery in Anderson.

"This Executive Budget recommends a \$76 million appropriation to the South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs for the operation, maintenance, repair, and renovations of the state Veterans nursing homes and to provide the state financial match requirements to construct a new Veterans nursing home in Lexington County, **says McMaster**. In addition, a \$5 million appropriation is recommended to fund repairs to the Stone Veterans Pavilion in Columbia, which will continue to be operated by the Department of Mental Health until 2025."

Department of Veterans' Affairs (SCDVA)

- \$49 million non-recurring funds for capital improvements to Veterans nursing homes, including \$40.6 million for the state match for the future facility located in Lexington County. The remaining funds will be used to make improvements at existing Veterans nursing homes with the exception of Stone Veterans Pavilion, which \$5 million in non- recurring funding has been recommended in the budget for the Department of Mental Health;
- \$25.5 million recurring funds to support the operations of four existing Veterans nursing homes and the fifth facility under construction in Sumter County, as part of the transfer of Veterans nursing homes operations from the Department of Mental Health to the Department of Veterans' Affairs as prescribed in the DHEC Restructuring bill. If the DHEC Restructuring bill had not been enacted, Veterans nursing homes would have still required additional resources;
- \$5 million non-recurring funds for the Military Enhancement Grant program, which South Carolina communities with military installations can access funding to support their local bases;
- \$1.3 million non-recurring funds to construct a second committal shelter used for internment and burial services at the M.J. "Dolly" Cooper Veterans Cemetery;
- \$954,244 recurring funds to implement the recommendations of the Boston Consulting Group and contract with third party vendors to provide support for the operations of the Veterans nursing homes, such as resident billing, auditing, cost reporting, and adverse incident reviews (DHEC Restructuring bill);
- \$866,392 recurring funds for retention and recruitment of critical agency personnel to provide oversight of the Veterans nursing homes, as recommended by the Boston Consulting Group on the transfer of Veterans nursing homes operations (DHEC Restructuring bill);
- \$182,000 non-recurring funds to expand the programming of the Military Child Education Coalition in South Carolina;
- \$169,945 non-recurring funds to contract for personnel services a service officer and a program coordinator

 to provide South Carolina Veterans support when receiving care at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical
 Center in Augusta, Georgia, which is the closest VA facility for many South Carolina veterans.





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All Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards during military service are eligible for VA health care beginning March 5

Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military — at home or abroad — will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care beginning March 5, 2024. This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

As directed by President Biden, this expansion of VA health care eliminates the phased-in approach called for by the PACT Act — meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law. This is a critical step forward because Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than nonenrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings. Additionally, VA health care is often more affordable than non-VA health care for Veterans.

VA encourages all eligible Veterans to visit VA.gov/PACT or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care beginning March 5. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on August 10, 2022, more than 500,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

"If you're a Veteran who may have been exposed to toxins or hazards while serving our country, at home or abroad, we want you to come to us for the health care you deserve," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "VA is proven to be the best, most affordable health care in America for Veterans – and once you're in, you have access for life. So don't wait, enroll starting March 5th."

"Beginning March 5, we're making millions of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act," said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. "With this expansion, VA can care for all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11. We can also care for Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more. We want to bring all of these Veterans to VA for the care they've earned and deserve."

In addition to expanding access to VA care, this decision makes it quicker and easier for millions of Veterans to enroll. Many Veterans believe they must apply to receive VA disability compensation benefits to become eligible for VA health care, but this is not correct. With this expansion and other authorities, millions of eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA care – without any need to first apply for VA benefits.

This expansion of care covers Vietnam Veterans, Gulf War Veterans, Iraq War Veterans, Afghanistan War Veterans, Veterans who deployed in support of contingency operations for the Global War on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission), and more.

This expansion also covers many Veterans who never deployed as a part of a conflict but were exposed to toxins or hazards while serving in the U.S. Specifically, under this expansion of care, any Veteran who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) — at home or abroad – is eligible for VA health care. VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA:air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires);chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water); occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams); radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure); warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons); and more. VA will use all available information to determine if Veterans participated in a TERA, including military records and service connection.

Visit: <u>https://www.legion.org/veteransbenefits/261167/all-veterans-exposed-toxins-and-other-hazards-during-military-service</u>



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<u>VA provides free emergency suicide prevention care to nearly</u> <u>50,000 Veterans and former service members in the first year of</u> <u>the new policy</u>

WASHINGTON — In the first year of VA's new policy allowing eligible Veterans and certain former service members in acute suicidal crisis to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for no-cost emergency health care, 49,714 Veterans and former service members have used this benefit — providing them with lifesaving care and saving more than \$64 million in health care costs.

