



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

May/June 2018



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At A Glance Calendar May & June

For a list of events in Lexington County for May & June

See page 15 Happenings Around Lexington County

Weekly on Tuesdays in May

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Thursday, May 3rd

Gaston Outreach

Friday, May 4th

Chapin Outreach

Tuesday, May 8th

County Council Meeting

Thursday, May 10th

Confederate Memorial Day
County Offices Closed

Sunday, May 13th

Mother's Day

Thursday, May 17th

Ft. Jackson's Employer's Day
For more info, see page 18

Saturday, May 19th

Armed Forces Day
Dang-it Doll Workshop
For more info see page 8
Palmetto Patriot's Ball
For more info, see page 11

Tuesday, May 22nd

County Council Meeting

Monday, May 28th

Memorial Day
County Offices Closed
For list of events, see page 13

Weekly on Tuesdays in June

Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon

Friday, June 1st

Chapin Outreach

Saturday, June 2nd through Saturday, June 9th

NACVSO Conference in Reno, NV

Wednesday, June 13th

County Council Meeting

Sunday, June 17th

Father's Day

Tuesday, June 19th

Lexington County Primary Election

Thursday, June 21st

County Council Meeting
Ft. Jackson's Employer's Day
For more info, see page 18

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...

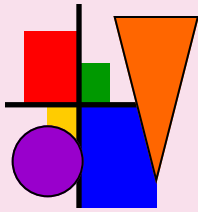
At last spring is here! At last we are settled in to our brand new office complex! We moved into a wonderful, carefully planned facility on February 12, 2018. It is everything we hoped it would be and has exceeded all of our expectations. The County held a ribbon cutting ceremony on March 16, 2018 and it was well attended. Folks from the VA Regional Office, the Dorn VA Medical Center, the State Office of Veterans Affairs, several other County VA offices, several Veteran's Service Organizations, County Council, County Delegation, Veterans and the general public were on hand for this auspicious occasion. Mrs. Mary Hazelton was there and she has the distinction of being the oldest former employee of this Department. She was hired by Dr. R.H. Fulmer in 1944 and she has been an inspiration to me and my staff. She has shared so much history of this Department and it was a true delight to have her in attendance.

For the first time in the history of this Department, our office is designed for the people we serve, disabled Veterans. We have a wide hallway, wide entrance, handicapped accessible doors and we are quite proud of this. It took 4 ½ years of planning and preparing for this new office. We are in the same building but up front where we belong. Please stop by for a tour of your new County Veterans Affairs Office.

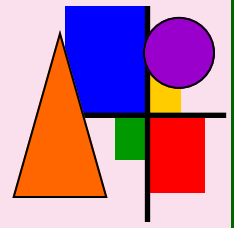
The VA appeals system has changed and we will be glad to assist you if you get a letter from them indicating you want to opt in to this new way of making decisions on appeals. It is new to us and it seems to be working. The law changed on appeals in August of last year to make it better and quicker for a decision, rather than taking years for a decision. It is not for everyone and certain eligibility is required. If you have questions or concerns on the new appeal system at VA, please call our office and we will gladly help you.

Enjoying the journey!





Aid & Attendance Benefits



A Veteran can receive housebound or aid and attendance benefits through the VA in one of two ways. The first is if you are a 100% service-connected Veteran; the other is through the non-service connected pension program. A surviving spouse can receive this benefit through survivor's benefits.

For service-connected Veterans

If a Veteran is service-connected at the 100% rate and is housebound, bedridden, or is so helpless as to need the aid and attendance of another person, then payment of additional Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) can be considered. The amount of SMC will vary depending on the level of disability.

For non-service connected Veterans

Veterans who are eligible for VA pension and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person may be eligible for an additional monetary payment. Veterans who are eligible for a VA pension and require the aid and attendance of another person, or are housebound, may be eligible for additional monetary payment. These benefits are paid in addition to monthly pension, and they are not paid without eligibility to pension.

Since Aid and Attendance and Housebound allowances increase the pension amount, people who are not eligible for a basic pension due to excessive income may be eligible for pension at these increased rates. A Veteran may not receive Aid and Attendance benefits and housebound benefits at the same time.

For Surviving Spouses

Surviving spouses that are eligible for either DIC or surviving spouse pension may also qualify for housebound or aid and attendance benefits. The surviving spouse must meet the same healthcare requirement as listed above for a Veteran.



Aid & Attendance (A&A)

The Aid & Attendance (A&A) increased monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount if you meet one of the following conditions: 1 - You require the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment. 2 - You are bedridden, in that your disability or disabilities requires that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment. 3 - You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity. 4 - Your eyesight is limited to a corrected 5/200 visual acuity or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less.

