

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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VET NEWS

September 2003

COMFORT ITEMS

The Blue Star Mothers organization is collecting comfort items for our servicemen and servicewomen currently serving on active duty.

A collection point will be at the Rally on September 7. The Blue Star Mothers will collect the items, package and ship them to specific individuals or units needing such assistance.

Units serving in Baghdad apparently are well-supplied with such items or have ready access to PXs. Troops in remoter areas are suffering by not being able to access such comfort items.

Please note the attached listing of suggested items for deployed troops.

The Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office has placed collection boxes at locations in several county office buildings: Lexington County Administration Building Lobby, Lexington County Auxiliary Building (Old Kroger Grocery Store) Lobby, Lexington County Courthouse, Lexington Public Library - Main Branch, Lexington County Sheriff's Department, and Lexington County Department of Social Services.

Money donations will also be accepted. Please make your check payable to: BLUE STAR MOTHERS.

Donations or checks may be dropped off at or mailed to the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office, 605 West Main Street, Suite 101, Lexington, SC 29072.

SEPTEMBER 7 RALLY

COL Keith Coln, Commander of the 169th Fighter Wing at McEntire Air National Guard Station will be the keynote speaker at Sunday's Rally/Welcome Home. Young men and women from Lexington County currently serving in the military will be honored at 3:00 pm on Sunday, September 7 at Lexington School District Stadium.

Lexington County Veterans Affairs Officer Gary Baker noted, "Col. Coln is a veteran of Operation Desert Storm where he flew 40 combat missions. He recently returned from a stint in Operation Iraqi Freedom during which he served as vice commander and commander of the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar." The 379th flew more than 3,500 combat sorties, about 20 percent flown by coalition air forces. Elements of the SC Air National Guard's 169th Fighter Wing were attached to the 379th and flew more than 400 combat missions. "He was right in the middle of all air warfare activities in the Iraqi War."

ROTC units from local high schools will be participating in the Rally as well as the White Knoll High School Band and the Brass Ensemble from Gilbert High School. Veterans and patriotic organizations will have displays and information booths. Vintage military equipment will also be on display.

Veterans of all wars will be recognized, as will those veterans currently serving throughout the world and those who have returned from recent deployments. Gold Star Mothers and Wives and Blue Star Mothers and Wives will also be honored during the program. Families of members of the 122nd Engineer Battalion, currently deployed in Iraq, will also be recognized.

The Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office is organizing the Rally for US Troops/Welcome Home along with representatives of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Blue Star Mothers, Granby Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Lexington Woman's Club.





VETERANS DECALS

Becky Rickenbaker, designer of the Lexington County Veterans Monument, has created a colorful decal which features a flying flag with an outline map of South Carolina with a star designating Lexington County. The decal has the words “Proud to be a Lexington County South Carolina Veteran.”

The decals should be ready in early September in time to be distributed at the Rally. There is no charge for one of the decals, however, a donation to the Lexington Veterans Fund would be appreciated. Any requests for mailing of any decals should be accompanied with sufficient donation to cover postage. All decal requests should be directed to the Veterans Affairs Office.

Becky also has for sale copies of her prints of the Lexington County Veterans Monument. Prints are available at local frame shops or you can contact her for prints at 996-5652. She will also be at the Rally.

VETERANS FORMATION

On the 3rd Saturday of each month, a Veterans Formation is held at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Columbia. This Formation or resource fair provides a meal, human services, and other community resources to homeless veterans. A number of veterans and community service organizations have supported this effort. Formation, educational opportunities, job training and placement, housing, alcohol and drug treatment, medical and mental care, transportation, food, entitlement benefits, and various forms of counseling and other resources are presented.

Lexington County has homeless veterans who would benefit from the services of the Formation. Attached are two flyers that explain the Formation and an invitation to attend the Formation on Saturday, September 20th.

Veterans organizations will benefit from learning of the resources available to homeless veterans.

Veterans can be directed to these resources or even to the Formation itself. If sufficient interest exists, such a Formation could be arranged for Lexington County.



VETERANS DAY ACTIVITIES

A number of activities are planned around Veterans Day this year.

Celebrate Freedom Foundation is sponsoring its annual Air and Ground Show at the Kershaw County Airport in Camden on November 7-9. This program has been held at Owens Field in Columbia for the past few years. The change will allow more types of aircraft to fly in the show and will provide more space for exhibits and reenactments. Contact Celebrate Freedom at 772-2945.

The City of Columbia will be the scene of the annual Veterans Day parade on November 7. Numerous veterans organizations and military units participate in this fine tribute to the veterans of the Midlands. Contact the City of Columbia at 343-8750.

Lexington County Employees Committee will host a parade and program in Lexington on Sunday, November 9. The location will be Virginia Hylton Park in Lexington. Contact Sharon Willis at 359-8121.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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| September 7 | Rally/Welcome Home for Our Troops, Lexington District Stadium, 3:00 pm |
| September 19 | POW/MIA Recognition Day, Dorn VA Medical Center- invitation only |
| November 7-9 | Celebrate Freedom Air & Ground Show |
| November 7 | Veterans Day Parade, Columbia |
| November 9 | Veterans Day Parade, Lexington |
| November 10 | Veterans Day Program, Dorn VA Medical Center |

KOREAN WAR CERTIFICATES AND PINS AVAILABLE

Veterans who did not receive their Korean War lapel pins or certificates at the July 27 Korean War Armistice Program may pick them up at the Veterans Affairs Office.

VETS VIDEOTAPING PROJECT

The Veterans Affairs Office is initiating a program to videotape veterans as they talk to school groups or other organizations about their military service. The tapes are edited, combined with graphics, photos of memorabilia or still photos, and copied to a DVD.