This policy has helped prevent Veteran suicide by guaranteeing no cost, world-class care to eligible individuals in times of crisis — including emergency room care, inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days, outpatient care for up to 90 days, and transportation costs. The policy has also increased access to no-cost emergent suicide care for up to 9 million Veterans, because eligible Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA system or go to a department facility to use this benefit.

Ending Veteran suicide is VA's top clinical priority and a key part of President Biden's Unity Agenda. Since 2021, VA has worked aggressively to expand support for Veterans in crisis, including launching the 988 (then press 1) to help Veterans connect more quickly with caring, qualified responders through the Veterans Crisis Line; partnering with community-based suicide prevention organizations to provide Veterans with on-the-ground support; expanding firearm suicide prevention efforts; and encouraging Veterans to reach out for help through a national Veteran suicide prevention awareness campaign. Moving forward, VA and the Biden-Harris Administration will continue to work urgently to end Veteran suicide through a public health approach that combines both community-based and clinically based strategies to save lives.

"There is nothing more important to VA than preventing Veteran suicide — and this expansion of no-cost care has likely saved thousands of lives this year," said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough.** "We want all Veterans to know they can get the care they need, when they need it, no matter where they are."

Any Veteran – enrolled in VA or not – can go to a VA or non-VA emergency room for no cost emergent suicidal care under this policy. Additionally, this benefit covers certain individuals who do not meet the requirements to be considered a Veteran, including those who were released from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable. It also covers service members — including reservists and national guard members — who served at least 100 days on active duty under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location. Veterans who experienced military sexual trauma are also covered.

This benefit was created by the Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment (COMPACT) Act of 2020. Under this policy, eligible individuals receive:

- Emergent suicide care provided by, paid for, or reimbursed by VA.
- Expanded access and eligibility (Individuals do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to use this benefit).
- Assurance that they will not be responsible for costs associated with emergency suicide care, including
 emergency transportation.
- Referral for appropriate VA programs and benefits they may be eligible for following the period of emergent suicide care.

To use this benefit, any eligible individual who is experiencing an emergency suicidal crisis should go to the nearest ER as soon as possible — transportation costs are covered by VA — and tell the ER staff that you are covered by this policy. The ER staff or someone acting on the individual's behalf should notify VA right away by calling 844-724-7842 (TTY: 711) or using VA's Emergency Care Reporting (ECR) portal.

If an eligible individual receives a bill for community care after receiving emergency care during or after a suicidal crisis that they believe should be covered by VA, they should contact VA's customer service center as soon as possible at 877-881-7618.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Dial 988 then Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text 838255.

<u>Ask VA</u>

Veterans with questions about their health care and benefits (Questions and updates) can be submitted online.

https://ask.va.gov/

Protect your online information when using My HealtheVet and VA apps

If you use our My HealtheVet online health portal or VA apps, such as VA Video Connect, VA Health and Benefits and Share My Health Data, there are steps you can take to keep your online health information safe.

Here are four tips to help you keep your personal information out of the hands of scammers and avoid other online threats.

- 1. <u>Create a Login.gov or ID.me account</u> Both of these accounts meet modern security standards. They encrypt your data at two levels so only you can access and change your stored information.
- 2. <u>Set up multifactor authentication</u> Multifactor authentication is an extra layer of protection on your account. It helps us make sure that it's you trying to access your account and not a scammer.
- 3. <u>Set strong passwords</u> Use a unique password for every website. And make sure each password is hard to guess. You can make passwords stronger by including unique phrases, use as many characters as the site or app allows, and use numbers and special characters.
- 4. <u>Be cautious when you use public computers or devices</u> Take extra precautions when you use My HealtheVet or another VA online service on a public device such as a library computer. Don't download or save any files with your personal information on a public computer. Don't leave information you print on a public printer. And always sign out of your accounts when you're done.



- 1. Why could the sailors not play cards? The Captain was siting on the deck.
- 2. What do you call a shipment full of military issued T-Rexes? Small arms
- 3. My friend asked, why I would not tell him my military rank. I told him it is Private.



Making Good Health Choices

Whole Health helps you create your own path to well-being.



Video- Air Force Veteran Karen Williams

The VA offers a program called the Virtual Healthy Kitchen Program. The prgram provides Veterans with nutrition knowledge, cooking skills, recipes, and guided practice to build confidence in cooking at home with healthy, minimally processed foods.

https://www.va.gov/portland-health-care/events/virtual-healthy-teaching-kitchen-htk-0/

<u>https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Healthy_Teaching_Kitchen.asp#:~:text=The%20Healthy%20T</u> <u>eaching%20Kitchen%20(HTK,with%20healthy%2C%20minimally%20processed%20foods.</u>

https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Recipes.asp

https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/features/Healthy_Cooking_Class_Spices_Up_Life.asp

https://teachingkitchens.org/member-listing/healthy-teaching-kitchens-of-the-veteranshealth-administration/



Comfort is enjoying a warm soup on a cool day! Try this quick and easy soup to warm you up!

