

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE  
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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# VET NEWS

June 2006

## NOTICE

If your mailing address has changed, or your organization's commander has changed, please call the VA office so we can update the VetNews mailing list.

## EXCITING NEWS!

The 12-passenger van from DAV has been delivered. The van will be dedicated at the Lexington County Auxiliary Building parking lot with a reception in the VA office, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

Physicals and background checks have been set up for the volunteer drivers through the VA hospital.

If you would like to be a volunteer driver, call the Lexington County Veterans Affairs office: 803-785-8400.

## LEXINGTON COUNTY SERVICEMEMBERS

If you have a specific person on active duty and would like to send them a "care" package, please put in items such as snack foods, hard candy, books, CD's, DVD movies, or whatever you think your servicemember would enjoy. The Lexington County Employee Committee and the Blue Star Mothers are working together on the project. Wrap the package securely, put on the recipient's mailing address, and your return address and deliver to the Lexington County Veteran Affairs Office on or before June 8<sup>th</sup>. Postage will be paid by the joint committee.

## UPDATE ON CONCURRENT DISABILITY & MILITARY RETIRED PAY

H.R. 1815, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, was signed into law January 6, 2006. The Act has been designated Public Law (P.L.) 109-163 and contains provisions to reduce the phase in time for the concurrent receipt of Veterans' Disability Compensation and Military Retired Pay to those military retirees rated less than 100 percent, but being paid at the 100 percent rate based on individual unemployability (IU). This law reduces the phase in time for these specific retirees to 2009, instead of 2014.

Two years ago, President Bush signed the FY 2004 NDAA (P.L. 108-136) that contained language to allow certain service-connected military retirees with at least 20 years of service to concurrently receive both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation. This concurrent receipt was granted to military retirees whose service-connected disabilities were rated 50 percent or greater, with a phase in period of 10 years (2004-2014). Last year, the FY 2005 NDAA (P.L. 108-375) contained a provision to repeal the 10-year phase-in period for 100 percent service-connected disabled military retirees. They now receive full Concurrent Retirement Pay and Disability (CRPD). (*The American Legion Bulletin*, April 7, 2006)

## JUNE EVENTS

VFW State Convention, June 2-4, Radisson Inn  
Flag Day, June 14  
Father's Day, June 18  
American Legion Convention, June 23-25, Radisson Inn

## REQUIREMENTS FOR VAN/POV DRIVERS

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

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

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

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

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

**Must complete a DAV VA VS Form 20**

**“BELATED THANK YOU TO THE  
MERCHANT MARINERS OF  
WORLD WAR II ACT OF 2005”**

H.R. 23 seeks to amend title 48, United States Code, and title II of the Social Security Act to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States Merchant Marine (including the Army Transport service and the Naval Transport Service) during WWII. A monthly benefit of \$,1000 will be granted to all Merchant Marines or their surviving spouses who, received a certificate of honorable service, served between December 7, 1941 and December 31, and, who also served as a crewmember of a vessel that was operated by the War Shipping Administration or the Office of Defense Transportation, operated in waters other than inland waters, the Great Lakes and other lakes, bays, and harbors of the United States, was under contract or charter to or property of the Government of the United States, serving the Armed Forces, and was licensed or otherwise documented for service as a crew member of such a vessel by an officer or employee of the United States authorized to license or document the person for such service.

**RESPECT FOR FALLEN HEROES ACT**

H.R. 5037 will amend titles 38 and 39, United States Code, to prohibit certain demonstrations at cemeteries under the control of the National Cemetery Administration and at Arlington National Cemetery, and for other purposes. The Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act would:

1. Ban all demonstrations 60 minutes prior to and after funerals taking place at Department of Veterans Affairs’ national cemeteries or the Department of Army’s Arlington National Cemetery (the only areas over which the Federal government maintains jurisdiction).
2. Impose a 500-foot restriction on demonstrations at national cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery.
3. Allow for a civil infraction for violations, including monetary fines and/or jail time of six months to a year, as consistent with the authority granted to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under current regulation.
4. Express the will of Congress that all states should enact similar bans for state and private cemeteries, as well as funeral homes.

**Note:** South Carolina legislation has set a 1000-foot restriction. The bill has been submitted to Governor Sanford for his signature.

