



# LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

*"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"*

**July/August 2015**



**Lexington, SC.**

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## **TOLL-FREE**

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## At A Glance Calendar July/August

<p>Weekly on Tuesdays in July</p> <p>Friday, July 3rd</p> <p>Saturday, July 4th</p> <p>Friday, July 10th</p> <p>Tuesday, July 28th</p> <p>Weekly on Tuesdays in August</p> <p>Thursday, August 6th</p> <p>Friday, August 7th</p> <p>Friday, August 14th</p> <p>Monday, August 24th</p> <p>Tuesday, August 25th</p>	<p>Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting @ 12 noon</p> <p>County Offices Closed</p> <p>Independence Day</p> <p>Batesburg/Leesville Outreach</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting @ 12 noon</p> <p>Gaston Outreach</p> <p>Chapin Outreach</p> <p>Batesburg/Leesville Outreach</p> <p>Alternate Health Fair @ Ft. Jackson 9am to 1pm</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p>
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<p>Purple—Holidays/Special Days</p> <p>Blue—Outreach dates</p> <p>Red—County Offices Closed, No van scheduled and Special Notices</p> <p>Black—Director's appearances in the County</p>	<p>Brown—County Council Meetings</p> <p>Pink—Special Events throughout the County</p> <p>Orange—Director Out of Office</p> <p>Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings</p>
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### JUST A REMINDER...

**THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON FRIDAY, JULY 3RD.**



### From the Director...

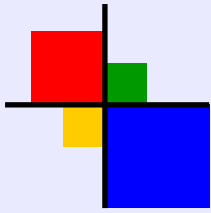
We are continuing to work on the scanning of all paper files in order to be more efficient in helping our Veterans and their survivors. This is being done in an effort to keep pace with the VA due to most claims being done by computer, rather than by hand. This effort has reduced the amount of time it takes the VA to complete a claim for benefits.

I attended the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers in Appleton, Wisconsin last month. This conference was one week in length and well attended by over 500 other County VA Officers throughout the Nation. It was great to network and get incredible training from seasoned VA Officers and VA leadership. We were even briefed by the leadership of the VA medical system who assured us Veterans deserve and will get quality health care.

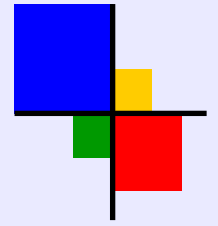
As the country pauses for Independence Day this month, let us all remember the sacrifices of those brave Patriots who fought for America's independence in the 1700's. Too often we get caught up in the pageantry of parades, fireworks, barbecues and time at the beach. These are all great and are what America is all about, but all these events were made possible because of those Patriots and their fight with the British. Freedom today is made possible by those who serve to protect all of us, our active duty military that serve all over the globe. Freedom is also made possible by those who paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. Let us always remember them.

I hope you have a wonderful and safe summer. Please be patient with our office as all of us take vacation time during the summer months so there will be limited staff during this time. Rest assured, we are here to ensure you get the benefit you are entitled to and honored to help you.

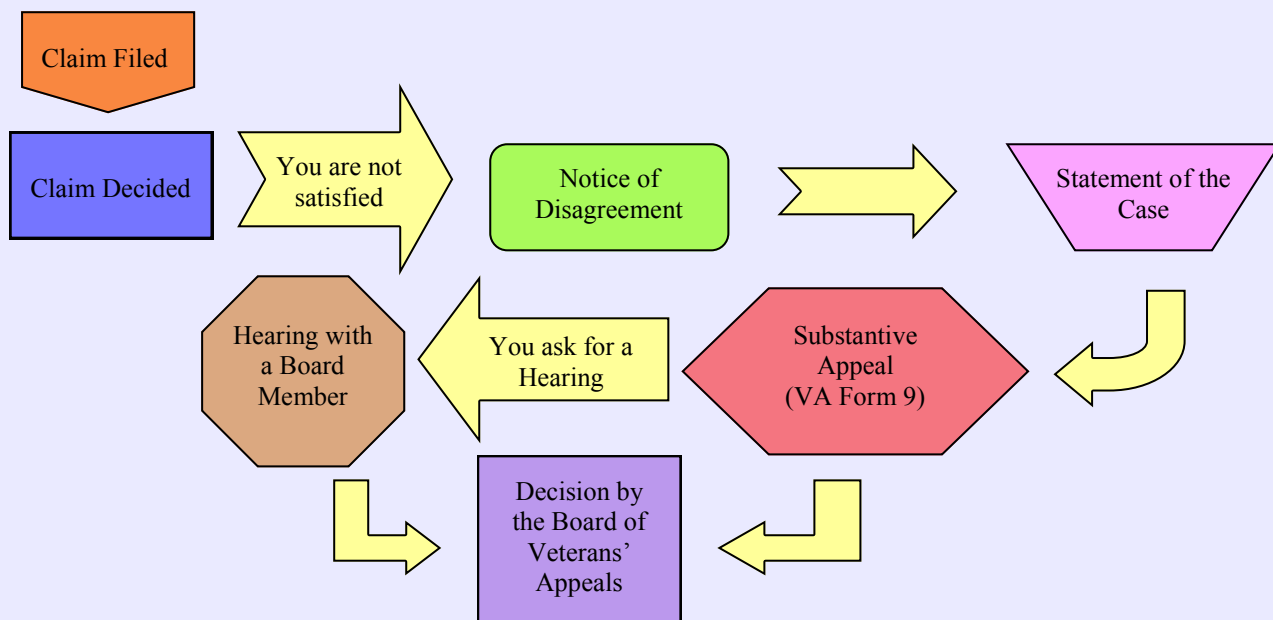
*It is an honor to serve Lexington County!*



# VA Appeals Process



An appeal is a request for the Board of Veterans' Appeals to review a local VA office decision on your claim. You appeal because you are not satisfied with the decision by the local VA regional office. The two most common reasons people appeal are: (1) the VA denied benefits for a disability you believe began in service; or (2) you believe that your disability is more severe than the VA rated it. You can appeal for any reason. The Board of Veterans' Appeals (also known as the Board or BVA) is a part of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is located in Washington, D.C. Members of the Board review appeals for VA benefits and make decisions on those appeals. Below is a chart of how the appeals process works. An explanation of each step will follow.