Housebound

This increase monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount when you are substantially confined your immediate premises because of permanent disability.

Continued on page 4

Aid and Attendance Benefits continued from page 3

You may apply for A&A or housebound benefits through our office or by writing the VA regional office where you filed a claim. If the regional office of jurisdiction is not known, you may file the request with any VA regional office. You should include copies of any evidence, preferably a report from an attending physician, validating the need for A&A or housebound type care. The report should have sufficient detail to determine whether there is disease or injury producing physical or mental impairment, loss of coordination, or conditions affecting the ability to dress and undress, to feed oneself, to attend to the wants of nature, and to keep oneself ordinarily clean and presentable. Whether the claim is for A&A or housebound, the report should indicate how well the applicant gets around, where the applicant goes, and what he or she is able to do during a typical day. This can be a statement from the attending physician or a VA form 21-2680 (examination for housebound status or permanent need for regular aid and attendance). In addition, it is necessary to determine whether the claimant is confined to the home or immediate premises. This can be a statement from the facility or a VA form 21-0779 (request for nursing home information in connection with claim for aid and attendance).



May is National Water Safety Month!



June is National Great Outdoors 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.



Burn Pits

The use of burn pits was a common waste disposal practice at military sites outside the United States such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Smoke from these pits contained substances that may have short- and long-term health effects, especially for those who were exposed for long periods or those more prone to illness such as individuals with pre-existing asthma or other lung or heart conditions. Toxins in burn pit smoke may affect the skin, eyes, respiratory and cardiovascular systems, gastrointestinal tract and internal organs. Veterans who were closer to burn pit smoke or exposed for longer periods may be at greater risk. Health effects depend on a number of other factors, such as the kind of waste being burned and wind direction. Most of the irritation is temporary and resolves once the exposure is gone. This includes eye irritation and burning, coughing and throat irritation, breathing difficulties, and skin itching and rashes. The high level of fine dust and pollution common in Iraq and Afghanistan may pose a greater danger for respiratory illnesses than exposure to burn pits, according to a 2011 Institute of Medicine report. Waste products in burn pits include, but are not limited to: chemicals, paint, medical and human waste, metal/aluminum cans, munitions and other unexploded ordnance, petroleum and lubricant products, plastics, rubber, wood, and discarded food. Burning waste in open air pits can cause more pollution than controlled burning, such as in an incinerator. At this time, research does not show evidence of long-term health problems from exposure to burn pits. VA continues to study the health of deployed Veterans.

If you are concerned about your exposure to burn pits, talk to your health care provider or contact your local VA Environmental Health Coordinator at the nearest VA facility or call 1 877 222-8387. VA health care is available to all combat Veterans for conditions possibly related to service for five years after discharge. Join the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry and complete the free voluntary medical evaluation, to help the VA learn more about potential health effects. Check your eligibility and sign up through an online questionnaire at <https://veteran.mobliehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry>. Eligible Veterans and service members include those who served in:

- Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn
- Djibouti, Africa on or after September 11, 2001
- Operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm
- Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after August 2, 1990

In total, 134,620 Veterans and service members completed and submitted the registry questionnaire between April 25, 2014 and March 5, 2018. It takes about 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire. You can do it in one sitting or save it and come back later. You can print and use your completed questionnaire to discuss concerns with your provider. VA providers can also access an online copy of your questionnaire.

Important points about the Burn Pit Registry:

- No cost to participate
- Not a disability compensation questionnaire or required for other VA benefits
- Enrollment in VA's health care system not necessary
- Based on Veterans'/service members' recollection of service, not on their military records
- Veterans'/service members' family members are not eligible to participate

Veterans may file a claim for disability compensation for health problems they believe are related to exposure to burn pits during military service. VA decides these claims on a case-by-case basis.



You are invited to a

Memorial Day Service

“The Hero is commonly the simplest
and obscurest of man.”

_ Henry David Thoreau

Monday, May 28, 2018
10:00 am

Caughman Harman Funeral Home
503 North Lake Drive
Lexington, SC 29072
803-359-6118

***COME JOIN US TO REMEMBER AND THANK THOSE
WHO SACRIFICED ALL OR SOME OF THEMSELVES FOR
OUR NATION'S FREEDOMS***

Light refreshments will be served following the Service

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.

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.

Dang-it Dolls Workshops

Saturday, May 19th 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.

There will be no workshops during June, July and August.



**May is
National
Hamburger
Month!**



**June is
National
Iced Tea
Month!**

**Don't forget to vote on Tuesday, June 19th in
the Lexington County Primary Elections.**



ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of May & June?