**FLAGS FLOWN AT HALF STAFF,  
CONDITION, MANNER**

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 10-1-161 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 207 of 2004, is further amended to read:

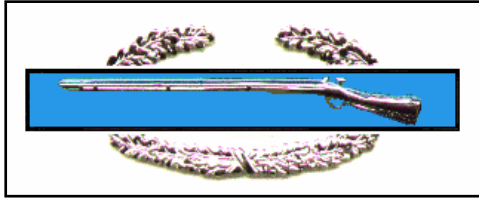
”Section 10-1-161. (A) On Memorial Day the flags, which are flown atop the State Capitol Building, must be displayed at half-staff until noon, then raised to the top of the staff.

- (B) To honor and pay tribute to the following public officials the flags which are flown atop the State Capitol Building must be lowered to half-staff on the day on which funeral services are conducted for these public officials:
- (1) current and past members of the United States Congress from the State of South Carolina
  - (2) current constitutional officers of the State of South Carolina;
  - (3) former Governors and Lieutenant Governors of the State of South Carolina;
  - (4) current members of the South Carolina General Assembly;
  - (5) current members of the South Carolina Supreme Court; and
  - (6) current and former Presidents of the United States.
- (C) As contained in this section, “half-staff” means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff.
- (D) In addition to the public officials enumerated in subsection (B), flags atop the State Capitol Building must be lowered to half-staff on the day when funeral services are conducted for members of the United States military services who were residents of South Carolina and who lost their lives in the line of duty while in combat.
- (E) The flags atop the State Capitol Building must be flown for a period of thirty days from the date of death of the President or a former President; for a period of ten days from the date of death of the Vice President, the Chief Justice, or a retired Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, or the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives; and from the date of death through the date of interment of an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, or a secretary of a federal executive or military department, or a former Vice President.
- (F) Upon the occurrence of an extraordinary event resulting in death or upon the death of a person of extraordinary stature, the Governor may order the flags atop the State Capitol Building be lowered to half-staff at a designated time or for a designated period of time.
- (G) The Governor may order the flags atop the State Capitol Building to be lowered to half-staff for the same designated time when an act of the United States Congress or a presidential order is issued to lower flags to half-staff over federal buildings.

(H) The flags atop the State Capitol Building, when flown at half-staff must first be hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flags must be again raised to the peak before they are lowered for the day.”

Signed by Governor Sanford March 29, 2006 with effective date of March 30, 2006.

## HAVE YOU BEEN AWARDED THE COMBAT INFANTRYMAN'S BADGE?



If so, you're eligible to join the Combat Infantryman's Association, Inc., a national organization.

Army Veterans – Infantry – Rangers, Special Forces – Combat Units: IF YOU SERVED IN THE FOLLOWING WARS:

WWII; KOREA; VIETNAM; GRENADA; PANAMA; DESERT STORM; BOSNIA; AFGHANISTAN; IRAQ and if you were awarded the COMBAT INFANTRYMAN'S BADGE we invite you to become a member of this "elite group of men" of the Combat Infantryman's Association. Be recognized, wear your combat Infantryman's Badge and be proud, you earned it!

The first meeting will be June 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the Fort Jackson NCO Club. Reservations required. RSVP by June 9<sup>th</sup>.

For more information and application contact: Stanley E. Thornburgh, 425 Kitti Wake Drive, West Columbia, SC 29170-3032; phone: (803) 957-1469; e-mail [Stanley39us@Yahoo.com](mailto:Stanley39us@Yahoo.com).

## GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM MEDAL UPDATE

The Navy has added the following designated geographical locations for eligibility for the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal: Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chad, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo (only specified GWOT operations not associated with operations qualifying for the Kosovo Campaign Medal), Mauritania, Niger, Turkey, Uganda, the Mediterranean Sea (when conducting boarding and searching vessel operations), Colombia and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Initially eligibility only extended to:

1. LAND AREAS: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Crete, Cyprus, Diego Garcia, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey (east of 35 degrees east longitude), Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.
2. OFFSHORE: Arabian Sea (north of 10 degrees north latitude and west of 68 degrees east longitude), Bab el Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Aqaba, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Suez, Mediterranean Sea (east of 28 degrees east

longitude), Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Strait of Hormuz, and Suez Canal.