**Claim Filed** - To apply for benefits, you file a claim at your local VA regional or county office. This is when you ask for the benefit you want. There is at least one VA regional office in each state, Puerto Rico, and Manila. You can also file your claim on the internet at [www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov). You can also ask for help with your claim. Help is available from Veterans Service Organizations (VSO), such as The American Legion, VFW, DAV, etc. and from your local county office.

**Claim Decided** - The local VA regional office makes a decision on your claim and sends the decision letter to you. The local VA regional office's decision will allow or deny your claim. If you are not satisfied with the decision, you can then appeal.



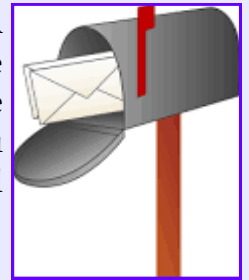
Continued on page 4

## VA Appeals process continued from page 3



**Notice of Disagreement** - If you disagree with the rating decision, you can write a statement to your local VA regional office saying that you disagree and that you want to appeal that decision. This statement is called a Notice of Disagreement (NOD). The NOD is completed on VA Form 21-0958. The NOD is sent to your local VA regional office and must be submitted within one year of the date your local VA regional office mailed you its original decision. After you send in your NOD, you may request that your file be reviewed by a Decision Review Officer (DRO) from your local VA regional office. This is called the non-traditional appeal process. DRO's offer a second review of your entire file and can also hold a personal hearing on your claim. These hearings are held at your local VA regional office. The DRO will evaluate the evidence you present and make a decision on your appeal without waiting to send the case to the BVA. If you are not satisfied with the DRO's decision, you will be sent a Statement of the Case and you continue through the traditional appeal process.

**Statement of the Case** - With the traditional appeal process, after the local VA regional office gets your NOD, it will create a Statement of the Case (SOC). The SOC is a detailed explanation of the evidence, laws, and regulations used by the local VA regional office in deciding your claim. The SOC will be mailed to you along with a VA Form 9, Substantive Appeal Form by your local VA regional office.



**Substantive Appeal (VA Form 9)** - When you get the SOC from your local VA regional office, a VA Form 9 will be included. The VA Form 9 is also available through the internet at [www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov). A VA Form 9 is the last step in the appeal process. To finish the process you must fill out the VA Form 9 and send it back to your local VA regional office. When you fill out your VA Form 9 you should state the benefit you want, any mistakes you find in the SOC, and if you want a personal hearing. Your local VA regional office must get your VA Form 9 within 60 days of the date that they mailed you your SOC or within one year of the date that they mailed you the original decision denying your claim, whichever is later.

**REMEMBER THE  
TIME LIMIT FOR  
FILING VA FORM 9!**

**Personal Hearings** - You can request a personal hearing in connection with your appeal. A personal hearing is a meeting between you, your representative (if you have one), and the person from the VA who will decide your case. There are two types of personal hearings: (1) a hearing with someone from your local VA regional office (this is the DRO hearing); or (2) a hearing with a member of the Board of Veterans' Appeals. You can request a personal hearing with a local VA office at any time by sending a written request to your local VA regional office. You can request a hearing with a member of the Board of Veterans' Appeals when you fill out your VA Form 9. If you want a personal hearing with a member of the Board, you can choose from several different types. You can elect a hearing in Washington, D.C., where the Board of Veterans Appeals is located; a videoconference hearing with you at your local VA regional office and the Board member in Washington, D.C.; or a hearing at your local VA regional office with the Board Member present. Because of scheduling delays, a videoconference hearing is the quickest way to get a hearing with a Board Member.



Continued on page 5

## VA Appeals process continued from page 4



Personal hearings with a Board Member are informal. They are not like the courtroom hearings you see on TV or in trials. The Board Members will identify themselves and will make sure you agree about what claims are on appeal. The Board Member will tell you about what happens during the hearing and you will be asked to take an oath to tell the truth. You will be given a chance to make sure any information you think is important is heard

by the Board Member. If you have a representative, the representative will ask you questions to help explain your claim. If not, the Board Member will ask you to tell them about your claim. The Board Member may or may not ask questions during the hearing and you can add evidence to your claim during this time. This evidence will be added to your file and reviewed by the Board Member when a decision is made on your claim. The Board Member ***does not*** make a decision on your claim at the hearing. A transcript of the hearing will be made and sent to the Board of Veterans' Appeals with your file. When the Board Member gets all this information, they will review it and make a decision.



**Decision by the Board of Veterans' Appeals** - After reviewing the evidence in your file, the Board Member will make a decision on your appeal. The Board will send you a copy of the decision. The



decision will allow, deny or remand your claim. If your claim is allowed or denied, the Board's decision is final. However a remand is not a final decision.

