



**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
LEXINGTON COUNTY**

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VET NEWS

May 2007

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

The Veterans Affairs Office will be closed:

May 10—Confederate Memorial Day

May 13—Mother's Day

May 28—Memorial Day

Confederate Memorial Day

Confederate Memorial Day is a day set aside in the South to pay tribute to those who served with the Confederate forces during the American Civil War. The founder of the Federal Memorial Day, John A Logan (Commander in Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic), was so impressed with the way the South honored their dead with a special day, he become convinced that such a day must be created to honor Union dead.

The battlefield graves all around Richmond could be seen "marked with little white flags, faded wreaths of laurel" where family and friends of Confederate soldiers had placed them. Logan is reported to have been "deeply touched" and said "it was most fitting; that the ancients, especially the Greeks, had honored their dead, particularly their heroes, by chaplets of laurel and flowers, and that he intended to issue an order an order designating a day for decorating the grave of every soldier in this land, and if he could he would have made it a holiday." This of course was done at a later date, thus, our National Memorial Day.

Veterans Readjustment Counseling

Our office is pleased to announce counseling sessions at our location for Vietnam veterans that served in combat. David Cox, a counselor with Veterans Readjustment Counseling from the Vet Center is a certified social worker, marriage and family therapist, and a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor. Mr. Cox is available for sessions on Monday afternoon and all day on Tuesdays. Please contact him at 803-765-9944 to schedule an appointment.

Welcome Aboard

The office would like to welcome William Arndt, as a new volunteer van driver. He joins the ranks with the other volunteer drivers who are Roger Rucker, Craig Brandt, Stan Thornburgh, Ed Gavin and Gary Baker. We want to give a HUGE thank you to our drivers. If you are interested in driving the van, please call the office to obtain an application.

AID & ATTENDANCE THE UNDER-USED BENEFIT

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid & Attendance (A&A).



"Veterans have earned this benefit by their service to our nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "We want to ensure that every veteran or surviving spouse who qualifies has the chance to apply."

Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of his or her potential eligibility. The A&A pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the congressionally mandated legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly A&A benefit if they have large medical expenses, including nursing home expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement. To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self-support and in need of regular personal assistance.

The criteria for the A&A benefit includes the inability to feed oneself, to dress and undress without assistance, or to take care of one's own bodily needs. People who are bedridden or need help to adjust special prosthetic or orthopedic devices may also be eligible, as well as those who have a physical or mental injury or illness that requires regular assistance to protect them from hazards or dangers in their daily environment.

Other qualifications:

- * Veteran must have served at least 90 days of active military service, 1 day of which was during a period of war.
- * Discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.
- * Wartime veterans who entered active duty on or after 9/8/1980, (10/16/1981 for officers) must have completed at least 24 continuous months of military service or the period for which they were ordered to active duty.

If all requirements are met, VA determines eligibility for unreimbursed medical expenses from the veteran's or surviving spouse's total household income. If the remaining income amount falls below the annual income threshold for the A&A benefit, VA pays the difference between the claimant's household income and the A&A threshold.

Aid & Attendance Annual Income Thresholds:

- * veteran without dependents\$18,234
- * veteran & 1 dependent\$21,615
- * surviving spouse alone..... \$11,715
- * surviving spouse & 1 dependent.....\$13,976

(add \$1,866 for each additional dependent)

For additional information or assistance in applying for the A&A benefit, please contact the VARO at 1-800-827-1000 or the Lexington County office at 803-785-8400.

DOCTOR STATEMENT FOR
AID & ATTENDANCE

What the Evidence Must Show to Support Your Claim:

To establish entitlement for special monthly pension, the evidence must show the following:

Aid & Attendance

You must meet one of the following conditions to receive the Aid and Attendance benefit:

- ⇒ You are so helpless as to require the aid of another person to perform the personal functions required in everyday living, OR
- ⇒ You have bilateral vision of 5/200 or less, OR
- ⇒ You are a patient in a nursing home.

Housebound

You must meet one of the following conditions to receive the housebound benefit:

- ⇒ Your disability permanently confines you to your home or immediate premises, OR
- ⇒ You have one condition rated 100% disabling AND another condition(s) rated 60% or more disabling.