Vets must have served 30 consecutive days or 60 non-consecutive days in the above areas. Proof of service can consist of travel orders, letters of evaluation, or flight logs. Eligibility for the award meets the Veteran of Foreign Wars criteria for membership. (Source: *Armed Forces News*, 7 April 2006)

## FREE TUITION FOR CERTAIN WARTIME VETERANS

A child of a wartime veteran, upon application to and approval by the South Carolina Department of Veteran Affairs, may be admitted to any state-supported college, university or post-high school technical education institution free of tuition.

But such assistance is limited to children of veterans who have, for example, died in combat, been prisoners of war, been declared missing in action or earned the Purple Heart.

The veteran parent must be a South Carolina resident, have served honorably in a branch of the military service of the United States during a war period and meet one of the following criteria:

- ❖ was killed in action
- ❖ died from other causes while in the service
- ❖ died of disease or disability resulting from service
- ❖ was a prisoner of war as defined by Congress or presidential proclamation during such war period
- ❖ is permanently and totally disabled, as determined by the VA, from any cause
- ❖ has been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor
- ❖ is missing in action
- ❖ the applicant is the child of a deceased veteran who qualified under the fourth and fifth items listed above
- ❖ has been awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received in combat.

The provisions of the law apply to a child of a veteran who meets the state's residency requirements, is 26 years old or younger and is pursuing any type of undergraduate degree.

For more information, call the Veterans Affairs Office.

# AGENT ORANGE NEWS

## Diabetes Mellitus (Type II)

### As A Presumptive Condition for In-Country Vietnam Veterans

#### Questions and Answers

1. What veterans will be affected when this condition is added as a presumptive condition for those exposed to herbicides/dioxins?

Honorably discharged veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962 through May 7, 1975 and have "adult onset diabetes mellitus." This does not include veteran's who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period February 28, 1961, to January 9, 1962.

2. What does "presumptive condition" mean?

Normally, the claimant must show proof of relationship between service and the condition being claimed. Under presumption of service connection, VA presumes the service-connected relationship exists based on the other qualifying criteria, such as dates and location of service and that the condition being claimed, in this case, is associated with exposure to Agent Orange.

3. Must I have served "in-country" Vietnam to be eligible?

To have presumptive service connection granted for diabetes mellitus based on Vietnam service, the claimant must have served in-country.

4. What does "in-country" mean? What if I served in support of operations in Vietnam, for example, on board a ship in the Gulf of Tonkin?

During the period 1/9/62 through 5/7/75, you must have physically served or visited in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), including service in the waters offshore if the conditions of service involved duty or visitation in Vietnam. This means the ship must have come to port in the RVN and you disembarked.

5. Will private medical records be accepted as proof of my diabetes?

Will I be required to undergo a VA examination? If private medical records are sufficient, VA can make a determination and grant based on those records. If not, a VA examination will be required. These records should :

- Comment on the age of onset and the diagnostic test used to affirmatively diagnose this condition
- Comment on the treatment modalities (i.e. Insulin, diet, regulation of activities, etc.)
- Discuss, if applicable, the prior and current episodes of ketoacidosis or hypoglycemic reactions. Were hospitalizations required? What was the frequency of hospitalizations?

- Fully describe any complications that stem from the veteran's diabetes mellitus; such as vision; cardiac; vascular; renal; neurologic (including both peripheral neuropathy and cerebral effects); amputations; and other associated complications.

6. I applied for service-connection for my diabetes and was denied. The condition was however, rated as non-service connected. Will I need to reapply for service connection?

Vietnam veterans who were previously denied service connection for diabetes should reapply by contacting his or her local VA office at, 1-800-827-1000 or by e-mail through the VA web page. ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)).

7. My husband died from diabetes and was an in-country Vietnam veteran. Do I now qualify for service connected death benefits (DIC)?

If you believe the cause of death was related to diabetes and the veteran had in-country service, you should contact the local VA office to determine your eligibility.

8. Will I receive retroactive benefits based on a grant of service connection due to presumptive service in Vietnam?

Under a federal court decision in the case of *Nehmer v. U.S. Veterans' Admin.*, C.A. No. C-86-6160 (TEH) (N.D. Cal.), Vietnam veterans are eligible for retroactive awards of benefits for their diabetes, if they applied for service connection for diabetes before the VA diabetes regulation went into effect on July 9, 2001.

9. If I am already service connected for diabetes, will I get an increase based on this change?

You will not receive any additional benefits as a result of this change. However, if your diabetic condition has increased in severity since you were last rated by VA, you should contact your local VA office. You can file a claim for a reevaluation and the local VA office can provide assistance with that claim.