Sometimes the Board finds that it does not have enough information about your claim to make a decision. When this happens the Board will either try to get more information itself or send your claim back to the local VA regional office so they can try and get the needed information. When your claim is sent back to the local VA regional office, it is call a remand. If your claim is denied by the Board, you can do one of four things: (1) go back to your local VA regional office and try to reopen your claim with new and material evidence, (2) file a motion asking the Board to reconsider your claim or review your case again because there was a clear and unmistakable error (CUE) in the Board's decision,; (3) file an appeal with the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims; or (4) do nothing.

### **Helpful Hints for the VA Appeal Process**

1 - Have a representative help you with your claim and appeal. A representative can answer questions and can help make the process move faster. Representatives from Veterans Service Organization have offices in most local VA regional offices or use your local county VA office.



2 - Give as much detail as possible about evidence that you want the VA to get before they make a decision on your claim. For example, full names, addresses, and dates are very important.



3 - Make sure you let your local VA regional office know if you move to a new address while your appeal is being decided.

4 - Put your claim number/social security number on all letters or other evidence you send to the VA.

5 - Make sure you keep a copy of any evidence you give to the VA for your records.

**IMPORTANT**  
**DAV VAN**  
**INFORMATION**



**The van runs on certain Mondays Wednesdays & Thursdays taking Veterans to appointments at**

**DORN VAMC for their scheduled appointments between 9am and 1pm. Currently, we have only four van drivers and are running the van on a limited schedule listed below.**

**1st Monday of the month  
 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of the month  
 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month**

**If you need to schedule a ride on the DAV van, please call the office for other dates and space availability.**

**If you can volunteer to drive the DAV van at least one day a month, contact the office at 803-785-8400.**



**County Council Needs You!**

Veterans are needed to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at County Council meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. County Council meetings start at 4:30pm, so you would need to be present around 4:15pm. Contact the office at 803-785-8400 if you are interested.



***OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES***



**Batesburg/Leesville Outreach - 2nd Friday of the month at the Batesburg/Leesville Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.**

**Chapin Outreach – 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.**



**Gaston/Swansea Outreach – 1st Thursday of the month at the Gaston Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.**

***There will be no Gaston or Chapin outreach for July.***

***Appointments are strongly encouraged. Call the office at 803-785-8400 to schedule a time.***

**Veterans Crisis Line**

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is also available.





## *The History of the Berlin Wall*

As World War II came to an end in 1945, a pair of Allied peace conferences at Yalta and Potsdam determined the fate of Germany's territories. They split the defeated nation into four "allied occupation zones": The eastern part of the country went to the Soviet Union, while the western part went to the United States, Great Britain and (eventually) France.

Even though Berlin was located entirely within the Soviet part of the country (it sat about 100 miles from the border between the eastern and western occupation zones), the Yalta and Potsdam agreements split the city into similar sectors. The Soviets took the eastern half, while the other Allies took the western. This four-way occupation of Berlin began in June 1945.

The existence of West Berlin, a conspicuously capitalist city deep within communist East Germany, "stuck like a bone in the Soviet throat," as Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev put it. The Russians began maneuvering to drive the United States, Britain and France out of the city for good. In 1948, a Soviet blockade of West Berlin aimed to starve the western Allies out of the city. Instead of retreating, however, the United States and its allies supplied their sectors of the city from the air. This effort, known as the Berlin Airlift, lasted for more than a year and delivered more than 2.3 million tons of food, fuel and other goods to West Berlin. The Soviets called off the blockade in 1949.



After a decade of relative calm, tensions flared again in 1958. For the next three years, the Soviets—emboldened by the successful launch of the Sputnik satellite the year before and embarrassed by the seemingly endless flow of refugees from east to west (nearly 3 million since the end of the blockade, many of them young skilled workers such as doctors, teachers and engineers)—blustered and made threats, while the Allies resisted. Summits, conferences and other negotiations came and went without resolution. Meanwhile, the flood of refugees continued. In June 1961, some 19,000 people left the GDR through Berlin. The following month, 30,000 fled. In the first 11 days of August, 16,000 East Germans crossed the border into West Berlin, and on August 12 some 2,400 followed—the largest number of defectors ever to leave East Germany in a single day.



That night, Premier Khrushchev gave the East German government permission to stop the flow of emigrants by closing its border for good. On August 13, 1961, the Communist government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) began to build a barbed wire and concrete "Antifascistischer Schutzwall," or "antifascist bulwark," between East and West Berlin. The official purpose of this Berlin Wall was to keep Western "fascists" from entering East Germany and undermining the socialist state, but it primarily served the objective of stemming mass defections from East to West. In just two weeks, the East German army, police force and volunteer construction workers had completed a makeshift barbed wire and concrete block wall—the Berlin Wall—that divided one side of the city from the other.

Before the wall was built, Berliners on both sides of the city could move around fairly freely: They crossed the East-West border to work, to shop, to go to the theater and the movies. Trains and subway lines carried passengers back and forth. After the wall was built, it became impossible to get from East to West Berlin except through one of three checkpoints: at Helmstedt ("Checkpoint Alpha" in American military parlance), at Dreilinden ("Checkpoint Bravo") and in the center of Berlin at Friedrichstrasse ("Checkpoint Charlie"). (Eventually, the GDR built 12 checkpoints along the wall.) At each of the checkpoints, East German soldiers screened diplomats and other officials before they were allowed to enter or leave. Except under special circumstances, travelers from East and West Berlin were rarely allowed across the border.



The construction of the Berlin Wall did stop the flood of refugees from East to West, and it did defuse the crisis over Berlin. (Though he was not happy about it, President Kennedy conceded that "a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.") Over time, East German officials replaced the makeshift wall with one that was sturdier and more difficult to scale. A 12-foot-tall, 4-foot-wide mass of reinforced concrete was topped with an enormous pipe that made climbing over nearly impossible. Behind the wall on the East German side was a so-called "Death Strip": a gauntlet of soft sand (to show footprints), floodlights, vicious dogs, trip-wire machine guns and patrolling soldiers with orders to shoot escapees on sight.

