



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

December 2011

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Director's Corner

The Veteran's Parade in Lexington last month was a great event! It was good to see so many people come out and the weather was spectacular! My grandson rode with me in a 1929 Model A Ford driven by a dear Veteran friend, Leo Craps. It was great to see the coverage by local television stations and the parade was the feature story for Channel 57's 10:00 news that night.

I hope your Thanksgiving was a great time with family and friends and you probably ate too much like I did. My aunt is visiting from California and came by the office recently to see how I was doing. It is always great to see people that helped shape your life and she is one of those. Our office was invited to a great Thanksgiving feast by the Lexington County Combat Veteran's group along with their wives. It was a fantastic luncheon and we thank them for including us.

I was honored to be the guest speaker at Pineview Elementary School in West Columbia for their Veteran's Day event. I am a Lexington County School District #2 graduate so it was very special to speak in my old school district. I even ran into a dear friend after the event and we were able to catch up with each other and talk about our children and grandchildren. I also attended my beloved Airport High School's Veteran's event and the children put on an amazing ceremony. Gilbert Middle School had one of the best patriotic ceremonies I think I have ever seen and I was honored to visit a dear high school friend and her class before the ceremony. I was at the dedication of the Gilbert-Summit Veteran's Monument on Veteran's Day along with US Rep. Joe Wilson. This monument is awesome and if you want to visit you can find it beside the Gilbert Senior Center next to the Gilbert Post Office.

As we prepare for Christmas this month and all the things that go with it, let us remember the reason for the season. Many people tell me it is politically correct to say "Seasons Greetings" or "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." I say to them, when did politics get into Christmas?

Whatever phrase you use I wish for you and your family the happiest time ever. As we enter 2012 I wish all of you a Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you as I travel throughout this great county.

It is an honor to serve Lexington County!

**AT-A-GLANCE
DECEMBER**

-
- Friday, December 2nd**
12-2pm Van Drivers Luncheon
- Tuesday, December 6th**
9 - 12 noon Batesburg/Leesville Outreach
- Wednesday, December 7th**
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- Saturday, December 10th**
12 noon Wreaths Across America
@ Ft. Jackson Cemetery
- Tuesday, December 13th**
9-12 noon Chapin Outreach
- Tuesday, December 20th**
Hanukkah begins at sundown
- Wednesday, December 21st**
Winter Begins
- Friday, December 23rd**
County Offices Closed
- Sunday, December 25th**
Christmas Day
- Monday, December 26th**
County Offices Closed (no van scheduled)
Kwanzaa begins
- Tuesday, December 27th**
County Offices Closed

JANUARY 2012

-
- Sunday, January 1st**
New Years Day—2012
- Monday, January 2nd**
County Offices Closed (no van scheduled)
- Monday, January 9th**
7pm Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting



Just a Reminder...

The DAV van will not run on Monday, December 26th due to holiday closings.



YOUR VA OFFICE STAFF

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**DECEMBER DATES FOR
OUTREACH PROGRAM**

- Dec. 6th: 9-12 Batesburg-Leesville
Police Depart
- Dec. 13th: 9-12 Chapin Town Hall

*Please call the office
to schedule an appointment.*

**TOLL-FREE
TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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

We are now emailing copies of the newsletter. Please contact the office to be added to the newsletter email list.

Pension and Aid & Attendance Benefits

What is VA Pension for Veterans?

Pension is a benefit paid to **wartime Veterans** who have **limited or no income**, and who are **age 65 or older**, or, **if under 65, who are permanently and totally disabled**. Veterans who are more seriously disabled may qualify for **Aid and Attendance** or **Housebound** benefits. These are benefits that are paid in addition to the basic pension rate.



Who is eligible?