10. Will I be eligible for medical treatment?

Even if you decide not to file a claim based on exposure to herbicide, you can still get a free physical examination at the nearest VA Medical Center. You may also be entitled to free ongoing medical treatment at a VA medical facility. You should contact the nearest VA medical facility or you can obtain information and an application for health benefits at the Veterans Health Administration web site at [www.va.gov/vbs/health/index.htm](http://www.va.gov/vbs/health/index.htm) or by calling 1-877-222-8387.

11. Where can I get a copy of the National Academy of Sciences Study on Herbicide/Dioxin Exposure and Type 2 Diabetes?

You can download a copy of the study from the NAS web site at [www.nap.edu/html/diabetes](http://www.nap.edu/html/diabetes).

### FRENCH CERTIFICATES

French consulates are offering a certificate of thanks to living American WWII vets who served in France or its territories during 1944-1945. For assistance in filling out the application, contact: *Order of Lafayette*, 243 West 70<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt. 6F, New York, NY 10023-4321.

E-Mail: [orderoflafayette@hotmail.com](mailto:orderoflafayette@hotmail.com)

### VETERANS DEFENSIVE DRIVING COURSE

The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Dorn will offer an eight-hour Defensive Driving course to all eligible veterans on June 1, 2006. The course may be good for a four-point reduction from one's driver record.

The course will last from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.. There is no charge for it (similar courses in the community range in cost from \$55 - \$85).

To be eligible for this course, the veteran must be enrolled at the Dorn VA Medical Center. The veteran must be in possession of a valid South Carolina driver's license. Some car insurance companies allow for a 5-10% decrease in premiums if the insured has completed this driver improvement course. It is advisable that the veteran check with his/her insurance company prior to taking the course to ensure whether or not that particular insurance company grants this discount.

If you have any questions concerning this, please contact Alan B. Simmerson, Driver Rehabilitation Specialist at 803-776-4000, extension 7052.

### DONATIONS NEEDED

The Lexington County Veterans Office has some medical equipment which can be loaned out to veterans or their families. We have wheelchairs, a hospital bed, crutches, potties, and walkers available.

If you are aware of any surplus or no longer needed equipment, please contact the VA office. We'll pick it up and make it available to veterans.

### BUGLES ACROSS AMERICA

In a speech given by VA Secretary Nicholson at the National Press Club on 27 March 2006, he noted that in 2007, "Taps" will sound for more than 107,000 veterans or approximately 300 a day. This is a sharp increase from just two years ago. In response to this growing need, VA is conducting one of the most ambitious expansions of national cemeteries since the Civil War. Three new cemeteries will soon be added to the 122 existing cemeteries, and six more are in the planning stages. By 2009, the capacity will have nearly doubled. Burial benefits for veterans include a gravesite in any of our 122 national cemeteries with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a Government headstone or marker, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family.

Some veterans also may be eligible for burial allowances. Cremated remains are buried or inurned in national cemeteries in the same manner and with the same honors as casketed remains. Burial benefits available for spouses and dependents buried in a national cemetery include burial with the veteran, perpetual care, and the spouse or dependent's name and date of birth and death will be inscribed on the veteran's headstone, at no cost to the family. (Source: *American Forces Press Service*, 29 March 2006)

### CEREMONIAL BUGLE

The Lexington Veterans of Affairs Office has purchased an electronic ceremonial bugle to be used at deceased veterans' funerals or ceremonial occasions. The manual explains how Funeral Honors should be performed as well as operation and maintenance instructions. This bugle may be reserved by authorized personnel through this office at: 803-785-8400.



### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A traveling, ¾-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., is coming to Columbia, SC on October 27, 28 & 29, 2006. Greenlawn Memorial Park & Funeral Home needs your help preparing for its arrival. Dedicated to Vietnam veterans and honoring all U.S. veterans, the **Dignity Memorial® Vietnam Wall Experience™** is 240 feet long, eight feet high and contains the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam. Honor their sacrifice by joining a committee and helping plan for the three-day exhibition.

All names etched on "The Wall" will be read throughout the three-day exhibition. Readings will take place in 20-minute intervals.