May 1, 1707 - Great Britain was formed from a union between England and Scotland. The United Kingdom today consists of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



May 5, 1961 - Alan Shepard became the first American in space.



May 6, 1937 - The German airship, the Hindenburg, burst into flames following a trans-Atlantic voyage.



May 7, 1915 - The British passenger ship, the Lusitania, was torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. The attack hastened neutral America's entry into World War I.



May 12, 1820 - British nurse and public health activist Florence Nightingale was born in Florence, Italy.



May 18, 1980 - Mount St. Helens volcano erupted in southwestern Washington State. This was the first major eruption since 1857.



May 19, 1890 - Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh was born in the central Vietnamese village of Kim Lien (as Nguyen That Thanh).



American Red Cross

May 21, 1881 - The American Red Cross was founded by Clara Barton.



May 27, 1937 - In San Francisco, 200,000 people celebrated the grand opening of the Golden Gate Bridge by strolling across it.



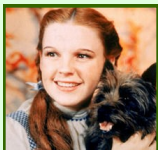
May 30, 1783 - The *Pennsylvania Evening Post* became the first daily newspaper published in America.



June 1, 1926 - Marilyn Monroe was born in Los Angeles, CA.



June 6, 1944 - D-Day, the largest amphibious landing in history, began in the early-morning hours as Allied forces landed in Normandy on the northern coast of France.



June 10, 1922 - Judy Garland was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.



June 11, 1923 - American football coach Vince Lombardi was born in Brooklyn, New York.

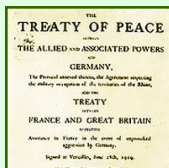


June 14, 1777 - John Adams introduced a resolution before Congress mandating a United States flag. This anniversary is celebrated each year as Flag Day.



June 24, 1895 - Boxing champ Jack Dempsey was born in Manassa, Colorado.

June 28, 1919 - The signing of the Treaty of Versailles formally ended World War I.



June 30, 1971 - The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted, granting the right to vote in all federal, state and local elections to American citizens 18 years or older.





Fisher House

A Fisher House is, "a home away from home" for families and Caregivers of Veterans and Active Duty Military receiving treatment at major military and VA medical facilities. VA Fisher House accommodations are provided at no cost to guests, and located within walking distance of the treatment facility.

VA Fisher Houses provide temporary accommodations at no cost for Veterans, Active Duty Military, their families and Caregivers while receiving treatment through a VA Medical Facility.

As of February 2018, there are seventy-six Fisher Houses located in the US, Germany and the United Kingdom on military installations and VA medical facilities. Typically, the houses are 5,000 to 16,800 square foot homes donated by the Fisher family and Fisher House Foundation. Each house is designed to provide 8 to 21 suites. All are professionally furnished and decorated in the tone and style of the local region. The houses can accommodate 16 to 42 family members. They feature a common kitchen, laundry facilities, spacious dining room and an inviting living room with library, and toys for children. Newest houses are 100% handicap accessible and include elevators. A Fisher House is a temporary residence and is not a treatment facility, hospice or counseling center. The program began in 1990, and has offered more than six million days of lodging to more than 277,000 families.

In September 2016, the WJB Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center completed the application process for a Fisher House to be built on the facility property in Columbia, South Carolina. On November 8, 2016, facility leadership was notified that Dorn's proposal had been approved.

Pictures from our Ribbon Cutting and Open House



The Midlands Chapter of Blue Star Mothers presents
the 9th Annual



A Salute to South Carolina Patriots

Saturday, May 19, 2018

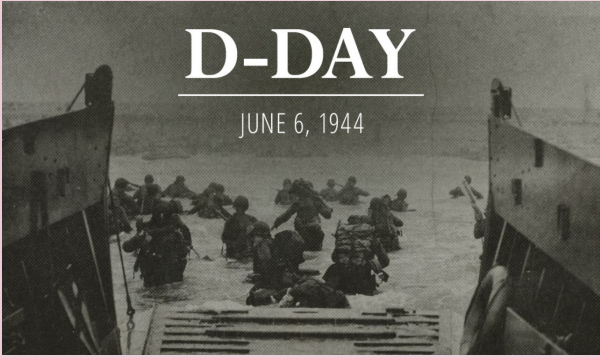
NCO Club Fort Jackson - Columbia

5:30pm—Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction

6:45pm—Dinner and Program

**Now is your chance to say thank you to South Carolina's
Military and Veterans by supporting and attending the
Midlands Chapter of Blue Star Mothers' Palmetto Patriots' Ball.**

The Palmetto Patriots' Ball is hosted by the Midlands Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. and is a non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization.



