



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

July/August 2018



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At A Glance Calendar July & August

For a list of events in Lexington County for July & August

See page 15 Happenings Around Lexington County

Weekly on Tuesdays in July

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Monday, July 2nd through Friday, July 13th

Director out off the office

Tuesday, July 3rd

Veteran's Recognition Night Lexington County Blowfish
For more information see page 8

Wednesday, July 4th

Independence Day
County Offices Closed

Tuesday, July 24th

County Council Meeting

Weekly on Tuesdays in August

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, August 2nd

Gaston Outreach

Friday, August 3rd

Chapin Outreach

Friday, August 10th

Batesburg/Leesville Outreach

Tuesday, August 28th

County Council Meeting

Monday, September 3rd

Labor Day
County Offices Closed

CALENDAR KEY

Purple—Holidays/Special Days
Blue—Outreach dates
Red—County Offices Closed, No van scheduled and Special Notices
Black—Director's appearances in the County

Brown—County Council Meetings
Pink—Special Events throughout the County
Orange—Director Out of Office
Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings

From the Director...

As the summer heats up for all of us in South Carolina, let us remember July 4th and what it represents. Many celebrate with family and friends because it is a Federal holiday. Many have barbecues, lake parties and beach parties and this is great. But numerous people died during the Revolutionary War in order for America to be free. When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he explained what our country is all about. Freedom is never free and it has been paid for by all of the heroes who gave their lives in battle for this country. I encourage all of us to remember this July 4th as we celebrate 242 years as a Nation, the sacrifices that have been made so we could all live in freedom.

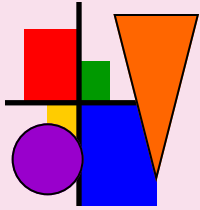
We are continuing to settle into our new office building and invite Veterans to come see the office in person. We are so proud to have a state-of-the-art office complex and want to show it off. Please drop by at your convenience Monday-Friday, from 8am-5pm. Have a great summer!

Enjoying the journey,

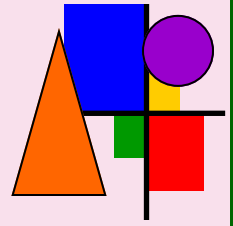


Below is a picture of Ed Lundeen (current VA Director); Mary Hazelton (oldest and first VA office employee); and Gary Baker (former VA Director) taken at Caughman-Harmon Memorial Day Presentation.





Death & Burial Benefits

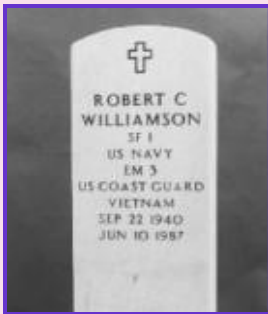


Veterans discharged from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and service members who die while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, as well as spouses and dependent children (under age 18 and age 18-23 if in school full-time) of Veterans and active duty service members, may be eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits. The Veteran does not have to die before a spouse or dependent child (under age 18 and age 18-23 if in school full-time) for them to be eligible.



Burial in VA National Cemeteries

Burial in a VA National Cemetery is available for eligible Veterans, their spouses and dependents (under age 18 and age 18-23 if in school full-time) at no cost to the family and includes the gravesite, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave, a headstone or marker, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine. For Veterans, benefits also include a burial flag (with case for active duty) and military funeral honors. The VA operates 131 National Cemeteries, of which 72 are open for new casketed interment and 18 are open to accept only cremated remains. The funeral director or the next of kin makes arrangements by contacting the National Cemetery Scheduling office at 800-535-1117 or the Ft. Jackson National Cemetery at 866-577-5248 (803-699-2246).



Headstones, Markers, and Medallions

Veterans, active duty service members, and retired Reservists and National Guard service members, are eligible for an inscribed headstone or marker for their grave at any cemetery — National, State Veterans, or private. VA will deliver a headstone or marker at no cost, anywhere in the world. For eligible Veterans whose deaths occurred on or after November 1, 1990, VA may provide a government headstone or marker even if the grave is already marked with a private one, or VA may provide a medallion instead of a headstone or marker for Veterans' graves in private cemeteries when the grave is already marked with a privately-purchased headstone or marker. Spouses and dependent children (under age 18 and age 18-23 if in school full-time) are eligible for a government headstone or marker only if they are buried in a National or State Veterans cemetery. Public Law 110-157 enacted December 26, 2007, expanded VA authority to provide a medallion instead of a headstone or markers for Veterans' graves in private cemeteries when the grave is already marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. Claimants will have the option to apply for either a traditional headstone or marker to place on the grave, or a medallion to affix to a privately-purchased headstone or marker.



Military Funeral Honors

Upon request, Department of Defense will provide military funeral honors consisting of folding and presentation of the United States flag and the playing of "Taps." A funeral honors detail consists of two or more uniformed members of the armed forces, with at least one member from the deceased's branch of service. Family members should inform their funeral director if they want military funeral honors. Department of Defense maintains a toll-free number (1-877-MIL-HONR) for use by funeral directors only to request honors. VA can help arrange honors for burials at VA National cemeteries. Veterans service organization or volunteer groups may also help provide honors. For more information, visit www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil/.