To volunteer call Tammy Chandler at (803) 776-1092.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VA**

### **How/Where Do I Apply for Health Care?**

You can apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ. The 10-10EZ may be obtained by visiting, calling, or writing any VA health care facility or veterans' benefits office. You can also call toll-free 1-877-222-VETS (1-877-222-8387) or access the form on the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm>.

You can submit a completed form in person or by mail to the enrollment coordinator at any VA Medical Center. Please be sure to sign your application form, otherwise it cannot be processed for enrollment. VA Form 10-10EZ is a four-page application form, front and back.

Once a determination of your eligibility has been made, you will receive written notification. This process can take between 30-60 days.

### **Will the VA Bill My Insurance Carrier?**

The law requires VA to bill insurance carriers for covered veterans. Some veterans may have health insurance coverage under a spouse's policy. If you are receiving care for a non-service-connected disability and have health insurance, your insurance carrier will be billed. VA does not bill your health insurance carrier for VA-adjudicated service-connected disabilities. (An adjudicated service-connected disability is one for which you have filed a claim and VA has determined that you are service-connected.)

If you are a Priority 7 veteran, providing us your insurance information will allow us to bill your insurance carrier, which will offset part or all of your co-payment. The law requires VA to bill private health insurance companies for all non service-connected care a veteran receives. VA's budget and your future care could depend on the amount VA is able to collect from private health insurance carriers. By not giving us insurance information you may be limiting your future care and that of many other veterans.

### **What is a Preferred Facility?**

Your preferred facility designates where you prefer to receive your primary care and is normally the facility closest to your home. However, acceptance in the VA health care system means that you may receive the comprehensive benefits package through VA's national health care system at any VA health care facility you choose or are nearest to when you require care.

### **Am I Eligible for a Nursing Home?**

The State Veterans Home is a home approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs which was established by a State for veterans disabled by age, disease, or otherwise who by reason of such disability are incapable of earning a

living. State homes include facilities for domiciliary nursing home care, and/or adult day health care. Hospital care may be included when provided in conjunction with domiciliary or nursing home care. A state home may also provide care to veteran related family members. For further information, please contact your local VA Medical Center.

Veterans requiring nursing home care for a service-connected condition or a veteran rated 70% or more have mandatory eligibility. All other veterans are eligible on a resource and space-available basis. The best source for determining what assistance is available for these VA services, is the Social Work department at the nearest VA facility. To find the nearest facility, visit the facility page at <http://www.va.gov/sta/guide/home.asp> click on your state, and the VA medical centers will be listed along with phone numbers. I hope this is helpful. Thank you for visiting our VA Website.

### **Will VA Provide Hearing Aids?**

Generally, hearing aids are not provided when the hearing loss is the result of aging. However, the VA may provide you a hearing aid if you:

- \* receive increased pension based on the need for regular aid & attendance or being permanently housebound
- \* receive compensation for a service connected disability of 10% or greater
- \* require this item for treatment of a service-connected condition, or
- \* are a former prisoner of war

### **What Type of Home Health Services are Available?**

Home health services are any medically indicated supportive medical services prescribed by and under the direction of a VA physician or a physician contracted by the VA for providing treatment to veterans. These services are skilled treatment services as performed by professional health care providers and professional health care technicians. The best source for determining what assistance is available for these VA services is the Social Work department at the nearest VA facility.

### **Am I Eligible for Free Prescriptions?**

Medication copayments are charged for each 30 day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for nonservice-connected conditions. Exemptions from this copayment requirement are provided for veterans service-connected 50% or more, former POWs, and for veterans whose income is less than the established dollar threshold.

Also exempt from the medication copayment are veterans receiving medication for the treatment of conditions related to agent orange, ionizing radiation, Persian Gulf, military sexual trauma, and certain cancers of the head and neck. Recent combat veterans are exempt from medication copayments for two years following discharge when being treated for conditions related to their military service.