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## VA TRAVEL BENEFITS

If you meet the criteria below, you may be eligible for mileage reimbursement or special transport in association with obtaining VA health care services.

### *You Qualify If:*

1. You have a service connected (SC) rating of 30% or more, or
2. You are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
3. You receive a VA pension, or
4. Your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
5. You are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension examination.

### *You Qualify for Special Mode Transportation (Ambulance, Wheelchair van, etc.) if:*

1. Your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician, and
2. You meet one of the eligibility criteria in 1 through 4 above, and
3. The travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)

General travel is paid at \$0.415 (41.5 cents) per mile.

## Medical Expense Reports

For Veterans and Surviving Spouses not receiving the maximum Non-Service Connected Pension or Survivor Benefits, the VA may be able to pay you at a higher rate if you identify expenses the VA considers allowable. Medical and dental expenses paid by you may be deductible from the income VA counts when determining your benefit entitlement. Any medical or dental expense that you paid for a member of your household (self, spouse, child, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed may also be counted. Expenses may be listed on a **VA Form 21P-8416 – Medical Expense Report (MER)** - and submitted anytime for the previous year. For example: Medical Expense Reports for 2014 may be submitted anytime during the calendar year of 2015.

*You can contact our office now at  
803-785-8400  
to schedule your appointment for us to  
help you complete your 2014 MER.*



***Honor Flight is searching for WWII Veterans.***

Please help find as many WWII Veterans as possible to join the October 14th flight. Time is not on our side as we have lost many of these WWII heroes and those that are still with us are becoming very frail. This may be the last flight of the year, so please help us locate WWII Veterans that have never had an opportunity to see "THEIR" WWII Memorial.

Go to [www.honorflightsc.com](http://www.honorflightsc.com) to print an application.



# ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of July/August...



**July 2, 1964** - President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**July 3, 1863**– The Battle of Gettysburg ends.

**July 4, 1882** - The "Last Great Buffalo Hunt" began on Indian reservation lands in North Dakota as 2,000 Teton Sioux Indians in full hunting regalia killed about 5,000 buffalo.

**July 10, 1943** - The Allied invasion of Italy began with an attack on the island of Sicily.

**July 10, 1991** - Boris Yeltsin became the first popularly elected president in Russia's thousand-year history.

**July 11, 1817** - American philosopher Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts.

**July 16, 1969** - The Apollo 11 Lunar landing mission began from Kennedy Space Center at 9:37 a.m.

**July 22, 1934** - Bank robber John Dillinger was shot and killed by FBI agents. He was the first criminal labeled by the FBI as "Public Enemy No. 1."

**July 27, 1953** - The Korean War ended with the signing of an armistice. The war had lasted just over three years.

**July 30, 1963** - Automotive pioneer Henry Ford was born in Dearborn Township, Michigan.

**August 2, 1776** – Most of the 55 members of the Continental Congress signed the parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence.

**August 4, 1901** - Jazz trumpet player Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**August 5, 1962** - Film star Marilyn Monroe died at age 36 from an overdose of sleeping pills.

**August 9, 1974** - At noon, Richard M. Nixon resigned the presidency as a result of the Watergate scandal.

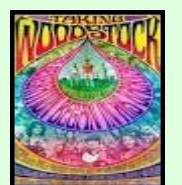
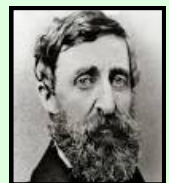
**August 13, 1961** - The Berlin Wall came into existence after the East German government closed the border between the east and west sectors of Berlin with barbed wire to discourage emigration to the West.

**August 15, 1969** - Woodstock began in a field near Yasgur's Farm at Bethel, New York.

**August 17, 1786** - American frontiersman Davy Crockett was born in Hawkins County, Tennessee.

**August 21, 1959** – Hawaii was admitted to the Union as the 50th state.

**August 27, 1910** - Mother Teresa was born (as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu) in Skopje, Yugoslavia.



# VA Apportionments

## APPORTIONMENTS

A claim for an apportionment is by or on behalf of a dependent for which the primary beneficiary is not providing reasonable support, or part of a Veterans' disability award may be apportioned (paid) to the Veteran's spouse, child or dependent parent. A surviving spouse's award may also be apportioned for the Veteran's child or children. When the Department of Veterans Affairs receives a claim for an apportionment of a primary beneficiary's benefits, the VA must develop for evidence, decide whether to award or deny the apportionment claim and notify the primary beneficiary and claimant of the decision. Additionally, in some cases, the VA must offset or withhold part or all of the apportioned award.

In order for a claimant to receive an apportionment of a competent primary beneficiary's benefits, the claimant must file a claim for an apportionment, and demonstrate a need for benefits or live apart from the Veteran and not receive a reasonable level of support. If the requirements are met and the primary beneficiary will not suffer undue hardship, the VA may authorize an apportionment to be paid to the claimant. The VA's primary obligation is to the



Veteran. Even if the claimant demonstrates a need, the VA cannot impose undue hardship on the Veteran. An apportionment may also be paid to an estranged spouse and child, children in an estranged spouse's custody, a child or children not living with the primary beneficiary or surviving spouse and to whom the primary beneficiary or surviving spouse is not reasonably contributing, or a dependent parent (in compensation cases).

A primary beneficiary's benefits will not be apportioned, when the total benefit payable to the primary beneficiary is so small that it does not allow payment of a reasonable amount to any apportionee. Special consideration must be given to claims for apportionment from an estranged spouse or a spouse for whom the Veteran is not receiving additional benefits, as it could adversely affect the rate of the Veteran's benefit.

