

Veterans Affairs Office of Lexington County



TELEPHONE: (803) 785-8400

FAX: (803) 785-0115

EDITOR: *Debbie Myers*

VET NEWS

April 2008

GARY R. BAKER
DIRECTOR

BARBARA O'CONNOR
ASST. CSO

JENNIFER HENDRIX
VETERANS SPECIALIST

605 WEST MAIN STREET
SUITE 101
LEXINGTON, S.C. 29072



Dates To Remember

Apr. 1st	April Fools Day
Apr. 6th	Army Day
Apr. 9th	National Former POW Recognition Day
Apr. 11th	Persian Gulf War Official Ceasefire (1991)
Apr. 14th	Advisory Committee Meeting—7PM
Apr. 15th	Income Tax Day
Apr. 20th	Passover
Apr. 22nd	Earth Day
Apr. 23rd	Administrative Professionals Day
Apr. 25th	Arbor Day

WELCOME HOME, RETURNING TROOPS!

SCARNG PLANS REINTEGRATION FOR SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES

The purpose of reintegration is to successfully return soldiers and families to their normal family, work, school and community lives. Workshops are being planned for the following locations:

Sunday, **April 13, 2008**—Location: Columbia, S.C. seminar scheduled for Military Host 132 MP CO but all deployed families are invited

Saturday, **April 26, 2008**—Location: Columbia, S.C. scheduled make up brief for Host State FRG Network but all deployed families are invited

These seminars are being designed for the return of 218 BCT Main Body and 132 MP Company. Each event will last a total of 4 1/2 hours.

For more information about these workshops, please contact:

COL Keith Dunn (SCNG J1) 803-806-1622 or by email: Michael.k.dunn@sc.ngb.army.mil

LTC Taube Roy (SCNG State Family Program Director) 803-806-1750 or email: taube.roy@us.army.mil

CW3 Terry O'Connor (SCNG Reintegration Officer) 843-423-3271 or email: wto_maod@bellsouth.net

You may also call the Lexington County V A office at 803-785-8400 for further information.

The **Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office** will have a booth at both of these events.

Veterans Day 2008 Poster Contest

From Jan/Feb 2008 issue of *Vanguard Magazine*

Attention artists, graphics designers and photographers!

The Veterans Day National Committee is seeking admissions for the 2008 national Veterans Day poster.

The poster is distributed to more than 110,000 schools nationwide, military installations around the world, and to federal agencies in the nation's capitol. It also graces the cover of the official program booklet for the Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The committee will reconvene in May to review all submissions and select a finalist.

The final poster must be 18" x 24" at 300 dots per inch, but please scale down submissions to 9" x 12" and submit electronic versions as JPEG images or PDF files via email to this email address: vetsday@va.gov. Alternatively, send copies of artwork or a CD with artwork files to: Department of Veterans Affairs (002C), 810 Vermont Ave., N. W., Washington, D.C., 20420. Please do not send originals.

The deadline for submissions is May 1. To view Veterans Day posters from previous years, please visit www.va.gov/vetsday and click on "Poster Gallery".

Submissions should include sufficient information to demonstrate that the image is the work of the artist and is not copyrighted material (i.e., photos and concepts). The committee may select a particular submission but ask the artist to make modifications to the original design. Additional changes may be required prior to printing.

??? JUST CURIOUS ???

(Taken from column by Bertram Rantin of *The State Newspaper* dated March 6, 2008)

Q: Why is the National Anthem sung at certain sporting events and not others? How did this practice originate?

A: It's just a matter of preference whether the anthem is sung. The following excerpts from a 1996 Sports Illustrated article shed a little light on the custom and its origin: "The practice of playing 'The Star Spangled Banner' is clearly rooted in wartime patriotic fervor. During World War I, it became customary to play the song before baseball games...Since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, it has been a staple at almost all athletic competitions. In most countries, however, national anthems are reserved for international or championship games."

The article notes that while many Americans don't show the anthem proper respect, they like the fact that it's there. "the Baltimore Orioles stopped playing 'The Star Spangled Banner' for one week during the 1954 season, hoping to use the song only on holidays and special occasions. In reaction, the City Council passed a resolution suggesting that the anthem be played before every game."