Continued on page 4

Death & Burial Benefits continued from page 3

Burial Flags

The VA will furnish a United States burial flag to memorialize: Veterans who served during wartime or after January 31, 1955; Veterans who were entitled to retired pay for service in the Reserve or National Guard, or would have been entitled if over age 60; or members or former members of the Selected Reserve who served their initial obligation, or were discharged for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, or died while a member of the Selected Reserve.



The next of kin may apply for the flag at any VA regional office or United States Post Office by completing VA Form 21-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes, available at <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/cio/20s5/forms/VBA-21-2008-ARE.pdf>. In most cases, a funeral director will help the family obtain the flag.



Reimbursement of Burial Expenses

The VA will pay a burial allowance of up to \$2,000 if the Veteran's death is deemed service-connected. In such cases, the person who bore the Veteran's burial expenses may claim reimbursement from the VA. In some cases, VA will pay the cost of transporting the remains of a Veteran whose death was service-connected to the nearest National cemetery with available gravesites. There is no time limit for filing reimbursement claims in service-connected death cases.

Burial Allowance

The VA will pay up to a \$700 burial and funeral allowance for Veterans who, at time of death, were entitled to receive pension or compensation or would have been entitled if they were not receiving military retirement pay. Eligibility also may be established when death occurs in a VA facility, a VA-contracted nursing home or a State Veterans nursing home. In cases in which the Veteran's death was not service-connected, claims must be filed within two years after burial or cremation.



Plot Allowance

The VA will pay up to a \$700 plot allowance when a Veteran is buried in a cemetery not under United States government jurisdiction if: the Veteran was discharged from active duty because of disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; the Veteran was receiving compensation or pension or would have been if the Veteran was not receiving military retired pay; or the Veteran died in a VA facility. The plot allowance may be paid to the state for the cost of a plot or interment in a state-owned cemetery reserved solely for Veterans burials if the Veteran is buried without charge. Burial expenses paid by the deceased's employer or a state agency will not be reimbursed.



Presidential Memorial Certificates

Certificates are issued upon request to recognize the United States military service of honorably discharged deceased Veterans. Next of kin, relatives and other loved ones may apply for a certificate by mailing, e-mailing, or faxing a completed and signed VA form 40-0247 along with a copy of the Veteran's military discharge documents or proof of honorable military service. The form and eligibility requirements can be found at www.cem.va.gov.

My Healthvet



The VA is committed to serving Veterans and providing them with the best possible health care. My Healthvet is a gateway to Veteran health and wellness. It is designed for Veterans, service members, their caregivers and others.

A Veteran must be enrolled in VA healthcare to use My Healthvet, the VA's online personal health record. It is a free tool to help Veterans take charge of their health care. Veterans are able to accomplish such tasks as refilling prescriptions, requesting appointments, sending secure messages, accessing VA medical records, etc. My Healthvet offers tips and tools to help you partner with your health care team, so together you may work to manage your health. Here you may find useful resources when you need them. The support tools are designed to enrich your experience with My Healthvet and help you make informed decisions.



To use My Healthvet, you will need a computer with internet access. Accessing My Healthvet can be at home or through public access like at a library or internet cafe. Computers may also be available to Veterans at your local VA Medical Center.

Contact the My Healthvet Coordinator at your local VA Medical Center for questions and/or assistance. There are three ways you can access My Healthvet. Each level offers a different way to enter the site. Visit www.myhealth.va.gov and click "Contact" in the upper right corner, call the My Healthvet Help Desk at

1-877-327-0022 or 800-877-8339 (TTY), Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. (Central Time), or contact the My Healthvet Coordinator at your local VA Medical Center.

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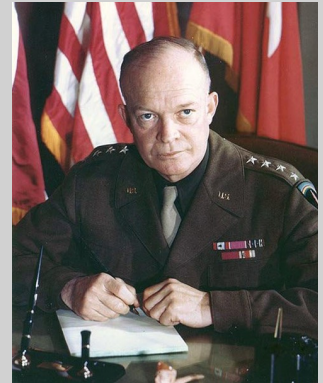


Word Search

- Independence
- Freedom
- Parade
- Patriotic
- Liberty
- July
- Summer
- Declaration
- Picnic
- Celebration
- Holiday
- British
- Stars
- Music
- Flag
- Fireworks
- America
- Philadelphia
- Colonies
- Stripes



“Freedom has its life in the hearts,
 the actions, the spirit of men
 and so it must be daily earned and refreshed
 else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots,
 it will wither and die.”
 - Dwight D. Eisenhower



July is National Grilling Month!



August is National Eye Exam Month!



Rollout and Application Process for New Veterans ID Card

The VA has announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for Veterans. Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have honorable or general (under honorable conditions) service will be able to apply for the ID card. The VIC will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to Veterans. This will provide Veterans with a safer, more convenient and efficient way for Veterans to show proof of service. To request a VIC, Veterans must visit vets.gov and click on “Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card”. This section is located at the bottom left of the website. Veterans who apply, should receive the card within 60 days. There is no need to apply for this card if you are retired from the military or enrolled in VA healthcare. For questions or additional help contact their help desk at 1-855-574-7286, Monday through Friday 8am to 8pm EST.