An apportionment is not made to a dependent as a convenience on the part of the primary beneficiary. The primary beneficiary cannot request a portion of his or her benefits not be paid in order to allocate those benefits to another person. Information regarding the financial status of all parties involved may be required to determine the need on the part of the claimant and hardship on the part of the primary beneficiary.



## VETERANS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES



The Veteran Transportation Services (VTS) is a new program offered by the Dorn VAMC in Columbia. Our office at 605 West Main Street in Lexington, has been deemed a shuttle-stop for the "Park and Ride" service on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays only. These are the days that our van does not run. The shuttle runs 8am to 4pm except on holidays and will be at our location at 7am. They will pick up in the emergency lane at the front of the building and leave promptly at 7:10am. A Veteran living within a 25 mile radius of the hospital are picked up at their home. Any Veteran with appointments at the VAMC Dorn may ride; they can be handicapped, in a wheelchair or on oxygen. For more information on this new program, please contact Steven Torres at 803-776-4000 ext 6398.

**Please do not contact our office, all inquires should be directed to Mr. Torres.**

## Lexington County Veterans Group

All Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 12 noon to 2:00 pm in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.

The Veterans group also participates in various social activities such as group lunches, group dinners with wives/significant other, boat trips on Lake Murray, participation in the Lexington County Veterans parade and other general group tours.

For further information, please contact the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office at 803-785-8400.



*"It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle."*

*-H. Norman Schwarzkopf*



## Dang-it Dolls Workshop

### Mark your calendar

as there will be no workshops until Saturday, September 12, 2015, from 10am to 3pm at the Cayce Masonic Lodge, 1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.



There is something for everyone to do and this is the one place where **THE MORE THE MERRIER** really counts.

## Ft. Jackson News...



**Army Community Service (ACS) celebrates 50th Birthday** - July 25th from 9 to 11am, in the Strom Thurmond Bldg. RM 222. Fifty years ago on July 25th, ACS was established to provide readiness & life skills programs to promote self-sufficient families, safe homes, cohesive communities, & enhanced readiness. Ft. Jackson celebrates ACS' birthday during July culminating with a drop-in. Point of contact is Miranda Broadus at 751-1124.

**Jackson Jubilee** - August 7th: This event showcases on and off post agencies & services offered to the Ft. Jackson community. Event in partnership with senior spouses, American Red Cross, Ft. Jackson Schools, and other agencies. Family Readiness Groups will also participate and welcome new Soldiers and family members to the community. Point of contact is Marilyn Bailey, 751-5444.



# *Happenings Around Lexington County*

## *July 4th Weekend*

**Thursday, July 2nd**  
**Friday, July 3rd**  
**Saturday, July 4th**

Lexington County Blowfish Baseball Games  
Games start @ 7:05pm  
For more information and tickets go to  
[www.goblowfishbaseball.com](http://www.goblowfishbaseball.com)



**Friday, July 3rd**

Star Spangled Symphonic Salute  
Saluda Shoals Park  
Concert starts @ 8pm  
For more information call (803) 772-1228



**Saturday, July 4th**

57th Lexington County Peach Festival  
Gilbert, South Carolina  
Parade starts @ 9:30am; Fireworks start @ 10pm



**Saturday, July 4th**

Lake Murray Boat Parade  
Parade begins @ 12 noon at Bombing Island  
heading towards the dam.  
For more information call (803) 781-5940.



**Saturday, July 4th**

Lake Murray Fireworks display  
Starts at dusk (approximately 9:15pm)  
Fireworks will be set off from two great locations:  
Spence Island and Dreher Island State Park.  
The show is choreographed to a patriotic concert  
that will air simultaneously on B106.7.  
The best places to view the fireworks are Dreher  
Island State Park and both parks at the Lake Murray dam.



## *During the Month of August*

**Friday, August 7th**

Brew at the Zoo @ Riverbanks Zoo  
7 to 9:30pm  
For more information go to  
[riverbanks.org/brew-at-the-zoo](http://riverbanks.org/brew-at-the-zoo)



**Friday, August 7th**  
**Saturday, August 8th**

34th SC Peanut Party in Pelion  
For more information go to  
[scpelionpeanutparty.com](http://scpelionpeanutparty.com)





## VA Expands Disability Benefits for Air Force Personnel Exposed to Contaminated C-123 Aircraft



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published a new regulation that expands eligibility for some benefits for a select group of Air Force Veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who were exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange through regular and repeated contact with contaminated C-123 aircraft that had been used in Vietnam as part of Operation Ranch Hand (ORH). The VA published this regulation as an interim final rule so that it could immediately begin providing benefits to eligible Air Force Veterans and Air Force Reserve personnel who submit a disability compensation claim for any of the 14 medical conditions that have been determined by the VA to be related to exposure to Agent Orange.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald made the decision to expand benefits following receipt of a 2015 report by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine (IOM) on Post-Vietnam Dioxin Exposure in Agent Orange-Contaminated C-123 Aircraft. This VA-requested report found evidence that as many as 1,500 to 2,100 Air Force and Air Force Reserve personnel who served as flight, medical and ground maintenance crew members on ORH C-123 aircraft, previously used to spray Agent Orange in Vietnam, were exposed to the herbicide. "Opening up eligibility for this deserving group of Air Force Veterans and reservists is the right thing to do," said Secretary McDonald. "We thank the IOM for its thorough review that provided the supporting evidence needed to ensure we can now fully compensate any former crew member who develops an Agent Orange-related disability."