Generally, you may be eligible if: you were discharged from service under conditions other than dishonorable, **AND** you served at least 90 days of active military service 1 day of which was during a war time period. **If you entered active duty after September 7, 1980, generally you must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which called or ordered to active duty** (There are exceptions to this rule), **AND** your countable family income is below a yearly limit set by law (**The yearly limit on income is set by Congress**), **AND** you are age 65 or older, **OR**, you are permanently and totally disabled, not due to your own willful misconduct.

As you can see, there are a number of criteria that may affect your eligibility to pension benefits. If you are unsure if you meet all criteria, we encourage you to go ahead and file an application, particularly if your *countable income* appears to be near the maximum. VA will determine if you are eligible and notify you. If you do not initially qualify, you may reapply if you have un-reimbursed medical expenses during the twelve month period after VA receives your claim that bring your countable income below the yearly income limit. (These are expenses you have paid for medical services or products for which you will not be reimbursed by Medicare or private medical insurance.)

What is countable income for Veterans pension eligibility purposes?

This includes income received by the Veteran and his or her dependents, if any, from most sources. It includes earnings, disability and retirement payments, interest and dividends, and net income from farming or business. There is a presumption that all of a child's income is available to or for the Veteran. VA may grant an exception in hardship cases.

What about Net Worth?

Net worth means the net value of the assets of the Veteran and his or her dependents. It includes such assets as bank accounts, stocks, bonds, mutual funds and any property other than the Veteran's residence and a reasonable lot area. There is no set limit on how much net worth a Veteran and his dependents can have, but net worth cannot be excessive. The decision as to whether a claimant's net worth is excessive depends on the facts of each individual case. All net worth should be reported and VA will determine if a claimant's assets are sufficiently large that the claimant could live off these assets for a reasonable period of time. VA's needs-based programs are not intended to protect substantial assets or build up an estate for the benefit of heirs.



Are there any exclusions to income or deductions that may be made to reduce countable income?

Yes, there are exclusions. The following are examples of what may be excluded:

1. Public assistance such as Supplemental Security Income is not considered income.
2. Many other specific sources of income are not considered income, however, all income should be reported. VA will exclude any income that the law allows.
3. A portion of unreimbursed medical expenses paid by the claimant after VA receives the claimant's pension claim may be deducted. (These are expense you have paid for medical services or products for which you will not be reimbursed by Medicare or private medical insurance.)
4. Certain other expenses, such as a Veteran's education expenses, and in some cases, a portion of the educational expenses of a child over 18 are deductible.

Continued on next page

Aid & Attendance Benefits continued...

How Does VA calculate your pension?

Your annual pension is calculated by first totaling all your countable income. Then any deductions are subtracted from that total. The remaining countable income is deducted from the appropriate annual pension limit which is determined by the number of your dependents, if any, and whether or not you are entitled to housebound or aid and attendance benefits. This amount is then divided by 12 and rounded down to the nearest dollar. This gives you the amount of your monthly payment.

What are Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefits?

Aid and Attendance (A&A) is a benefit paid in **addition** to monthly pension. This benefit may not be paid without eligibility to pension. A Veteran may be eligible for A&A when:

1. The Veteran requires the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting himself/herself from the hazards of his/her daily environment, **OR**,
2. The Veteran is bedridden, in that his/her disability or disabilities requires that he/she remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment, **OR**,
3. The Veteran is a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity, **OR**,
4. The Veteran is blind, or so nearly blind as to have corrected visual acuity of 5/200 or less, in both eyes, or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less.



Housebound is paid in addition to monthly pension. Like A&A, Housebound benefits may not be paid without eligibility to pension. A Veteran may be eligible for Housebound benefits when:

1. The Veteran has a single permanent disability evaluated as 100-percent disabling **AND**, due to such disability, he/she is permanently and substantially confined to his/her immediate premises, **OR**,
2. The Veteran has a single permanent disability evaluated as 100-percent disabling **AND**, another disability, or disabilities, evaluated as 60 percent or more disabling.

A Veteran cannot receive both Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefits at the same time.