Thank you for serving!





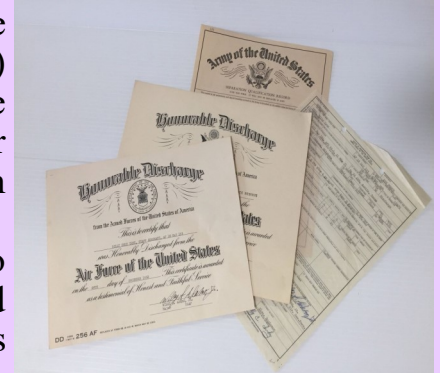
What is a DD214 or Discharge Papers?

The DD 214 is an important document for Veterans and their families when it comes to benefits associated with military service. The DD 214 formally called the DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty is a document of the United States Department of Defense. The DD 214 is issued upon a military service member's retirement, separation, or

discharge from active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, e.g., U.S. Air force, U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, or U.S. Navy.

The first DD Form 214's were issued in 1950, replacing the older "WD AGO" (War Department Adjutant General's Office) Forms and the NAVPERS (Naval Personnel) discharge documents. These documents had existed since 1941. In earlier versions of the form it was called a "Report of separation from Active Duty".

A Report of Separation contains information normally needed to verify military service for benefits, retirement, employment and membership in Veterans' organizations. The DD 214 represents the complete verified record of a service members time in the military, awards and medals, and other pertinent service information, such as highest rank/rate and pay grade held on active duty, total military combat service and/or overseas service, Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) or Navy officer designator, Navy Officer Billet Code (NOBC), Additional Qualification Designation (ACD) or Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC) identifiers and a record of training and schools completed.



A Veteran may request their military service records online, by mail or by fax through the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri. A Veteran may submit their request online by going to the NPRC website at www.archives.gov. A Veteran may also submit a request by mail or fax using Form SF-180. The address for the NPRC is 1 Archive Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138. Their telephone and fax numbers are (314) 801-0800 and (314) 801-9195. Please note that NPRC holds historical military personnel records of nearly 100 million Veterans.



The 2018 Lexington County Veterans Parade will be held on Sunday, November, 4, 2018.





Lexington County Blowfish Salute to the Service of Veterans of Foreign Conflict

Enjoy a night at Lexington County Baseball Stadium on Tuesday July 3rd as the Blowfish salute the service of our Veterans against the High Point-Thomasville HiToms

Details

- Complimentary admission for each Veteran & 1 Guest
- Reserved Air-Conditioned Stadium Club Room
- Hamburgers/Hot Dogs/Chips/Drink Buffet
- Pre-game on the field Veteran's Group Recognition
- Group photo opportunity with LC Blowfish players
- "Fallen Comrade" table display with explanation
- Color Guard: Pledge/National Anthem/TAPS
- Veteran representative interview over PA system
- In Game announcements throughout the game
- Reserved media table on stadium concourse
- Television/Radio/Print media publicity



Postgame Fireworks

In honor of the 4th of July, a postgame Fireworks show will take place just after the final out is recorded in the game!

RSVP: Veterans reserve your 2 complimentary tickets by contacting: Kyle Calhoun, LC Blowfish Office: 803-254-3474 or by email at: kyle@blowfishbaseball.com

The VA Mission Act of 2018

The VA Mission Act of 2018 is designed to greatly improve Veteran access to VA healthcare. What does it mean for Veterans? The VA Mission Act addresses in-network and non-VA healthcare issues, Veterans' homes, access to walk-in VA care, prescription drug procedures, and much more. This VA reform law affects a wide range of areas and the "official" name of this law says a lot about its' focus; informally known as the VA Mission Act, this legislation's formal name is the *VA Maintaining Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act*. Over 30 Veteran service organizations (VSOs) have endorsed this reform effort as it worked its' way through legislative channels. The VA Mission Act was passed by both houses and President Trump signed the Mission Act into law on June 6, 2018. The VA now must work on the criteria to be considered including wait times for VA appointments, quality of VA care and distance from a VA facility.

Eliminating Funding Gaps, Consolidating Programs, And Modernization

The VA Mission Act does some important things in the short term as well as introducing long-care fixes. The short term improvements are crucial for some Veterans; the Act eliminates a gap in care due to funding issues associated with the VA Choice program. The VA Choice funding ended on May 31, 2018. VA Choice was designed to help Veterans get non-VA healthcare if distance or wait list issues are a problem. The VA Choice continues to be funded in the short-term until replaced. The long-term fixes are associated with the replacement of the VA Choice; the VA Mission Act consolidates seven different programs offering community care including the VA Choice into a single entity. Funding is also provided for education and training, VA medical staff recruitment, and a review of VA medical facilities. This review process is intended as the first step in a modernization program for VA locations that need upgrades.