Freedom Team Salute program gives all Army Soldiers – Active duty, Reservists, and National Guards-men – the opportunity to recognize parents, spouses, and employers for the support they provide to our Soldiers while they serve to protect our freedom.

Visit the website at freedomteamsalute.army.mil and enter the veteran's or soldier's name and address. Veterans may register themselves. In 4-6 weeks the recipient of the Freedom Team Salute will receive the Commendation package.

PRESCRIPTION CARDS AVAILABLE

Welcome to the American Consultants Rx Inc. site where we work hard to supply needed assistance to consumers who are looking for a way to cut costs on prescriptions, medical, and insurance.

Due to the rising costs, unstable economics, and the mounting cost of prescriptions, American Consultants Rx Inc. (ACRX..A.K.A ACIRX) an Atlanta based company was born in 2004. The ACRX discount prescription card program was created and over 3 million discount prescription cards were donated to the community across the country free of charge between 2004-2005.

As an additional request from doctors, clinics, and social welfare directors across the country the ACRX cards can also be downloaded by clicking on [FREE ACRX CARD](#) and printing a card that is already pre-activated. All pharmacies involved will honor a copy of the ACRX card. This means any organization or individual will always be able to obtain prescription discount cards. We have also made arrangements where any individual can discover what the cost of their medicine will be with the card as well as what store in their area offers the best discount by clicking on [DRUG PRICING](#) which is also found on the Pharmacy Locator section. Just enter your drug name, click on find drugs, and the prices will come up. Click on the pill bottle for name brand pricing and location of store or click on the Rx sign for generic version (if available), pricing, and store. There is also a mail order section which the ACRX card offers discounts as well, that is located under drug pricing.

You or your organization will also be able to place an order for cards. The ACRX cards will offer discounts of name brand drugs of up to 40% off and up to 60% off of generic drugs. They also possess no eligibility requirements or expiration date as well. One card will take care of a whole family and can be used multiple times. The cards are good at over 50k stores from Walgreen, Wal-Mart, Eckerd's, K-Mart, Kroger, Publix, and many more.

ACRX is proud to announce the release of up to 20 million discount prescription cards distributed among many social welfare programs, non profits, clinics, hospitals, churches, etc. throughout the country. It should be noted that many other organizations place a cost on their money saving cards, we do not believe a cost should be applied just to assist our fellow Americans. So we ask that you help us pass the word on about our site and program to others who may benefit.

Call the Pharmacy Only Help Desk, at: 1-800-847-7147 or on line at: www.acirx.org

These prescription cards are available in the Veteran's Affairs Office or you may cut out one of the cards enclosed.

**HOLOCAUST RESEARCH GROUP
SEEKS SOUTH CAROLINA
LIBERATORS**

The Holocaust Archives, College of Charleston, SC is seeking contact with South Carolina liberators or their descendants. They are interested in material related to the veteran's firsthand experience seeing a Nazi concentration camp either as a liberator or as a witness in the days following liberation.

They are interested in knowing if the veteran spoke about the experience, wrote about it, or had photographs or other memorabilia. If you have information or wish more details about the project please contact:

Karen Tannenbaum
100 Aberdeen Drive
Greenville, SC 29605
ktann@charter.net
864-232-4480

Betty Carson resigned from her position as clerk on the first of April. The other office staff is handling the extra duties, until the position can be filled.

The office would like to extend our sympathies to the family of Jean Frick, who passed

away on March 26, 2007. Jean served as Assistant to the Veteran's Affairs Officer until her retirement in 2005.

COMBAT-RELATED SPECIAL COMPENSATION

Just because a veteran was not injured storming the beaches at Normandy does not mean he or she may not be entitled to receive Combat-Related Special Compensation. Many veterans may be missing hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars every month because they have not applied for the compensation. Don't let the word "combat" turn you off; there are many situations which are combat related and could mean extra tax-free money in your pocket. CRSC is meant to restore military retirement pay that has been offset by the VA compensation when evidence exists to confirm the associated disabilities are combat related.