VETERANS AFFAIRS MOBILE PHARMACIES

WASHINGTON -

To support veterans and their families during major emergencies, especially natural disasters, the Department of Veterans Affairs has begun to deploy mobile pharmacies that will provide vital medicine when patients are unable to fill their prescriptions. VA will also open up the facilities to help communities during major disasters and other emergencies.

Each mobile pharmacy is housed in a 40-foot-long solid steel trailer built to withstand winds in a Category 3 storm. The units include a satellite connection with VA's Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy system, a computerized automated state-of-the-art mailout pharmacy that can process more than 1,000 prescriptions hourly.

Pharmacists can use the satellite system to obtain a veteran's prescription data to dispense the drugs onsite. In addition, VA can send replacement medications during an emergency by mail or another carrier to a veteran's home or temporary address.

The VA, recognizing the need for mobile pharmacies after the 2005 hurricanes, deployed several mobile medical clinics as part of its response to the disasters. The first mobile pharmacy was unveiled September 11, 2007, and a second one was expected to be delivered in March of 2008.

To ensure rapid response to a wide range of emergencies, VA's mobile pharmacies will be strategically placed across the nation. Plans now call for one of the three mobile pharmacies to be stationed in Dallas, Texas, Murfreesboro, Tennessee and Charleston, SC. The Department also expects to acquire a fourth unit that will be placed in the western part of the country.

Each mobile pharmacy is divided into five compartments, including a work area for pharmacists, entryway access for patients and a sleeping and bathing area for VA personnel. Pharmacy personnel from across the country have already volunteered to staff the units in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency. Six pharmacists have already completed their training and can deploy on short notice.





A NOTE REGARDING THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS PAYMENT

Did you receive Disability Compensation, Pension or Survivors' Benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs last year?

Even if you are not otherwise required to file a tax return, you may still be entitled to an economic stimulus payment from the federal government.

- ◆ **WHAT YOU COULD GET:** You could receive a payment of \$300 for individuals or \$600 if you are married and file a joint tax return with your spouse. Eligible taxpayers who qualify for a payment may receive an additional \$300 for each qualifying child. To qualify a child must be under age 17 as of December 31, 2007.
- ◆ **WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:** All you have to do to get the stimulus payment is file a 2007 IRS Form 1040 or 1040A and report at least \$3000 in qualifying income on the form. You can include the amount of your VA benefits to qualify for the stimulus payment.
- ◆ **QUALIFYING INCOME:** Add the amount of your VA disability compensation, pension, or survivors' benefits to any other qualifying income you have to reach the \$3000 requirement. Other qualifying income would include wage earnings or Social Security benefits.
- ◆ **WHAT YOU FILL OUT:** Enter your name, address, Social Security Number, and filing status on the form. Then just enter the amount of VA and Social Security benefits you received on line 14a of Form 1040A or line 20a of Form 1040. You can estimate the benefits you receive from VA or the Social Security Administration by taking the monthly amount you received last year and multiplying it by the number of months you received payments. If you need to include wage earnings to reach the \$3000 qualifying level, enter that amount on Line 7 of Form 1040A or 1040. In addition, you should write the words "Stimulus Payment" at the top of the 1040A or 1040.
- ◆ **IS THE STIMULUS PAYMENT TAXABLE NEXT YEAR?** No!
- ◆ **WILL THIS PAYMENT AFFECT THE AMOUNT OF VA BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE?** No!
- ◆ **WHEN WILL I RECEIVE MY PAYMENT?** For those who file a 2007 tax return, IRS will begin mailing checks in May.
- ◆ **FOR MORE INFORMATION:** In late March 2008, the IRS will mail a packet of information to recipients of VA benefits who did not file a tax return last year. The packet will contain guidance to help you claim the stimulus payment. If you need information in the interim, you can visit the IRS website at www.IRS.gov

GUN SALUTES

1. Origin and significance of military gun salutes - The use of the gun salutes for military occasions is traced to early warriors who demonstrated their peaceful intentions by placing their weapons in a position that rendered them ineffective. The tradition of rendering a salute by cannon originated in the 14th Century in the British Navy. Since discharging the cannon rendered it ineffective, by custom, warships fired seven-gun salutes while shore batteries, which had a greater supply of gunpowder and were able to fire three guns for every shot fired afloat, fired a 21 salute. In 1842 the U. S. established the Presidential salute at 21 guns while in 1890 it was established as the National salute. Today, the 21-gun salute is fired in honor of the President while guns salutes of less numbers are rendered to other military and civilian leaders based on their protocol rank.