Veteran Care Program

In the past, among of the chief complaints about VA healthcare involved timely scheduling of appointments, care and services. Under the VA Mission Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs is required to coordinate timely care including help for those who need VA medical services outside their region of residence. The VA is also tasked with making sure Veterans "do not experience a lapse in health care services." A significant improvement under the VA Mission Act is that the Department of Veterans Affairs is now required to provide, "access to community care if the VA does not offer the care or services the Veteran requires, the VA does not operate a full-service medical facility in the state a Veteran resides, the Veteran was eligible for care in the community under the 40-mile rule in the Veterans Choice Program" and when the Veteran meets certain requirements. The VA is required to enter into contracts with private networks to insure Veterans get this care when warranted.

Authorization for Veteran Care Contracts

To implement the Veteran Care Program, the VA is authorized to enter into contracts, or Veterans Care Agreements, with community healthcare providers with rates comparable to the VA Veterans Community Care Program. In addition to this authorization, certain procedures are also included in the act to guide this process in terms of making the agreements, how they are paid, and how they are enforced.

Veteran Care Homes

The VA is now authorized to enter Veteran Care Agreements with State Veterans Homes with the purpose of eliminating competitive contracting; State Veterans Homes are not technically considered to be federal contractors, but under the VA Mission Act these homes are required to follow Federal Fraud, Waste, and Abuse requirements.

Veteran Access to Walk-In Services

Veterans have walk-in care access under the VA Mission Act, but this portion of the law includes certain conditions including a requirement that Veterans must have used VA healthcare services within a 24-month period prior to requesting walk-in services. Walk-in care is available from community healthcare providers who have a contract or other agreement with the VA to provide the services. According to the text of the law, "Veterans who are not required to make a copayment at the VA would be entitled to two visits without a copayment and then the VA would be authorized to charge an adjustable copayment". Those who are required to co-pay may pay for the first two walk-in visits, with a VA-authorized copayment adjustment for successive walk-in care. The Department of Veterans Affairs is required to "ensure continuity of care" including accessibility to medical records from walk-in care providers and medical record sharing between VA and these agencies.

Expanding the VA Veteran Caregiver Program

Important changes to the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers includes expanded eligibility for Veterans with service-connected medical issues. In the past access to this program was more limited and emphasized post-9/11 military service only.

"Safe Opioid" Procedures for VA Prescriptions

The VA is now required to ensure its' care providers, including contractors, are using "evidence-based guidelines" for prescribing opioid-based painkillers or pain management approaches. These guidelines are found in the Opioid Safety Initiative which must be adhered to as a condition of providing community care. Under the new rules, the VA is required to insure that community health care providers have the appropriate access to patient medical histories including "all medication prescribed to the Veteran as known by VA".

Lexington County Veterans Group



All Honorably Discharged Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon 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.

Veteran Wives Support Group

**Meets, 1st Friday of each month
2 to 4pm**

**Crossroads Counseling Center
130A Whiteford Way
Lexington, SC 29072**



For further information, please visit their website at lex-coveteransgroup.com or contact our office at 803-785-8400.



**Remember that August means
Back to School!**



Dang-it Dolls Workshops

There will be no workshops during July and August.



**July is
National
Ice Cream
Month!**

**August is
National
Catfish
Month!**



DID YOU KNOW...

In fiscal year (FY) 2017, the VA guaranteed more than 740,000 home loans for a total of \$189 billion, an all-time record for the VA Home Loan Program. Over the past three years, the VA has guaranteed more than 2 million VA home loans for over \$500 billion.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of July & August?

The Civil Rights Act of 1964



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

July 4, 1804 - Novelist and short-story writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts.

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

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 Number 1."

July 28, 1943 - During World War II, a firestorm killed 42,000 civilians in Hamburg, Germany. The firestorm occurred after 2,326 tons of bombs and incendiaries were dropped by the Allies.

July 30, 1863 - Automotive pioneer Henry Ford was born in Dearborn Township, Michigan.

August 1, 1779 - "Star-Spangled Banner" author Francis Scott Key was born in Frederick County, Maryland.

August 3, 1492 - Christopher Columbus set sail from Palos, Spain, with three ships, Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria.

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

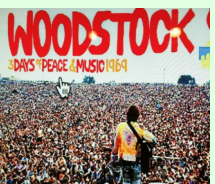
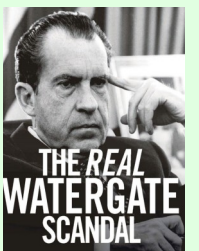
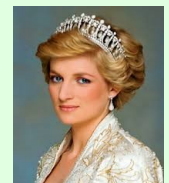
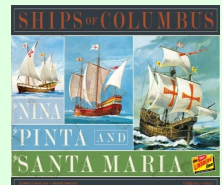
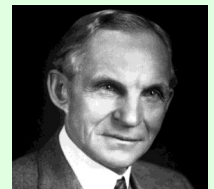
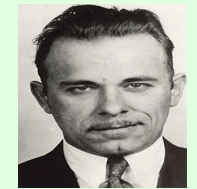
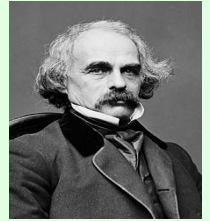
August 13, 1961 - The Berlin Wall came into existence after the East German government closed the border between the east and west sectors of Berlin with barbed wire to discourage emigration to the West.