Bacon Potato Corn Chowder

<u>Ingredients</u> ¹/₂ pound bacon strips, chopped ¹/₄ cup chopped onion 1-1/2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed 1 can (14-3/4 ounces) cream-style corn 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk ¹/₄ teaspoon salt ¹/₄ teaspoon pepper

Directions

In a large skillet, cook bacon until crisp, reserving 1 -1/2 teaspoons in pan. Add onion to drippings cook until tender.

Meanwhile place potatoes in a large saucepan; add water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat. Cook until tender. Drain, reserving 1 cup potato water.

Add corn, milk, salt, pepper, potatoes and reserved potato water to saucepan; heat through. Stir in bacon and onion and enjoy!

Serves 4 to 6



Memorial Day:

Decoration Day, or better known as Memorial Day, was created after the Civil War. Memorial Day developed from opportunity for America to reunite again after so much loss. It was also a time for America to begin the healing process of rebuilding. A movement that became a time for America to come together to honor those who died during service.

It is likely that 360,222 Union Deaths and 258,000 Confederates Died between 1861 and 1865. (nps.gov)

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NewsBank

Flip through a wide variety of U.S. news sources, including The State and other South Carolina newspapers.

<u>Chapín Amerícan Legíon</u>





LET'S PLAY BINGO!

Chapin American Legion Post 193 hosts BINGO on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the OLE Oak Barn, 1155 Holy Trinity Church Road, Little Mountain, SC. Admission is \$3.00, and Game packets (13 games) are just \$20.00. Doors open at 5:30 pm and games begin promptly at 7:00 pm. Concessions are available on-site so please no outside food or beverages. Ages 6 and up can play! All proceeds benefit Chapin American Legion Post 193 New Building Fund.



Monday Morning Veterans ONLY Breakfast

Every Monday morning unless otherwise posted on our website <u>https://www.americanlegionpost193.com</u>

Coffee is on at 7:30 am with breakfast served from 8:30am-9:15am. The cost is \$6.00 per person. (Eggs including made to order, hash browns, grits, various types of meat, fruit, a yogurt bar, and home-baked goods, juice, and coffee.)

Chapin American Legion Post 193 102 Lexington Ave, Chapin, SC 29036

This is a Veteran ONLY event to foster fellowship and conversation



Save the Date – Groundbreaking Ceremony!

Friday, April 19 at 3PM

102 Lexington Ave, Chapin, SC 29036



Saturday, March 16 at 4PM. American Legion Riders, Chapter 193 Presents KARAOKE NIGHT! Come have fun with TEDIOKE PRODUCTIONS. Bring your own beer and wine. For more info contact Anne Richardson at 803-600-5175.

Chapin American Legion Post 193 is actively recruiting new members! We are a dynamic Post and one of the fastest growing Posts in the State of SC For more information, please contact our Post Adjutant, Steven Goulet, at (803) 553-2806 or <u>adjutant@americanlegionpost193.org</u> **Chapin American Legion Post 193** is also conducting a fundraising Military Appreciation Cruise in conjunction with Dream Vacations. Come join us as we set sail November 9-16, 2024, aboard the Norwegian Joy on a cruise of the Western Caribbean. Pricing includes gratuities, specialty dining, shore excursion credit, a premium drink package, and more. It is per person double occupancy. For more information contact Betty Barrett, Dream Vacations consultant, <u>babarrett@dreamvacations.com</u>, (803) 618-6011. Each cabin booked and sailed provides our Post will funds to help us in our mission of serving Veterans and the local community. See you onboard!



MILITARY APPRECIATION CRUISE

Find your happy place on board Norwegian joy. Enjoy a rush like no other as you race in the middle of the ocean on a thrilling two-level race track. Stroll along the Waterfront, a quarter-mile oceanfront promenade that connects you with the ocean while experiencing some of Norwegian's signature dining venues, bars and stunning views. Be pampered in luxury in our new, spacious and beautifully appointed Concierge accommodations. Enjoy vacation experiences that will delight your senses and calm your soul on Norwegian joy.

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Lexington County Veterans Group

- If anyone has another person in mind for special guest speaker, share the information with Rod, the Group Leader.
- We miss all our members that are absent and hope to see you soon!

Thank you for being supportive and reach out to members



All Lexington County Veterans are cordially invited to attend the weekly meeting. The group meets on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm at The American Legion Post 7. The address is 200 American Legion Drive (off Harmon St.) Lexington, SC 29072



Ed

Jennifer

Kathy

Christy

Brittany

Annastasia

Hopes everyone has a