For example, if a veteran is currently rated for a disability at 10% with the VA, they receive a check for \$115 each month, but their retired pay is reduced by that same amount. If that disability is found to be combat-related by the CRSC review board, they could continue to receive the monthly check from the VA for \$115 along with the remainder of the retired pay, but begin to receive an additional monthly check from CRSC for \$115.

If you're not sure if the circumstances surrounding your disability meet the combat-related criteria, still apply for the CRSC and let the board make the determination for you. There are prerequisites to consider before submitting the application.

Basic Eligibility Criteria:

- ⇒ Be retired with 20 or more years of active-duty military service or retired at age 60 from the Guard or Reserve
 - ⇒ Be receiving military retired pay. (*Veterans who waived military retirement pay for Civil Service credit are NOT eligible to apply for CRSC*)
 - ⇒ Have a compensable VA disability rating of 10% or higher.
 - ⇒ Receive military retired pay that is reduced by VA disability payments.
- You will need DD Form 2860 to apply for the CRSC benefits.



BURIAL BENEFITS BURIAL BENEFITS

The Veterans Benefit Administration administers a burial benefits program designed to assist claimants in meeting the funeral and burial costs of a deceased veteran. The type and amount of benefits payable depends on the veteran's individual service record and cause of death.

SERVICE-CONNECTED DEATH:

If veteran's death is service-connected, the VA will pay a burial allowance of up to \$2,000 (for a death on or after 9-11-2001—prior to 9-11-2001, the allowance was \$1,500). There is no time limit for applying for a service-connected burial allowance. The person who bore the veteran's burial expenses may claim reimbursement from any VA regional office.

NON-SERVICE CONNECTED DEATH:

If the veteran's death is not service-connected, there are two types of payments the VA may make:

- 1-Burial & Funeral Expense Allowance
- 2-Plot Allowance

The VA will pay a burial and funeral allowance of \$300, provided the veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and at the time of death the veteran was:

- * in receipt of VA pension or compensation
- * receiving military retired pay in lieu of compensation
- * had an original or reopened claim pending, and had been found entitled to compensation or pension from a date prior to the date of death
- * death occurred in a VA facility

* death occurred while traveling (under proper authorization & at VA expense) to or from a specified place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care

* death occurred on or after 10-9-1996, while a patient at an approved State nursing home, residing at a VA approved State nursing home, or transferred to a non-VA facility for acute medical care and then dies at that location.

Payments may be made to a creditor who provided services, the person or persons whose personal funds were used to pay such expenses, or a representative of the estate of the deceased veteran or claimant when the estate funds were used to pay the expenses or the veteran or claimant prepaid them.

The VA will pay a plot allowance if the veteran is not buried in a cemetery that is under US government jurisdiction. They may also pay a plot allowance of \$300 (for deaths on or after 12-1-2001—prior to 12-1-2001, the allowance was \$150), provided that the veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and the veteran:

* discharged from active duty because of a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty

* receiving a VA pension or compensation at the time of death or would have been entitled to receive such benefits if not for the receipt of military retirement or disability pay

*died in a VA facility.

Reimbursement of burial expense may be applied for by submitting a VA Form 21-530, Application for Burial Allowance. If you file the claim, you will need to include a copy of the death certificate, proof of veteran's military service (DD-214), and an itemized bill of the funeral and burial expenses. Itemized bills must clearly show the name of the veteran for whom services were performed, the nature and cost of the service rendered, all credits, and the name of the person or persons by whom payment in whole or part was made.

The VA shall furnish a US flag, at no cost, for burial or memorial purposes in connection with the death of an eligible veteran who served honorably with the US Armed Forces. The flag will automatically be provided if burial is in a national, state, or post cemetery. If in a private cemetery, the flag can be obtained through a service office, undertaker, or interested person from the nearest VA office. VA Form 2008, Application for US Flag for Burial Purposes, must be completed and submitted with a copy of the veteran's discharge. Generally, the funeral director will help the next of kin with this process.