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

August 31, 1997 - Britain's Princess Diana died at age 36 from massive internal injuries suffered in a high-speed car crash, reportedly after being pursued by photographers.



Nearly \$700 Million in State Veterans Home Funding Leads to New Construction Projects

Funding Represents Largest Appropriation in Program's History

Recently the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will use \$685 million in funding from Congress to fund several State Veterans Home construction projects through the VA State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program. The new funding can be used where needed for repairs, renovation or new construction, and is part of an Omnibus Bill that represents the largest allocation to the more than 50-year-old State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program; funding for the program has averaged \$94 million over the last five years. The State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program provides up to 65 percent of the cost to build and renovate facilities.

Plans for the new funding include at least 52 projects including bed replacement projects in Massachusetts, Michigan and Wisconsin; life safety projects in Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas; new construction projects in Arizona, Hawaii, Illinois, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia; and general renovation projects in Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Wisconsin.

VA Takes Significant Step in Improving Correspondence With Veterans

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing improvement of managing taxpayer dollars, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has deployed the Centralized Benefits Communications Management Program (CBCM) nationally. The program represents a new centralized printing and mailing process system designed to improve productivity and streamline correspondence with Veterans on compensation benefits and pension burial claims. Prior to CBCM, which went into effect March 23, VBA's 56 regional offices were responsible individually for their manual processing of outbound mail.

Under CBCM, claims processors across the country now submit letters electronically to one central location for printing and distribution — allowing specialized employees to focus more time and energy assessing Veteran claims.

In addition to improving productivity, CBCM also will help reduce maintenance requirements of hundreds of regional office printers, reduce the likelihood of returned mail through additional address verification and enhance the security and privacy of Veteran information through minimized handling of mail.

Over the past five years, VA has improved the way it processes compensation and pension claims enabling the development of CBCM. In the future, VA will enhance CBCM's design to improve further VBA's methods of communication with Veterans by allowing them to choose between paper or digital correspondence. For more information or questions about CBCM, email VAPublicAffairs@va.gov.

The History of "The Star Spangled Banner"

"The Star-Spangled Banner" is the national anthem of the United States. The lyrics come from a poem written on September 14, 1814, by the then 35-year-old lawyer and amateur poet Francis Scott Key after witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry by British ships during the Battle of Baltimore in the War of 1812.



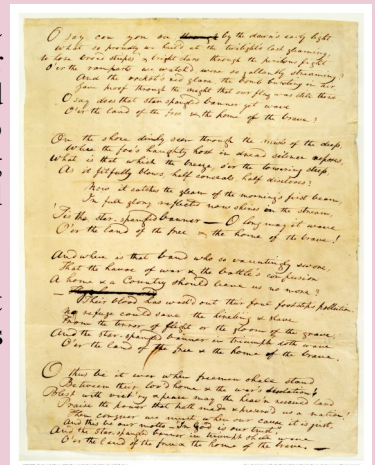
Francis Scott Key was born on August 1, 1779, at Terra Rubra, his family's estate in Frederick County (now Carroll County), Maryland. He became a successful lawyer in Maryland and Washington, D.C., and was later appointed U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.

On June 18, 1812, America declared war on Great Britain after a series of trade disagreements. In August 1814, British troops invaded Washington, D.C., and burned the White House, Capitol Building and Library of Congress. Their next target was Baltimore.



After one of Key's friends, Dr. William Beanes, was taken prisoner by the British, Key went to Baltimore, located the ship where Beanes was being held and negotiated his release. However, Key and Beanes were not allowed to leave until after the British bombardment of Fort McHenry. Key watched the bombing campaign unfold from aboard a ship located about eight miles away. After a day, the British were unable to destroy the fort and gave up. Key was inspired by the lone, large U.S. flag, with 15 stars and 15 stripes, known as the Star-Spangled Banner, flying triumphantly above Fort McHenry at daybreak and quickly penned a few lines in tribute to what he had witnessed.

The poem was printed in newspapers and eventually set to the music of a popular English drinking tune called "To Anacreon in Heaven" by composer John Stafford Smith. People began referring to the song as "The Star-Spangled Banner". With a range of 19 semitones, it is known for being very difficult to sing. Although the poem has four stanzas, only the first is commonly sung today. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson announced that it should be played at all official events. It was adopted as the national anthem on March 3, 1931.



Francis Scott Key died of pleurisy on January 11, 1843. Today, the flag that flew over Fort McHenry in 1814 is housed at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

ATTENTION ALL VETERANS

You can now call Dorn VAMC directly to schedule podiatry and eye exams.

Eye Exams call 803-776-4000 ext. 5122.

Podiatry Clinic call 803-776-4000
ext. 4407, 6505 or 7242.

VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals Resolves Record Number of Claims

Underscoring the VA's pledge to reduce the wait time for those appealing disability benefits claims, the Board of Veterans' Appeals, as of May 27, 2018, has signed more than 53,650 decisions to date in fiscal year (FY) 2018, which is approximately 86 percent more than the 28,839 decisions signed through the same period last year. The Board is currently on track to meet and exceed its FY 2018 total goal of reviewing a historic 81,000 appeals by September 30, 2018. This pace paves the way for implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, which has a target implementation date of February 14, 2019, and will offer Veterans more choice and control over their claims and appeals process.

In FY 2017, Congress allocated the Board approximately \$42 million, which was used to hire additional staff, primarily more than 200 decision-writing attorneys and 24 Veterans law judges. The increase in staff, along with streamlining several processes, contributed to the result.

The VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals' mission is to conduct hearings and decide appeals in a timely manner. The VA's disability appeals process is a complex, multi-step adjudication process that uses "open records," which allows Veterans to submit medical and lay evidence at any point from the beginning to the end of the process, including while the claim is pending on appeal; this may, in turn, require the VA to develop further evidence on the Veteran's behalf.

County Council Needs You!

Veterans are still 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 please be present around 4:15pm.



Contact the office at 803-785-8400,
if you are interested.

The office would like to thank Alicia Cohen, Roy Mefford, Mike Gordon, and Bob Hall. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of May and June.

THANKS



July

BIRTH FLOWER

positivity
open heart
dignity
grace
first love



LARKSPUR

august

BIRTH FLOWER

strength of character
faithfulness
integrity
infatuation
persistence



GLADIOLUS

Happenings Around Lexington County

During the Months of July & August

Friday, May 11th
through
Friday, August 10th

Twilight in the Garden
Riverbanks Zoo Botanical Garden;
Fridays only - 6 to dusk
For more information, visit their website at
riverbanks.org/events or call 803-779-8717.



Monday, May 28th
through
Saturday, August 4th

Lexington Blowfish Baseball Season
Lexington County Baseball Stadium; Games start at
7:05pm For more information, visit their website at
goblowfishbaseball.com.



Saturday, June 30th

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



Saturday, June 30th

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; 98.5; or Z93.1. The best places to
view the fireworks are Dreher Island State Park and both parks
at the dam.



Tuesday, July 3rd

Star Spangled Symphonic Salute
Saluda Shoals Park
5605 Old Bush River Road, Columbia
7 to 9pm - \$5.00 parking fee
For more information call (803) 772-1228.



Wednesday, July 4th

60th Lexington County Peach Festival
Gilbert, South Carolina
Parade starts @ 9:30am; Fireworks start @ 10pm
For more information go to
www.lexingtoncountypeachfestival.com.



Friday, August 3rd

Brew at the Zoo @ Riverbanks Zoo
7 to 9:30pm - tickets are required
For more information go to
www.riverbanks.org/brew-at-the-zoo.



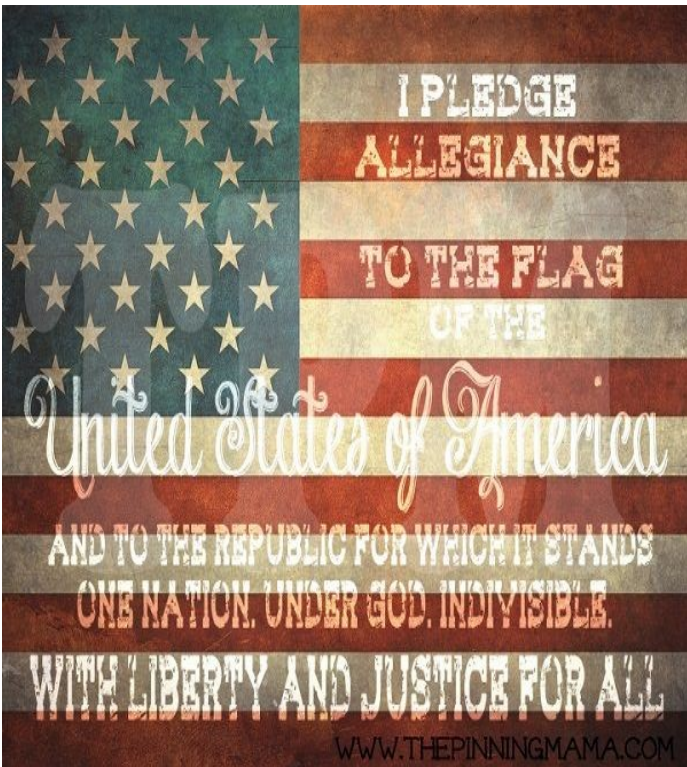
Saturday, August 25th

Wine on the River
7 to 10pm
Alexander Road, West Columbia
For more information call (803-727-8047).



This 4th of July
**Please be courteous
with fireworks!**

Independence Day can be a difficult holiday for veterans with PTSD. Consider your neighbours when setting off fireworks and don't fire them off late at night or near other homes. Loud, unexpected noises such as fireworks are extremely common triggers for combat veterans suffering from PTSD, because the noises can remind them of gunfire or explosions they experienced on the battlefield.