Can a Veteran receive Service Connected Benefits and Aid and Attendance?

Yes, a Veteran who is determined by the VA to be in need of the regular aid and attendance of another person, or a Veteran who is permanently housebound, may be entitled to additional disability compensation or pension payments. A Veteran evaluated at 30 percent or more disabled is entitled to receive a small additional payment for a spouse who is in need of the aid and attendance of another person.



Can a Veteran's parent(s) also receive Aid and Attendance?

Yes, if they are currently in receipt of Parents' DIC benefits there is a small additional benefit. The VA provides an income-based monthly benefit to the surviving parent(s) of a service member or Veteran whose death was service-related.

Continued on next page

Aid & Attendance Benefits continued...

How to Apply for Aid and Attendance and Housebound:

You may apply for Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits by writing to the **VA regional office having jurisdiction** of the claim. That would be the office where you filed a claim for pension benefits. If the regional office of jurisdiction is not known, you may file the request with any **VA regional office**.

You should **include copies of any evidence**, preferably a report from an attending physician validating the need for Aid and Attendance or Housebound type care. The report should be in sufficient detail to determine whether there is disease or injury producing physical or mental impairment, loss of coordination, or conditions affecting the ability to dress and undress, to feed oneself, to attend to sanitary needs, and to keep oneself ordinarily clean and presentable. **In addition**, it is necessary to determine whether the claimant is confined to the home or immediate premises.

Whether the claim is for Aid and Attendance or Housebound, the **report should indicate how well the individual gets around**, where the individual goes, and what he or she is able to do during a typical day.



If I am already receiving monthly payments or a service-connected disability can I get a VA pension too?

You cannot receive a VA non-service connected pension and service-connected compensation at the same time. However, if you apply for pension and are awarded payments, VA will pay you whichever benefit is the greater amount

How do I apply for Veterans non-service connected pension?



You can apply on line at the following VA web site: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>. You may download and fill out **VA Form 21-526, Veteran's Application for Compensation and/or Pension**. Make sure you download all parts of the application as well as the instructions for filling out the forms. If available, attach **copies** of dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates). You must send the completed application and any copies of other documents to the VA regional office that serves your area of residence. You may also contact a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) from a Veterans Service Organization. Please call the toll free number, 1-800-827-1000, for the location of the nearest VSO nearest you. You may also look to the VA web site for the nationally recognized Veterans Service Organizations.

If you have any questions, please call our office number, or you may contact VA electronically via the Internet at <https://iris.va.gov>.



Mr. Roland Morgan, an ex-drill instructor with the Air Force, was the featured speaker on Veteran's Day at South Lake Village here in Lexington. Mr. Morgan is also retired from Delta Airlines.

2011 Lexington County Veterans Day Parade

The 9th annual Lexington County Veterans Day Parade was a huge success. This year we had 40 entries, with entries ranging from marching bands, dignitaries, area service organizations to motorcycles. The Veterans Affairs Office took over most of the planning and execution of the parade when the parade coordinator, Sharon Willis was sidelined due to illness, three weeks before the parade. Many thanks go out to everyone that helped and pulled together to make this a great success.

We are already in the planning stages for next year's parade. This will be the 10th year and it is scheduled for Sunday, November 4th, 2012, so mark your calendars. Anyone wanting to participate in next year's parade we will be glad to email, fax or mail an application to you. Contact the office at 803-785-8400 for more details.

Below are pictures from the parade.



Grand Marshal, Gary Baker and family



Senator, Jake Knotts



VFW Post 8738



Lexington County Council Float with Lexington County Veterans riding along



American Legion Post 7



Lexington County Vietnam Combat Veterans



Ladies Auxiliary Military Order of the Purple Heart

We Need Your Help...