Copies of the finished DVD are provided to the veteran, school or group, Veteran Affairs Office, County Library, and the Library of Congress. The completed DVD can be shown to other school groups or organizations.

Veterans who have been invited to speak can contact the Veterans Affairs Office to coordinate the videotaping. A videotape provided by the school or other organization may also be used. Contact the VA Office if you would like to be videotaped. The emphasis currently is on World War II veterans, however, we would like to have videotapes of any veteran relating their military experiences.

WWII MONUMENT REGISTRATION

The World War II Memorial in Washington, C will be dedicated on Memorial Day, 2004. The Memorial Committee has developed the WWII Registry, to preserve the memory of America's World War II generation within the physical memorial and through the World War II Registry of Remembrances, an individual listing of Americans who contributed to the war effort. Any U.S. citizen who helped win the war, whether a veteran or someone on the home front, is eligible for the Registry. Names in the Registry will be forever linked to the memorial's bronze and granite representations of their sacrifice and achievement.

The Registry combines four distinct databases that can be searched for names of those whose service and sacrifice helped win the Second World War. The Registry includes the names of Americans who are: buried in American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) overseas military cemeteries, memorialized on ABMC Tablets of the Missing, listed on official War and Navy Department Killed in Service rosters now held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), or honored by public enrollment in the Registry of Remembrances.

Anyone who wants to register in the Registry of Remembrances can go to www.wwiimemorial.com. Anyone who served in World War II or on the homefront can be entered on the Registry. If someone does not have access to the internet, please call or come by the VA Office and we can include them on the register.

VA LEGISLATION AND FUNDING

As of this writing, Congress has not completed action on two important issues affecting veterans, concurrent receipt and full funding for the Veterans Administration.

Concurrent receipt provides for veterans who are disabled to draw their full military pension as well as disability pension benefits from the VA without being penalized dollar for dollar.

The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America have been advocates of better funding for the Veterans Administration. A joint resolution passed by the House and Senate calls for a \$3.4 billion increase in the VA health care budget. The House version of the VA appropriations bill provides only for a \$1.4 billion increase.

Concerned veterans should contact their members of Congress to support these two pieces of legislation.

NATIONAL CEMETERY FOR GREENVILLE/COLUMBIA

The US House has passed H1516 which calls for establishment of a National Cemetery in the Greenville/Columbia corridor. A State cemetery is currently in the works near Anderson which is slated for completed in late 2004 or 2005. The Senate now needs to consider the bill for the new National Cemetery.

STATE NURSING HOME IN COLLETON COUNTY

Plans are underway for construction of a 280 bed veterans nursing home to be constructed in Colleton County. The nursing home is expected to contain 220 nursing home beds and a 60 bed domiciliary.

The nursing home should be completed in late 2004 or 2005. This will supplement the two current nursing homes at Richard Campbell Nursing Center in Anderson and the C.M. Tucker Nursing Center in Columbia.

TRANSPORTATION LINK TO COLUMBIA

The Department of Transportation will conduct a pilot program from October 6-31 to study the feasibility of running buses from designated locations into Columbia. Several sites in Lexington are under consideration at this time for the project.

Check next month's newsletter for exact locations.

60th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

On June 6, 1944, Allied troops stormed ashore on the shores of Normandy, France to drive the Germans back. This foothold on the European continent ended with the defeat of the German armies almost a year later. The 60th anniversary of this great event will take place in 2004.

Activities should be planned to honor those service members who were part of this great invasion. A monument in Bedford, Virginia honors the D-Day sacrifice of about 30 local veterans who died on that day. Another museum in New Orleans, Louisiana is also dedicated to this particular day.

VETERANS IN LEXINGTON COUNTY

Did you know that Lexington County is the home to almost 24,000 veterans? According to census information provided by the Veterans Administration, Lexington County houses 23,764 veterans from all eras.

NEW EMPLOYEE

Betty Carson has joined the Veterans Affairs Office as a part-time clerk. She will be the office receptionist and will be involved with a project indexing discharge papers.

Betty formerly worked with the Lexington County Clerk of Court's Office. She is a native of Missouri.

CORRECTION OF RECORDS

Now is the time to correct any problems with your military records. Check them over to see what's missing.

Veterans are entitled to free copies of their military records including their military medical records. Those records can be obtained from the proper office.

Any awards or decorations which are not reflected on discharge papers or which were never presented or which were lost or stolen can be replaced or obtained without charge.

Corrections to veterans records can be accomplished through submission of a form through

the VA Office. Check with the VA Office if anything is missing or incorrect.

POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

Saturday, September 20 is POW/MIA Recognition Day, a time for reflecting on the service men and women who have been captured or who are unaccounted for.

Lexington County is the home of a number of veterans who were POWs during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

To recognize these veterans, Dorn VA Medical Center is having a recognition ceremony on Friday, September 19 for an invitation only function for former POWs.

PRIVATE PRESCRIPTIONS AT VA

Veterans who have applied for health care benefits at VA Medical Centers can get prescriptions prescribed by their private physicians while waiting for their initial medical appointments.

Check with the VA Office for details.

VETERANS DAY

Veterans Day, formerly Armistice Day, holiday observed annually in the United States in honor of all those, living and dead, who served with the U.S. armed forces in wartime. Some states observe the holiday on November 11 and others on the fourth Monday of October. Armistice Day, the forerunner of Veterans Day, was proclaimed in 1919 to commemorate the termination (at 11 am on November 11, 1918) of World War I. On the first anniversary of the truce, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation eulogizing fallen Allied soldiers and referring to November 11 as Armistice Day. It became a holiday in the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

The holiday acquired its present name and broadened significance in the U.S. in 1954. In Canada it is known as Remembrance Day, and in the United Kingdom, as Remembrance Sunday.