DID YOU KNOW...



Copies of all of our newsletters can be found on the Lexington County website at lex-co.com/departments/veteransaffairs/newsletters.

The newsletters are listed on the site by year.



About Our Office

On March 22, 1945 the SC General Assembly adopted a bill creating a VA office in each of the state's 46 counties. The Lexington County VA Director is appointed by the Lexington County delegation. This office is employed by Lexington County; not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for VA medical care. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: service connected disabilities and non-service connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits but can assist with some of these forms. Our office also provides off-site appointments at three of the County libraries once a month and we can provide home visits on a case by case basis.

OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES



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



Chapin Outreach is the 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



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

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

There will be no outreach in Gaston, Chapin or Batesburg/Leesville in July.

The VA has a website anyone can access for all VA questions, SEP user guides, regulations, policies, laws and any other VA resources. The website is: www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov.

Website

VA and U.S. Digital Service Launch New Web Tool to Help Veterans Track their Benefits Appeals

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S Digital Service announced their launch of an improved Appeals Status tool to increase transparency and enable Veterans to track the progress of their benefits claims appeals.

The tool, which went live March 21 on VA's Vets.gov website, will allow Veterans to access detailed information about the status of their benefits appeals and will include alerts about needed actions, as well as estimates of how long each step of the process takes.

Some Veterans who have previewed the new tool said it had given them hope and helped them understand that the process might take longer than expected.

County Offices will be closed on the following dates:

**Wednesday, July 4th
Independence day**

Monday, September 3rd



News Tidbits from Dorn VAMC



The ground breaking for the new 3 1/2 story parking garage on the Dorn VAMC campus was held on February 23, 2018. The new parking garage will house 278 spaces and should be completed in the next 8 to 14 months.

Dorn is now using two 15 passenger, climate controlled, vans to pick up clients around the campus. These vans circle the campus and pick up clients in remote parking areas.



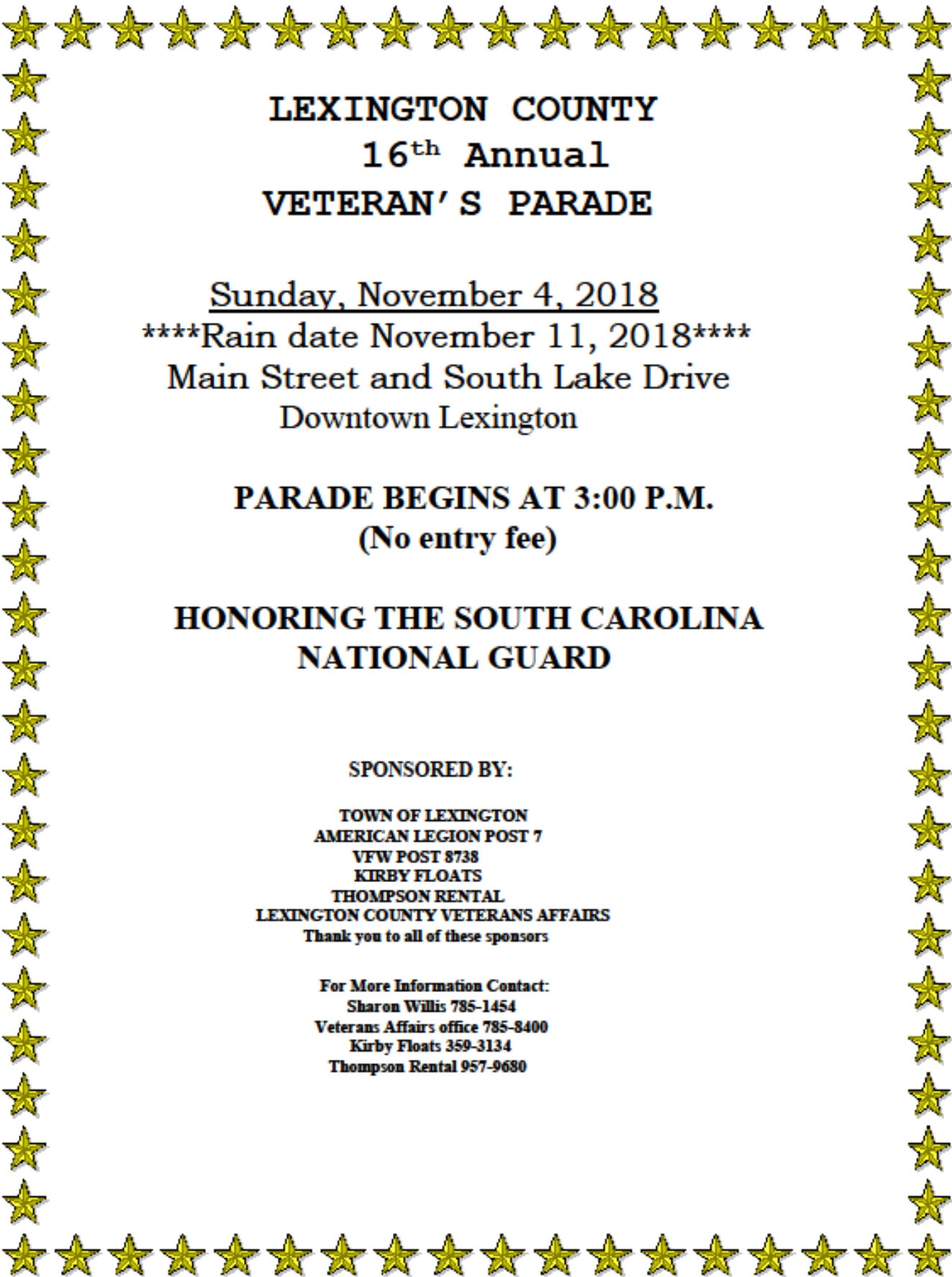
Dorn VAMC has stated its massive \$114 million construction and renovation program to improve patient care, parking, and security. The dozen or so projects, which began in February, include more parking, a new police station and fencing, new clinics, extensive modifications to the main hospital and renovation of the historic former nurses quarters.