We need your help Veteran Service Organizations in Lexington County! Below is a list of the Veteran Service Organizations in Lexington County that we are aware of. Also, we have included meeting days, times and locations. Please help us in verifying the information we have and including any we don't have. If you know of any Veteran organization that is not on our list, please give us a call or email with the information and we will update the list.

The new County Veteran's Service Officer is making his way throughout the county to visit each one of these and introduce himself and bring copies of our revamped newsletter. We also would like to include this information on our bulletin board in the lobby and on our web page at the county website. We want to help recruit for your organization and promote any events you have so please help us help you.

VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS IN LEXINGTON COUNTY

AMERICAN LEGION

Post #7-Lexington: Meets the first Saturday of the month (except before a holiday) at 1900.

Address is: American Legion Road, Lexington.

Post #61-Batesburg Leesville: Meets the third Tuesday of the month at 2000.

Address is: South Hendrix Street, Leesville.

Post #79-West Columbia: Meets the first Monday of the month at 1930.

Address is:

Post #90-South Congaree: Meets the first Thursday of the month at 1900.

Address is: Hwy. 302 near South Congaree.

Post #130-Cayce: Meets the third Thursday of the month at 1830.

Address is: Naples Avenue, Cayce.

Post #142-Gilbert: Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 1900.

Address is: Hwy. #1 Gilbert.

Post #156-Sandy Run: Meets the fourth Monday of the month.

Address is: Pine Plain Road outside of Gaston, just off Old Sandy Run Road.

Post #174-Irmo: Meets the second Friday of the month at 1900.

Address is:

Post #193-Chapin: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 1900.

Address is: 102 Lexington Ave., Chapin.

Post #217-Lexington: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 1930.

Address is:



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Chapter #4-West Columbia: Meets the second Monday of the month at 1900.

Address is: 511 Violet Street, West Columbia.

Chapter #13-West Columbia: Meets the second Saturday of the month at 1300.

Address is: 511 Violet Street, West Columbia.

Chapter #20-West Columbia: Meets the third Saturday of the month at 1100.

Address is: 511 Violet Street, West Columbia.

Chapter #28-West Columbia: Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 1800.

Address is: 511 Violet Street, West Columbia.

Chapter #51-Leesville: Meets the third Thursday of the month at 1900.

Address is: South Hendrix Street, Leesville.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Post #6740-Lake Murray: Meets the of the month at

Address is: 950 Rock N Creek Road, Leesville.

Post #8738-Lexington: Meets the first Tuesday of the month at 1900.

Address is: 424 Cedarcrest Drive, Lexington.

Post #9037-Pelion: Meets the of the month at

Address is: Old Charleston Road, Pelion.

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Detachment #1141-West Columbia: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 1800 for chow, 1900 for meeting.

Address is: 511 Violet Street, West Columbia.

BLUE STAR MOTHERS

Midlands Chapter-Lexington: Meets the third Thursday of the month at 1800.

Address is: 424 Cedarcrest Drive, Lexington.

AMVETS

Post #2-West Columbia: Meets the of the month at

Address is: 1778 D Avenue, West Columbia.



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FEATURED MEDAL: *THE PURPLE HEART*



The **Purple Heart** is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those who have been wounded or killed while serving on or after April 5, 1917 with the U.S. military. The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is located in New Windsor, New York. With its forerunner, the Badge of Military Merit, which took the form of a heart made of purple cloth, the Purple Heart is the oldest award that is still given to members of the U.S. military, the only earlier award being the obsolete Fidelity Medallion. The original Purple Heart, designated as the Badge of Military Merit, was established by George Washington—then the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army—by order from his Newburgh, New York headquarters on August 7, 1782. The Badge of Military Merit was only awarded to three Revolutionary War soldiers and from then on as its legend grew, so did its appearance. Although never abolished, the award of the badge was not proposed again officially until after World War I.