2. Origin and significance of the military custom of firing rifle volleys at funerals - During the funeral rites of the Roman Army the casting of the earth THREE times upon the coffin constituted "the burial." It was customary among the Romans to call the dead THREE times by name, which ended the funeral ceremony. As friends and relatives of the deceased departed they said "Vale", or farewell, THREE times. Over time when firearms were introduced on the battlefield the custom of practice of firing volleys was established to halt the fighting to remove the dead from the battlefield. Once each army had cleared its dead it would fire THREE volleys to indicate that the dead had been cared for and that they were ready to go back to the fight. Today, when a squad of soldiers fires THREE volleys over a grave, they are, in accordance with this old Roman custom, bidding their dead comrade farewell. After the last rifle volley, the bugler then sounds TAPS. The fact that the firing party consists of seven riflemen, firing three volleys does not constitute a 21-gun salute. (Ref: Mil Customs dated 1917).

3. Twenty-One versus Three - Many confuse the 21-gun salute with the 3-volley salute. The 21-gun salute is used primarily as a greeting. It's fired during presidential arrivals and departures and when heads of state visit. Also, it's not limited to the United States -- many countries have similar ceremonies. The 3-volley salute, on the other hand, is performed during police and military funerals by the Honor Guard and is intended as a reminder. While the two salutes look (and sound) similar, the 21-gun salute is considered the higher honor.

4. 21 History - It's been said that 21 guns are fired because the digits in 1776 add up to 21 (1+7+7+6=21). Logical, but Snopes.com writes this is just an urban legend. The real story behind the honor is a bit more complicated. The United States Army explains the salute's history. "Originally warships fired seven-gun salutes -- the number seven probably selected because of its astrological and Biblical significance." Land-based cannons had a higher capacity for gun powder and "were able to fire three guns for every shot fired afloat, hence the salute by shore batteries was 21 guns." Eventually, as gun powder improved, ships fired 21 guns, too. The habit of firing salutes became wasteful, with ships and shore batteries firing shots for hours on end. This was particularly expensive for ships, which had a limited space to store powder (which went bad quickly in the salt air). The British admiralty first dictated the policies now in place as a practical matter to save gunpowder. The rule was simple, for every volley fired by a ship in salute, a shore battery could return up to three shots. The regulations limited ships to a total of seven shots in salute, so the 21 gun-salute became the salute used to honor the only the most important dignitaries.

5. Salute Protocol - Today, the U.S. Navy Regulations proscribe that only those ships and stations designated by the Secretary of the Navy may fire gun salutes. A national salute of 21 guns is fired on: Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, to honor the President of the United States, and to honor heads of foreign states. Additionally, ships may, with approval from the office of the Secretary of the Navy, provide gun salutes for naval officers on significant occasions, using the following protocol: Admiral-17 guns, Vice Admiral-15 guns, a Rear Admiral (upper half)-13 guns, and Rear Admiral (lower half)-11 guns. All gun salutes are fired at five-second intervals. Gun salutes will always total an odd number.

6. Volley Protocol - The 3-volley salute is a salute performed at military and police funerals as part of the drill and ceremony of the Honor Guard. A rifle party, usually consisting of an odd number of firers, usually from 3 to 7 firearms. Usually the firearms are rifles for military, but at some police funerals, shotguns are used. The firing party is positioned such that, when they shoulder their arms for firing, the muzzles are pointed over the casket of the deceased who is being honored. If the service is being performed inside a church or chapel, or funeral home, the firing party fires from outside the building, typically positioned near the front entrance. On the command of the NCO-in-charge, the firing party fires their weapons in unison, for a total of three volleys. Because unbulleted blanks (which will not cycle the action of a semi-automatic rifle) are used, in the United States, M1 or M14 rifles are preferred over the current issue M16 rifle, because the charging handles of the M1/M14 are more easily operated in a dignified, ceremonial manner than on the M16.

Source: <http://www.hbtv.us/VA/> 20 Feb 08 ++]

GUN SALUTE IMAGES



QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

“In war there is no prize for the runner-up.”

General Omar Bradley

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of the **VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE** will be Monday, April 14th at 7:00 P.M.

These meetings are held at our office, located at 605 West Main Street, Lexington, Suite 101. Our office building has a new automatic door lock on the outside entry, so please call our office at 785-8400 if you will be arriving late to the meeting.