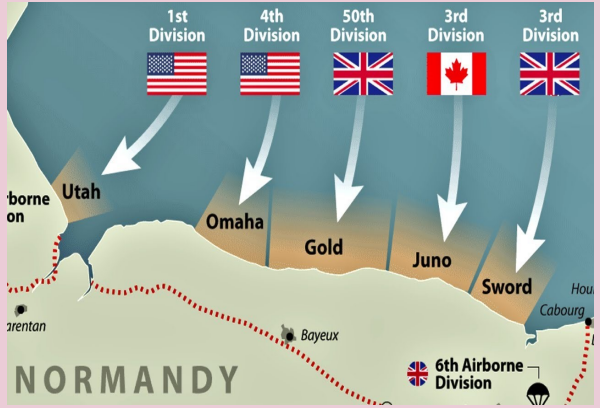
The History of the D-Day Invasion

After World War II began, Germany invaded and occupied northwestern France beginning in May 1940. The Americans entered the war in December 1941, and by 1942, they and the British were considering the possibility of a major Allied invasion across the English Channel. The following year, Allied plans for a cross-Channel invasion began to ramp up. In November 1943, Adolf Hitler, who was aware of the threat of an invasion along

France's northern coast, put Erwin Rommel in charge of spearheading defense operations in the region, even though the Germans did not know exactly where the Allies would strike. Hitler charged Rommel with finishing the Atlantic Wall, a 2,400-mile fortification of bunkers, landmines and beach and water obstacles.

In January 1944, General Dwight Eisenhower was appointed commander of Operation Overlord. In the months and weeks before D-Day, the Allies carried out a massive deception operation intended to make the Germans think the main invasion target was Pas-de-Calais (the narrowest point between Britain and France) rather than Normandy. In addition, they led the Germans to believe that Norway and other locations were also potential invasion targets. Many tactics were used to carry out the deception, including fake equipment; a phantom army commanded by George Patton and supposedly based in England, across from Pas-de-Calais; double agents; and fraudulent radio transmissions.

Eisenhower selected June 5, 1944, as the date for the invasion; however, bad weather on the days leading up to the operation caused it to be delayed for 24 hours. On the morning of June 5, after his meteorologist predicted improved conditions for the following day, Eisenhower gave the go-ahead for Operation Overlord. Later that day, nearly 5,000 landing and assault craft, 289 escort vessels, and 277 minesweepers participating. Nearly 160,000 troops crossed the English Channel on D-Day while more than 11,000 aircraft were mobilized to provide air cover and support for the invasion.



By dawn on June 6, thousands of paratroopers and glider troops were already on the ground behind enemy lines, securing bridges and exit roads. The amphibious invasions began at 6:30 a.m. The men landed under heavy fire from gun emplacements overlooking the beaches, and the shore was mined and covered with obstacles such as wooden stakes, metal tripods, and barbed wire, making the work of the beach-clearing teams difficult and dangerous. The British and Canadians overcame light opposition to capture beaches codenamed Gold, Juno and



Sword, as did the Americans at Utah Beach. Casualties were heaviest at Omaha, with its high cliffs. At Gold, Juno, and Sword, several fortified towns were cleared in house-to-house fighting, and two major gun emplacements at Gold were disabled, using specialized tanks. Less than a week later, on June 11, the beaches were fully secured and over 326,000 troops, more than 50,000 vehicles and some 100,000 tons of equipment had landed at Normandy. Continued on page 13

The History of the D-Day Invasion continued from page 12

By the end of August 1944, the Allies had reached the Seine River, Paris was liberated and the Germans had been removed from northwestern France, effectively concluding the Battle of Normandy. The Allied forces then prepared to enter Germany, where they would meet up with Soviet troops moving in from the east. The Normandy invasion began to turn the tide against the Nazis. A significant psychological blow, it also prevented Hitler from sending troops from France to build up his Eastern Front against the advancing Soviets. The following spring, on May 8, 1945, the Allies formally accepted the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. Hitler had committed suicide a week earlier, on April 30.

German casualties on D-Day have been estimated at 4,000 to 9,000 men. Allied casualties were at least 10,000, with 4,414 confirmed dead. At Omaha Beach, parts of the Mulberry harbor are still visible, and a few of the beach obstacles remain. A memorial to the American National Guard sits at the location of a former German strongpoint. Pointe du Hoc is little changed from 1944, with the terrain covered with bomb craters and most of the concrete bunkers still in place. The Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial is nearby, in Colleville-sur-Mer. A museum about the Utah landings is located at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, and there is one dedicated to the activities of the American airmen at Sainte-Mère-Église. Two German military cemeteries are located nearby.