On January 7, 1931, General Douglas MacArthur, confidentially reopened work on a new design, involving the Washington Commission of Fine Arts. Elizabeth Will, an Army heraldic specialist in the Office of the Quartermaster General, was named to redesign the newly revived medal, which became known as the Purple Heart. By Executive Order of the President of the United States, the Purple Heart was revived on the 200th Anniversary of George Washington's birth, out of respect to his memory and military achievements, by War Department General Orders No. 3, dated February 22, 1932. The Purple Heart award is a heart-shaped medal within a gold border, 1 ³/₈ inches (35 mm) wide, containing a profile of General George Washington. Above the heart appears a shield of the coat of arms of George Washington (a white shield with two red bars and three red stars in chief) between sprays of green leaves. The reverse consists of a raised bronze heart with the words FOR MILITARY MERIT below the coat of arms and leaves. The ribbon is 1 and ³/₈ inches wide and consists of the following stripes: ¹/₈ inch white ; 1 ¹/₈ inches purple ; and ¹/₈ inch white . As with other combat medals, multiple awards are denoted by award stars for the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard, or oak leaf clusters for the Army and Air Force.

The criteria were announced in a War Department circular dated February 22, 1932 and authorized award to soldiers, upon their request, who had been awarded the Meritorious Service Citation Certificate, Army Wound Ribbon, or were authorized to wear Wound Chevrons subsequent to April 5, 1917, the day before the United States entered World War I. The first Purple Heart was awarded to MacArthur. During the early period of American involvement in World War II (December 7, 1941 – September 22, 1943), the Purple Heart was awarded both for wounds received in action against the enemy and for meritorious performance of duty. With the establishment of the Legion of Merit, the practice of awarding the Purple Heart for meritorious service was discontinued. On December 3, 1942, the decoration was extended to be applicable to all services and required that regulations of the Services be uniform in application as far as practicable. It was also authorized the award only for wounds received. On April 25, 1962, it was changed to include provisions for posthumous award of the Purple Heart. On February 23, 1984, it was changed again to authorize award of the Purple Heart as a result of terrorist attacks or while serving as part of a peacekeeping force subsequent to March 28, 1973.

During World War II, nearly 500,000 Purple Heart medals were manufactured in anticipation of the estimated casualties resulting from the planned Allied invasion of Japan. To the present date, total combined American military casualties of the sixty-five years following the end of World War II — including the Korean and Vietnam Wars — have not exceeded that number. In 2003, there were still 120,000 of these Purple Heart medals in stock. There are so many in surplus that combat units in Iraq and Afghanistan are able to keep Purple Hearts on-hand for immediate award to wounded soldiers in the field.

The office staff wishes everyone a
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Ed, Jennifer and Janet





The above picture was taken on Veterans Day at the Gilbert-Summit Veterans Monument. From left to right are US Congressman Joe Wilson, Summit Mayor, Rosalyn Reeder, Lexington County Veterans Service Officer, Ed Lundeen and Mr. Fred Taylor.

Area Service Organizations - Continued from page 7

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

Chapter #402-Columbia: Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 1900.
Address is: 200 Pickens Street, Columbia.

NAVY SEABEES

SCX #2-West Columbia: Meets the second Monday of the month at 1900.
Address is: 179 Lynn Street, West Columbia.

PEARL HARBOR SURVIVOR ASSOCIATION

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Chapter #303, Sandlappers-Columbia: Meets the
Address is:

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

VA Regional Office-Columbia is the nearest chapter.
Address is: 6439 Garner's Ferry Road, Columbia.

CHINA-BURMA-INDIA VETERANS ASSOCIATION

AMERICAN EX PRISONERS OF WAR

Palmetto Chapter-Columbia: Meets the
Address is:



Looking for Volunteer Van Drivers

The van runs on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays, taking Veterans to appointments at DORN VAMC for their scheduled appointments between 9am and 1pm. If you can volunteer to drive the DAV van at least 1 day a month, contact the office at 803-785-8400.



Coming in the Next Issue...

Death and burial benefits.