RETIRED ARMY PIN

Retired Soldiers are authorized to wear the new Retired Army pin, which is the Army logo with the word “Retired” emblazoned above it. At the behest of the CSA Retiree Council, this pin replaced the small green Retired Army Lapel button. The Council asked for a larger pin that could be recognized from afar, worn on clothing other than a suit jacket, and that would show the continuing bond between the retired Soldier and the Army. A mass mail-out of the new pin to all retired Soldiers started 26 MAR 07 and continued for about 4 months. The pin can be purchased online for around \$4.00. [Source: RSO Handbook Section 1-7 Feb 08 ++]



VA VET CENTERS UPDATE

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake said that as of February 27, 2008 an expansion by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of its Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to returning combat veterans, is well ahead of schedule. In February 2007, VA announced it would open 23 new centers during the next two years. Fifteen of those centers are already operational, and five others are seeing patients in temporary facilities while finalizing their leases. The other three facilities will begin operations later this year.

When all are online VA will reach a record 232 Vet Centers by the end of the year. Peake said, "To support this expansion and augment the staff at 61 existing Vet Centers, this year we are channeling a 44% increase in funding to the Readjustment Counseling Service, which operates the Vet Centers -- nearly \$50 million more than last year's budget." Vet Centers provide counseling on employment, plus services on family issues, education and outreach, to combat veterans and their families. Vet Centers are staffed by small teams of professional counselors, outreach specialists and other specialists, many of them combat veterans as well.

VA's Vet Centers have hired 100 combat veterans back from Iraq and Afghanistan as outreach specialists, often placing them near military processing stations, to brief servicemen and women leaving the military about VA benefits. These outreach specialists meet with returning veterans, work through family assistance centers and visit military installations to carry the message that VA will be there for

the troops and family members after discharge.

The community-based Vet Centers are a key component of VA's mental health program, providing veterans with mental health screening and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) counseling, along with help for family members dealing with bereavement and loved ones with PTSD. The 15 new Vet Centers that are open in permanent locations are in Binghamton NY; Middletown NY; Watertown NY; Hyannis CT; DuBois PA; Gainesville FL; Melbourne FL; Macon GA; Manhattan KS; Escanaba MI; Saginaw MI; Grand Junction CO; Baton Rouge LA; Killeen TX; and Las Cruces NM. Five additional Vet Centers are providing services in temporary space while they finalize their leases: They are in Toledo OH; Ft. Myers FL; Montgomery AL; Everett WA; and Modesto CA. The final three locations where Vet Centers will open for clients later this year are in Berlin NH, Nassau County NY, and Fayetteville AR. [Source: VA News release 27 Feb 08 ++]



LOCAL VET CENTER INFORMATION

We are pleased to note that veterans readjustment counseling is available in the Lexington County area. David Cox of the **Columbia Vet Center** is meeting with veterans for individual, marital or group counseling. These sessions address issues related to helping veterans and their families readjust to civilian life, including issues of substance abuse. Mr. Cox schedules appointments in Lexington on **Mondays** and **Tuesdays** for those veterans who have served in a combat zone.

Mr. Cox has also begun monthly meetings designed to help wives of Vietnam veterans deal with issues relating to their time of service as well. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for **Monday April 14th at noon**, and will be held in the auditorium of our office building.

You may schedule appointments with David Cox by calling **803-765-9944**.

INFORMATION ON REFILLING PRESCRIPTIONS WITH THE VA

Refilling over the phone

For Touch Phones dial 1-800-293-8262. (24 hours a day, 365 days a year.) Please have your social security number and prescription numbers (RX#) ready. Press the pound key (#) after your entries.

Refilling through the Mail

If you want to refill your prescription through the mail, you need to sign the refill slip that comes with each prescription. Then you need to mail the refill slip in.

Mail your refill slip to:

In Columbia:

VA Dorn Pharmacy (119)

6437 Garners Ferry Road

Columbia, SC 29209-1639

Dropping of refill slips 'in person' at the VA

You do not need to wait in line to drop off your refill slips! Sign your refill slips. Bring your signed refill slips to the VA Pharmacy which is located on the 1st floor of the VA Medical Center.

Refilling online through the Internet – new!