Under this new rule, Air Force and Air Force Reserve flight, medical and ground maintenance crewmembers who served on the contaminated ORH C-123s are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides during their service, thus making it easier for them to establish entitlement for some VA benefits if they develop an Agent Orange-related presumptive condition. In addition, for affected Air Force Reserve crew members, VA will presume that their Agent Orange-related condition had its onset during their Reserve training. This change ensures that these reservists are eligible for VA disability compensation and medical care for any Agent Orange-related presumptive condition, and that their surviving dependents are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation and burial benefits. VA will immediately begin processing claims and issuing benefits to eligible Air Force crew members.

VA encourages reservists who were assigned to flight, ground or medical crew duties at Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (906<sup>th</sup> and 907<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Groups or 355<sup>th</sup> and 356<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron), Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts (731<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Squadron and 74<sup>th</sup> Aero-medical Evacuation Squadron) or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, International Airport (758<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron) during the period 1969 to 1986, and developed an Agent Orange-related disability to file a disability compensation claim online through the joint VA-Department of Defense web portal, eBenefits (<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>) or visit your local county VA office.

VA also has identified several active duty locations where ORH C-123 aircraft may have been used following their service in Vietnam. Active duty personnel who served in a regular USAF unit location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned and who had regular and repeated contact with the aircraft through flight, ground or medical duties during the period 1969 to 1986, and who develop an Agent Orange-related disability, also are encouraged to apply for benefits. For more information on applying for these benefits, including the affected units, Air Force Specialty Codes and dates of service for affected crew members, and

a listing of Agent Orange-related conditions, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp). Individuals with specific benefit questions related to herbicide exposure on C-123s may call VA's special C-123 Hotline at 1-800-749-8387 (available 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST) or e-mail [VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov](mailto:VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov).



## *The History of the Berlin Wall* - continued from page 7



In all, at least 171 people were killed trying to get over, under or around the Berlin Wall. Escape from East Germany was not impossible, however: From 1961 until the wall came down in 1989, more than 5,000 East Germans (including some 600 border guards) managed to cross the border by jumping out of windows adjacent to the wall, climbing over the barbed wire, flying in hot air balloons, crawling through the sewers and driving through unfortified parts of the wall at high speeds.

On November 9, 1989, as the Cold War began to thaw across Eastern Europe, the spokesman for East Berlin's Communist Party announced a change in his city's relations with the West. Starting at midnight that day, he said, citizens of the GDR were free to cross the country's borders. The Berlin Wall stood until November 9, 1989, when the head of the East German Communist Party announced that citizens of the GDR could cross the border whenever they pleased. East and West Berliners flocked to the wall, drinking beer and champagne and chanting "Tor auf!" ("Open the gate!"). At midnight, they flooded through the checkpoints.

More than 2 million people from East Berlin visited West Berlin that weekend to participate in a celebration that was, one journalist wrote, "the greatest street party in the history of the world." People used hammers and picks to knock away chunks of the wall—they became known as "mauerspechte," or "wall woodpeckers"—while cranes and bulldozers pulled down section after section. Soon the wall was gone and Berlin was united for the first time since 1945. "Only today," one Berliner spray-painted on a piece of the wall, "is the war really over."

To this day, the Berlin Wall remains one of the most powerful and enduring symbols of the Cold War.



## **VA Eliminates Net Worth as Health Care Eligibility Factor**

### *Elimination of Net Worth Makes More Veterans Eligible for Health Care*

The Department of Veterans Affairs is updating the way it determines eligibility for VA health care, a change that will result in more Veterans having access to the health care benefits they've earned and deserve.

Effective 2015, the VA eliminated the use of net worth as a determining factor for both health care programs and copayment responsibilities. This change makes VA health care benefits more accessible to lower-income Veterans and brings VA policies in line with Secretary Robert A. McDonald's MyVA initiative which reorients VA around Veterans' needs.

"Everything that we do and every decision we make has to be focused on the Veterans we serve," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "We are working every day to earn their trust. Changing the way we determine eligibility to make the process easier for Veterans is part of our promise to our Veterans."

Instead of combining the sum of Veterans' income with their assets to determine eligibility for medical care and copayment obligations, VA will now only consider a Veteran's gross household income and deductible expenses from the previous year. Elimination of the consideration of net worth for VA health care enrollment means that certain lower-income, non-service-connected Veterans will have less out-of-pocket costs. Over a 5-year period, it is estimated that 190,000 Veterans will become eligible for reduced costs of their health care services.

In March 2014, VA eliminated the annual requirement for updated financial information. VA now uses information from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration to automatically match individual Veterans' income information which reduces the burden on Veterans to keep their healthcare eligibility up to date. That change better aligned VA's health care financial assessment program with other federal health care organizations.

Veterans may submit updated income information at [www.1010ez.med.va.gov/](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/), or by visiting their nearby VA health care facility. For more information, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits) or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).



**2015 LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS PARADE APPLICATION**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2015 @ 3:00PM**

**JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR 13TH YEAR**

**NO ENTRY FEE, SIGN UP DUE BY OCTOBER 23rd, PLEASE**

**(IF YOU MISS THE DEADLINE GIVE ME A CALL, EVERYONE IS WELCOME IN THIS PARADE)**

ALL MARCHING BANDS AND ROTC GROUPS WILL MEET IN THE EMPTY PARKING LOTS OF BUSINESSES IN THE BUTLER STREET AND MAIN STREET AREA. PLEASE USE CAUTION! PLEASE DROP OFF ALL MEMBERS AND YOU CAN PARK AT THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING PARKING LOT FOR PICK UP. PLEASE, PLEASE DO NOT TAKE UP SPACES AT MCDONALD'S FOR PARKING. PARADE ROUTE WILL LINE UP AT HAYGOOD AND WEST BUTLER STREET, ENTER MAIN STREET TAKE A LEFT, GO DOWN MAIN STREET, TURN RIGHT ON SOUTH LAKE DRIVE AND THEN LEFT, ENDING AT THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING PARKING LOT.