On 12-27-2001, Public Law 107-103 was signed that allows the VA to furnish an appreciate headstone or marker for the graves of eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries, whose deaths occur on or after 12-27-2001, regardless of whether the grave is already marked with a non-government marker. On 12-6-2002, the law was further amended which changed the effective date to deaths occurring on or after 09-11-2001. For all deaths prior to 09-11-2001, the VA may provide a headstone or marker only for graves that are not already marked with a private marker. The application must be made to the VA. The government will ship free of charge, but will not pay for its placement. To apply, complete a VA Form 40-1330, Application for Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery, and forward it along with a copy of the veteran's military discharge documents. The application will have specific information on the available styles.

Social Security Earnings Credit

Under certain circumstances, there is a special extra earnings for your military service from 1940 through 2001 that can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Special extra earnings are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Special extra earnings are **not** granted for inactive duty training.

NOTE: Social Security cannot add these extra earnings to your record until you file for Social Security benefits.

How To Get Credit for Special Earnings

(the following only applies to active duty military earnings from 1940 through 2001)

⇒ **Service in 1978 through 2001**

For every \$300 in active duty basic pay—credited with an additional \$100 in earnings up to a max of \$1,200 a year.

⇒ **Service in 1957 through 1977**

Credited with \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

⇒ **Service in 1940 through 1956**

If you were in the military during this period, including attendance at a service academy, you did not pay SS taxes. However, your SS record may be credited with \$160/month in earnings for military service from 9/16/1940 through 12/31/1956, under the following circumstances:

* you were honorably discharged after 90 or more days of service, or released because of a disability or injury received in the line of duty.

* you are still on active duty

* you are applying for survivors benefits and the veteran died while on active duty.



You cannot receive credit for these special extra earnings if you are already receiving a federal benefit based on the same years of service. There is one exception: If you were on active duty after 1956, you can still get the special earnings for 1951 through 1956, even if you're receiving a military retirement based on service during that period.

Memorial Day History

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. It's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings; several different towns, along with planned or spontaneous gatherings of people to honor the war dead in the 1860's tapped into the general human need to honor our dead. It is not important who was the first, what is important is that Memorial Day was established. Memorial Day is not about division. It is about reconciliation; it is about coming together to honor those who gave their all.

Memorial Day was first observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war). It is now celebrated in almost every State on the last Monday in May.

Traditional observance of Memorial Day has diminished over the years. Many Americans nowadays have forgotten the meaning and traditions of Memorial Day.

To help re-educate and remind Americans of the true meaning of Memorial Day, the "National Moment of Remembrance" resolution was passed on Dec 2000 which asks that at 3pm local time, for all Americans "to voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to Taps." The Moment of Remembrance is a step in the right direction to returning the meaning back to the day.

Blue Star Mothers,

I am COL Charlie Seastrunk from Columbia, SC currently stationed in Baghdad, Iraq and just received your box of goodies to include Girl Scout cookies! It didn't take me long to share these with those here where I work as we have all services represented, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, civilians and even soldiers from Great Britain and El Salvador! The goodies and especially the Girl Scout cookies were much appreciated!

You have no idea how much this box meant to us as it gave us an instant morale boost! We appreciate all the time, effort, money, thoughts and prayers that went into getting this box to me! We have a very diverse unit here of over 210 that provides support to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior which is responsible for the Iraqi Police Forces. Our job is to mentor the various areas of the Ministry and make sure the Police Forces are trained and



**VETERAN'S AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY
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Lexington, SC 29072
(803) 785-8400**

MAY OUTREACH PROGRAM

May 1st 8-12 Batesburg-Leesville
May 8th 9-12 Chapin
May 15th 8-12 Swansea (by appt only)

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office: 785-8400
From Batesburg-Leesville: 332-8400

equipped to do their mission each and everyday.

Your thoughtfulness has gone along way today and made many smile as they dove into the many boxes of cookies.

Thanks again and I appreciate all you do for all of us over here! I hope to see you soon as I should be redeploying within the next 30 days or less!

Charlie

**CHARLES E. SEASTRUNK, III
COLONEL, US ARMY
SENIOR ADVISOR MOI IT GROUP
CPATT**