You can refill your prescriptions from the privacy of your home! You need a computer and the Internet. If you wish to use the new online refill system go to:

[http://www.myhealth .va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

If you are a first time user you will need to click-on Register Now to create:

User ID

Password

Password Hint (if you forget your password)

You will be asked to register for My HealtheVet. You can check the status of your re-fills and view and track your prescription history online. You must have the current prescription number (or RX #) since the names of medications are not listed. You can call the pharmacy if you don't have the RX #.

Facts about the Refill System

All medication refills are handled through the mail.

The only exception is when there is an emergency need. The VA is not set for refilling a large number of prescriptions for pick-up. The mail system allows more time for the Pharmacy to take care of veterans with urgent prescription needs.

Where are prescriptions mailed from?

Refills are **not** mailed from the Columbia or VA Pharmacy. Refills are mailed from the CMOP. :“CMOP” stands for “Central Mail-Out Pharmacy.” CMOP is not located at the medical center. It may take up to 2 weeks to receive your medication in the mail. So you should plan for that.

Check your supply of medication often. Be sure to get your medication refilled before you run out. Mail your refill slips in at least 2 weeks before you need your medication.

Is my refill sent to me automatically?

Refills are mailed **ONLY** when you or your provider requests them. They are not sent "automatically" by the pharmacy.

What if I lose my Prescription number?

If this happens, call the Pharmacy. They will give you your prescription number. Also, they can transfer you to the refill telephone number.

What if my prescription has expired or I have no more refills?

Most prescriptions are good for 1 year from the date the doctor writes it. Some prescriptions are only good until all the refills are used. It depends on which occurs first. Your prescription may expire. You may run out of refills. If so, you need to contact your provider or clinic. They will need to reorder the prescription. The Pharmacy can **not** give you extra medication. Your doctor must prescribe it. You can best notify your doctor by calling the Telephone Advice Program at 1-888-651-2683 or locally at (803)-647-5829.

When should I pick up my medication at the Pharmacy?

If you have a new prescription, it maybe filled for pick-up at the Pharmacy. Your doctor or provider may make a change in your prescription. If so, it may be filled for pick-up at the Pharmacy.

What if you are at the VA: for a scheduled appointment? Is it OK to pick up a refill just because you are here?

This may be convenient for you but the V A is not set up for refilling a larger number of prescriptions for pick-up. Please be courteous to your fellow veteran by arranging for refills by mail. Also, not all medications are stocked at the local pharmacy. The most common medications and medications that may be needed urgently are stocked but many others are only available via mail-out. Please plan ahead.

What if my Doctor changes the way I take a medication?

Your doctor or provider may tell you to change the way you are taking your medication. That is, the dose may be increased or decreased. Or the number of times you take the medication each day may be increased or decreased.

If you have been told to change the way you take your medication, your provider must enter a new prescription in the computer. This will make sure your prescription gets filled on time with the correct amount of days supply and directions.

What are the papers I receive with my prescription medication?

An education sheet and refill slip for your medication is sent to you. The education sheet helps you learn more about your medication. It tells you about possible side effects you may have. Your refill slip tells you how many days your refilled medication should last. Use your refill slip to refill your medication. You can refill medication over the phone, through the mail, by dropping it off in person at the VA, or online using the Internet.

BLUE STAR MOTHERS SEND GIRL SCOUT COOKIES TO THE TROOPS

The Midlands Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers prepared and mailed more than 6600 boxes of girl scout cookies to our troops currently deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The shipment cost approximately \$4700 in postage.

The group appeared on Live with Lucas on Friday, March 21st. Here is an observation from his blog regarding this appearance.

"We paid a visit to VFW Post 8738 in Lexington. Here we learned about the latest Midland Blue Star Mothers project. The women were busy late last night packing boxes full of Girl Scout cookies; over six thousand boxes to be exact. Inside those boxes the mother of soldiers sent notes of encouragement with the help from Operation Thank You."



MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of the Wives of Vietnam Veterans is scheduled for Monday, April 14th, 2008 at noon.

The meetings are hosted by David Cox of the Columbia Vet Center and are open to wives / significant others of Vietnam veterans. The meeting location is 605 West Main St., Lexington, and is held in the auditorium.

Call 785-8400 for more information.



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

APRIL OUTREACH PROGRAM

Apr. 1st	9-12	Batesburg/Leesville
Apr. 8th	9-12	Chapin
Apr. 15th	9-12	Swansea
Apr. 22nd	9-12	West Columbia

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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