Name & Description of Entry: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Request: \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax : \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Applications To:**

Lexington County Veterans Parade  
Attn: Sharon Willis  
212 South Lake Drive Ste 302  
Lexington SC 29072  
[swillis@lex-co.com](mailto:swillis@lex-co.com)

**For More Information Contact:**

Lexington Veterans Affairs Office 803-785-8400  
Sharon Willis @ 803-785-1454  
Cell # 803-237-9617  
Fax # 803-785-8300

Applications can also be found on the Lexington County VA website.

EVERYTHING WILL BE DONE TO PLACE YOU IN THE LINEUP THAT SHOWCASES YOUR ORGANIZATION AT THE BEST POSSIBLE SPOT. ONCE THE LINEUP FOR THE PARADE HAS BEEN DETERMINED YOU WILL RECEIVE A MAP AND LOCATION FOR YOUR PLACE IN THE PARADE. PLEASE ENTER THE PARADE LINE UP ROUTE FROM SOUTH CHURCH AND GO UP BUTLER STREET. PLEASE DO NOT ENTER FROM COLUMBIA AVENUE OR MAIN. TURNING FLOATS AND TRAILERS AROUND IS VERY DIFFICULT. HAYGOOD STREET MUST BE KEPT OPEN FOR THE LINEUP. MAIN STREET WILL BE CLOSED DOWN AT 2:45 SO PLEASE BE AT YOUR LOCATION BY 2:30.

**(A CEREMONY WILL BE HELD AT THE VETERANS MONUMENT FOLLOWING THE PARADE.)**

**ALL OF THE VETERANS APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT  
AND  
THEY THANK YOU VERY MUCH.**

NEED A FLOAT? CONTACT KIRBY FLOATS @ 803-359-3134.  
(DISCOUNTS GIVEN TO VETERANS)

# New VA website for Surviving Spouses

The Department of Veteran Affairs has created a new internet website for surviving spouses and dependents of military personnel who died on active duty and for survivors and dependents of Veterans who died after leaving the service. The site is organized into two broad categories: death in service and death after service. It provides visitors with information and about a wide range of benefits for surviving spouses, dependent children, and dependent parents of diseased Veterans and active duty personnel. The site also has information from, and links to, other federal agencies and organizations that offer benefits and services to survivors and dependents.



Several options also apply to surviving retirees participating in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), where the spouse is lost through death, divorce or annulment, and the retiree later remarries. Unless the former spouse coverage was elected as part of the divorce, retirees who remarry have three choices. They can: (1) Resume the prior level of coverage; (2) Elect not to resume spouse SBP coverage, (this election is irrevocable), this election will not affect child coverage; or (3) If the original election was for reduced coverage, the retiree may request the base amount be increased.

There is also a link to frequently asked questions, and answers to most questions. For more specific questions the site tells how to contact the VA directly. The new website can be found at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivors>. Some of the topics found on this page include:

- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
- Parents' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
- Survivors Pension
- Home Loans
- Dependents' Educational Assistance Program
- Educational and Vocational Counseling
- Beneficiary Financial Counseling
- Civil Service Preference
- Commissary and Exchange Privileges
- Children of Vietnam Veterans with Certain Birth Defects
- Fiduciary Services

## VA Appeals Process continued from page 5

6 - Try to identify as early as possible all the evidence you want the VA to look at when they make a decision on your claim. This will help speed up the time it takes for the VA to make a decision on your claim.

7 - You can request information about your appeal at the Board of Veterans' Appeals by calling 1-202-565-5436.



**School  
Begins  
again in  
August!**  
Watch out for kids  
and buses.





# Free CPR Classes



Provided By  
Lexington County EMS

## Help Us Help You!

Statistics show that there is a staggering 95 percent mortality rate for the over 300,000 Americans who are victims of sudden cardiac arrest each year. More of these victims would survive if quality CPR and easy access to Automated External Defibrillators were available.

It is important for all Americans to learn critical lifesaving skills such as how to perform CPR how to use an AED and the need to increase public access to AEDs.

Lexington County EMS personnel are providing FREE Family and Friends Adult, Child and Infant CPR training for the Community. In just 2 hours you can Help Us Help You in an emergency. Changes in CPR make the training fun and easy to learn.

## 2015 Class Schedule

Single session classes are scheduled on:

February 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	August 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2015
April 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	October 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2015
June 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	December 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2015

All sessions are from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM

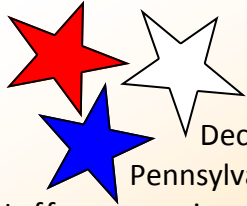
For more information or to schedule a session, please contact:

Lieutenant Micah Norman  
803-785-5057  
[mnorman@lex-co.com](mailto:mnorman@lex-co.com)

You can also find out more information on the AHA website or follow this link:

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/CommunityTraining/CommunityProducts/Family-Friendsreg-CPR\\_UCM\\_303576\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRAndECC/CommunityTraining/CommunityProducts/Family-Friendsreg-CPR_UCM_303576_Article.jsp)

Family & Friends CPR is for people who want to learn CPR but do not need a course completion card in CPR for their job. This course is ideal for schools and students, new parents, grandparents, babysitters and others interested in learning how to save a life.