## VETERANS AFFAIRS SERVICE

Veterans Affairs Service (VAS) is a non-profit organization that has been providing information to veterans on Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) benefits and services, volunteering to assist veterans with obtaining VA benefits, and conducting VA benefit briefings. Although the organization does mention on its website that it is in no way affiliated with the federal government, it is very easy to mistake this organization for the actual Department of Veteran Affairs given its similarity in name. But because it is not the Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans may be receiving inaccurate or out of date information, or possibly being misled about their benefits. The official web site for the Department of Veteran Affairs is: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

The Department of Veterans Affairs has warned that the group is allegedly telling troops very little about benefits, but attempting to sell financial products and to collect personal information on the service members for future use. **VAS is not affiliated with or endorsed by the Department of Veteran Affairs to provide any service.**

Any examples of VAS acts that violate chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code—such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation of claims for benefits—should be submitted to:

[www.Michael.Daugherty2@va.gov](mailto:www.Michael.Daugherty2@va.gov) or

Michael G. Daugherty, Staff Attorney, Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of General Counsel (022G2), 810 Vermont Ave., Room 1106, Washington, DC 20420; (202) 273-8636. (*The American Legion Bulletin*, April 27, 1006)

### VA ONLY PHONE CALL AWAY

The VA is only a phone call away - - - 24 hours a day in the following states: Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. The VA now offers telephone advice to veterans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Veterans will USE this new after-hours service by dialing the same telephone numbers used for advice during the day. The Tele-Nurse staff will have full electronic access to your appointments and health records.

#### Services provided by the new after-hours program include:

- Eligibility Information
- National Cemetery Information
- Medical Advice
- Self-Help Medical Information
- Triage

#### You must provide the following information when calling:

- Name, Address,
- Social Security Number,
- Phone Number & area code where you can be reached,
- What VA Hospital or Clinic you go to for treatment,
- Your doctor's name or Primary Care Team,
- Medications you take,
- Reason for your call.

### South Carolina

Charleston	843-937-6107
Toll-Free	1-888-651-2682
Columbia	803-647-5829
Toll-Free	1-888-651-2683

### OTHER INTERESTING INFORMATION

1. Veterans can now access their Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) accounts at any time of the day or night from any computer or telephone. Veterans will be able to view their current amount of coverage, premium rate, and billing method, as well as change their billing address. Website is [www.insurance.va.gov](http://www.insurance.va.gov) or veterans can call 1-800-419-1473.

2. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries are now available on-line. Anyone with Internet access can search for gravesite locations of deceased family members and friends. The site also displays the location of the gravesite, veteran's name, date of birth and death, branch of service, rank (if known), the cemetery's location and phone numbers. The website is [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov).

3. For those wishing to donate a prepaid calling card to a military member, they can log on to any of the three Armed Services Exchange websites:

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service - <http://www.aafes.com/> - The Navy Exchange Service Command - <http://www.navy-nex.com/> - The Marine Corp Exchange - <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/>

### SECOND INCREMENT OF SURVIVOR BENEFIT PROGRAM (SBP)/SOCIAL SECURITY OFFSET

This is a reminder that on April 1<sup>st</sup> the second increment of the SBP/Social Security Offset went into effect. For those survivors receiving SBP payments, the rate of payment should now be at least 45 percent of the covered amount of retired pay that your spouse signed up for. The payment increase should have been included in the May deposit/check. If not, contact DFAS at 1-800-321-1080 and speak to someone about your account. The next incremental increase will be on April 1, 2007.

### PURPLE HEART STAMP REVISED



A 39¢ version of the Purple Heart stamp will be issued May 26 at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in Washington, D.C. A first-day-of-issue ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. Sale of the stamp at post offices nationwide begins May 27.

**VETERANS IDENTIFICATION  
CARDS FOR FORMER  
PRISONERS OF WAR (FPOW)  
AND  
PURPLE HEART RECIPIENTS**

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has announced that it will begin applying FPOW and Purple Heart designations on its Veterans Identification Cards (VIC), in addition to the service-connected designation already displayed. The cards, which are used for identification and administrative processing purposes, are issued to veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system. The VIC **cannot** be used as a credit card, proof of insurance, or authorization or payment for care at non-VA facilities.

Those who are currently enrolled and have a current VIC photograph on file will automatically be sent an updated VIC card beginning early May 2006. Those who are enrolled but have not been issued a VIC can request a new card and have their photo taken at their local medical center. Processing normally takes five to seven days, once eligibility is verified.

VA is encouraging any FPOW or Purple Heart recipient who has not enrolled in the VA health care center to enroll and request a VIC.

Peter S. Gaytan, Director, National Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. (*The American Legion Bulletin*, April 27, 2006)

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

**JUNE OUTREACH PROGRAM**

June 6 <sup>th</sup>	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
June 13 <sup>th</sup>	9-12	Chapin
June 20 <sup>th</sup>	8-12	Swansea

**NEW OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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

**These are toll-free calls**