There is a new Women's Clinic at Dorn VAMC. They provide many services designed directly for our female Veterans. For more information on this new clinic contact Rose Hutson, Women's Veterans Program Manager at 803-776-4000 ext. 4765.



Women's Clinic





LEXINGTON COUNTY
16th Annual
VETERAN' S PARADE

Sunday, November 4, 2018

****Rain date November 11, 2018****

Main Street and South Lake Drive
Downtown Lexington

PARADE BEGINS AT 3:00 P.M.
(No entry fee)

HONORING THE SOUTH CAROLINA
NATIONAL GUARD

SPONSORED BY:

TOWN OF LEXINGTON
AMERICAN LEGION POST 7
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KIRBY FLOATS
THOMPSON RENTAL
LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS
Thank you to all of these sponsors

For More Information Contact:
Sharon Willis 785-1454
Veterans Affairs office 785-8400
Kirby Floats 359-3134
Thompson Rental 957-9680

Featured Medal:

Iraq Campaign Medal

The Iraq Campaign Medal is a military award of the United States armed forces that was created by Executive Order 13363 of President George W. Bush on November 29, 2004. The Iraq Campaign Medal was designed by the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry. The Iraq Campaign Medal became available for general distribution in June 2005. It was awarded to any member of the U.S. military who performed duty within the borders of Iraq (or its territorial waters) for a period of thirty consecutive days or sixty non-consecutive days. The medal was awarded retroactively from March 19, 2003 until the end of Operation New Dawn on December 31, 2011. Personnel who engaged in combat with an enemy force, or personnel wounded in combat or wounded as a result of a terrorist attack within Iraq received the Iraq Campaign Medal regardless of the number of days spent within the country.

In addition, each day participating in aerial missions as a "regularly assigned air crewmember of an aircraft flying sorties into, out of, within or over Iraq and in direct support of the military operations" established a single day of eligibility. When the required minimum days of eligibility were accrued, the medal was then awarded.

The medal was also awarded posthumously to any service member who died in the line of duty within Iraq, including from non-combat injuries such as accidents and mishaps.

On April 23, 2012, an order terminating the award of the campaign medal was issued by the Department of Defense. The order is effective to December 31, 2011, the day Operation New Dawn ended. Personnel serving in Iraq after 2011 will not be eligible to receive the Iraq Campaign Medal.

The Iraq Campaign Medal may be awarded with the arrowhead device for qualified soldiers. The Iraq Campaign Medal may be awarded with the combat operation insignia for qualified sailors assigned to Marine Corps units. The following are the established combat campaigns authorized for service stars to the Iraq Campaign Medal. On June 23, 2011, a DOD announcement closed the Iraqi Sovereignty phase and authorized an additional service star for participation in Operation New Dawn.

The medal is made of bronze and is 1.25 inches (32 mm) in diameter. The obverse depicts a relief of the map of Iraq, surmounted by two lines throughout, superimposed over a palm wreath. Above is the inscription "IRAQ CAMPAIGN." On the reverse, the Statue of Freedom surmounts a sunburst, encircled by two scimitars pointing down with the blades crossing at the tips. Below is the inscription "FOR SERVICE IN IRAQ." The medal is suspended from a ribbon 1.375 inches (34.9 mm) wide. The stripes of the ribbon are: 5/32 inch scarlet at the edges, followed by 1/16 inch white, 1/32 inch green and 1/16 inch white. The white is separated by a 5/32 inch black with a 7/16 inch stripe is chamois in the center.

The award replaced the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal for service in Iraq from March 19, 2003, through April 30, 2005. Personnel who previously received the GWOTEM for Iraq service were given the option to exchange the medal for the Iraq Campaign Medal. Both medals were not authorized for the same period of service in Iraq and any Iraq service which followed the medals creation was recognized only with the Iraq Campaign Medal.



Picture of the Iraq Campaign Medal and Ribbon.

Coming in the Next Issue...

Debt Management, Role of a social Worker @ VAMC, & Dental care