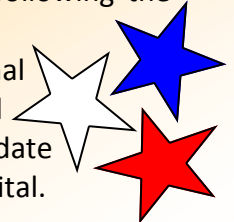
# Independence Day or Fourth of July

Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, commemorates the formal adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Declaration of Independence, written by a committee headed by Thomas Jefferson, is an eloquent statement of the American colonies' intention to become an independent nation. It broke the formal ties between the colonies and Britain after the American Revolution had begun. Independence Day celebrations are reminders of the ideals on which the nation was founded.

Although the signing of the Declaration of Independence was not completed until August 1776, the Fourth of July holiday has been accepted as the official anniversary of U.S. independence. It was not declared a legal holiday until 1941. Today it is celebrated in all states and territories of the United States. The first celebration took place in Philadelphia on July 8, 1776, four days after the Declaration of Independence was adopted. On that day the Declaration of Independence was read aloud, city bells rang, and bands played.

Within a few years the Fourth of July was observed throughout most of the new nation, although until 1783 the city of Boston, Massachusetts, commemorated Independence Day on March 5, the date of the Boston Massacre. An elaborate Fourth of July celebration was held in Philadelphia in 1788, following the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.

Several important U.S. projects were started on Independence Day. Work on the Erie Canal in New York state began on July 4, 1817. Construction of the first railroad in the United States, the Baltimore and Ohio, was started on July 4, 1828. July 4th was the date selected in 1848 for laying the cornerstone of the Washington Monument in the U.S. capital.



Did you know...

**August is  
National  
Blueberry  
Month?**



## Changes to SC Laws

Recently there have been two major changes to SC laws effecting Veterans or surviving spouses.

1. **Senate Bill 153** - States that certain surviving spouses are also extended property tax exemption on one vehicle if she is eligible for DIC benefits. This bill took effect on June 1, 2015.
2. **Senate Bill 391** - States that active duty personnel and certain Veterans can receive in state tuition if residing in South Carolina and they do not have to meet the one year residency requirement. This bill took effect on July 1, 2015.

For more information go to [scstatehouse.gov/legislation.php](http://scstatehouse.gov/legislation.php) then search by bill number.



## ***Featured Medal:***

### ***Overseas Service Ribbon***





**An Overseas Service Ribbon** is a service military award of the United States Military which recognizes those service members who have performed military tours of duty outside the borders of the United States of America. There are different versions of the Overseas Service Ribbons for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Coast Guard; Marines receive the Navy version of the Overseas Service Ribbon

**The Army Overseas Service Ribbon** was first issued in August 1981. It is presented to any member of the United States Army who completes a standard overseas tour of duty. In the December 11, 2006 revision of military awards, the Army eliminated the policy which had restricted the awarding of the Overseas Service Ribbon when another campaign or service medal is awarded. Additional awards of the Army Overseas Service Ribbon are denoted by award numerals. For those Army service members performing overseas duty prior to 1981, the Army Overseas Service Ribbon may be awarded retroactively, provided that a service member was on active duty subsequent to 1981.

**The Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon** was first proposed in 1968, but not authorized until September 17, 1986. The ribbon is awarded to any member of the Navy or Marine Corps who completes one year of consecutive or cumulative duty at a permanent overseas duty station. For members of the reserve components, the first award is authorized upon completion of either 30 consecutive or 45 cumulative days of overseas active duty for training. For subsequent awards, the criteria of award for reservists are the same as the active duty members criteria. In 1999, a directive of the Chief of Naval Operations permitted those personnel stationed on overseas home-ported naval vessels to receive the Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon. Prior to this time, such personnel were only eligible to receive the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon. Current regulations now permit the receipt of both ribbons for the same tour of duty. Additional awards of the Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon are denoted by service stars.

**The Air Force Overseas Service Ribbon** was approved in 1980 by order of General Lew Allen, Air Force Chief of Staff. The award is issued in two grades, being that of "short tour" and "long tour." The Air Force Overseas Short Tour Service Ribbon is awarded for less than two years of duty or as directed by Air Force policies. Normally, the Short Tour Service Ribbon is awarded for a permanent duty assignment of at least 300 days within an 18-month time span; such assignments are generally served unaccompanied by family members, though a short tour assignment need not be unaccompanied. Historically, most Short Tour Service Ribbons were awarded for service in South Korea, by far the most common short tour assignment in the USAF. The Air Force Overseas Long Tour Service Ribbon is issued for completion of a standard overseas service assignment of two years or more in length with additional awards denoted by oak leaf clusters. Long tour credit is awarded for completion of an overseas long tour (two years) prescribed by Air Force Instructions, or to any member assigned to a United States or overseas location who is subsequently sent under temporary duty orders (to include combat tours) for 365 or more days within a three year time frame. Additional awards of the Air Force Overseas Service Ribbon are denoted by oak leaf clusters and Air Force regulations permit the receipt and wear of both the short and long tour ribbons simultaneously, wherein the short tour ribbon takes a higher precedence by being worn to the wearer's right of the long tour ribbon.

**The Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon** was approved on October 28, 2009. It is awarded to active duty members on a permanent assignment and who successfully complete a tour of duty of at least 12 months at an overseas shore-based duty station or on board a cutter permanently assigned to an overseas area. It is also awarded to reservists who are permanently assigned and have satisfactorily completed a minimum of 36 cumulative days of service at an overseas duty station during each 12-month period of the total tour of duty.

Army Overseas Service Ribbon	Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon	Air Force Overseas Long Tour Service Ribbon	Air Force Overseas Short Tour Service Ribbon	Coast Guard Overseas Service Ribbon
				

***Coming in the Next Issue...Disability Compensation and Auto Allowances***