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 David Kerr, Dean Crepes, Adam McCullough, and Bo Davenport. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of March and April.

THANKS

Memorial Day Happenings

- 9am Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Jackson Cemetery. For more information contact the cemetery @ 866-577-5248.
- 10am Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Jackson Headquarters. This includes a 21 gun salute. For more information contact Fort Jackson Army Community Service @ 803-751-5256.
- 10am Memorial Day Program at Caughman-Harman Funeral Home in Lexington. For more information see their flyer on page 7 or contact the funeral home @ 803-359-6118.



News About Discharge Upgrades or Changes

The Department of Defense, through a joint initiative with the Department of Veterans Affairs, is pleased to announce the launch of a web-based tool that will provide customized guidance to Veterans who desire to upgrade or change the conditions of their military discharge. “We are thrilled to have partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs in developing this wonderful and easily-accessible tool,” said Mr. Robert Wilkie, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. “We support our Veterans, whether they served recently or long ago, and we are excited to introduce a tool that will individualize the guidance for those who desire an upgrade or change in their military discharge,” he said.

Over the years, some Veterans have criticized the review process as daunting or difficult to understand. The issuance of supplemental guidance over the past few years, while helpful to many, has the side effect of creating multiple guidance documents that can be confusing to some.

Furthermore, some Veterans suffer from mental health or other conditions that make tasks like these more difficult for them than for others.

This innovative tool simplifies and customizes the guidance. By answering a few short questions, Veterans will know which board they need to go to, what form to fill out, any special guidance applicable to their case, where to send their application, and some helpful tips for appealing their discharge. Any Veterans who believe their discharge was unjust, erroneous, or warrants an upgrade are encouraged to use this tool and then apply for review.

This tool can be found on Vets.gov at: <https://www.vets.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions>. The link is also available on Military OneSource (<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/>) and each of the review board’s websites (listed below). The link has also been forwarded to a number of Veterans Service Organizations and Military Service Organizations in order to spread the news to as many Veterans as possible.

This initiative was one of many in recent years aimed at improving the review process and guidance available to Veterans who believe they may have been unfairly discharged or received an unfair discharge characterization. The Department issued special guidance in 2011 for Veterans discharged under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” or its predecessor policies. Also, the Department issued guidance related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) in 2014. Most recently, in February 2016, the Department redoubled its efforts to ensure Veterans received the benefit of the latest guidance and statutes of limitations were liberally waived in such cases. Subsequently, in December 2016, the Department launched two internal reviews of its policies and procedures. That review disclosed some gaps and confusion in the previous guidance. In August 2017, the Department issued significant guidance clarifying how review boards will consider cases involving mental health conditions, including PTSD, TBI, sexual assault, or sexual harassment.

For information on a specific board, please contact the board directly or through its website at:

Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records

Website: <http://www.afpc.af.mil/Career-Management/Board-for-Correction-of-Military-Records/>

Phone: 240-612-5379

E-mail: usaf.pentagon.saf-mr.mbx.saf-mrbc@mail.mil

Air Force Discharge Review Board:

Website: <http://www.afpc.af.mil/Separation/Discharge-Review-Board/>

Phone: 240-612-0995

E-mail: usaf.pentagon.saf-mr.mbx.saf-mrb@mail.mil

Army Board for Correction of Military Records:

Website: <http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/>

E-mail: army.arbainquiry@mail.mil

Army Discharge Review Board:

Website: <http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/>

E-mail: army.arbainquiry@mail.mil

Navy Board for Correction of Naval Records:

Website: <http://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/bcncr/Pages/home.aspx>

Phone: 703-607-6111

E-mail: BCNR_Application@navy.mil

Navy Discharge Review Board:

Website: <http://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/CORB/Pages/NDRB/default.aspx>

Phone: 202-685-6600

E-mail: NDRB@navy.mil



Happenings Around Lexington County

During the Months of May & June

Saturday, May 5th

Pickin' & Piggin'

Saluda Shoals Park; 11am to 2:30pm
For more information, visit their website at icrc.net/pickin-piggin
or call 803-731-5208.



Sunday, May 6th

Spring Open House

At the Lexington County Museum; 2 to 5 pm For more information
visit their website at lex-co.com or call 803-359-8369.



Thursday, May 10th
through
Saturday, May 12th

SC Poultry Festival

Main Street, Leesville; 8am to 10pm
For more information, visit their website at scpoultryfestival.com.



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.



Saturday, May 12th

Lexington Wine Walk on Main

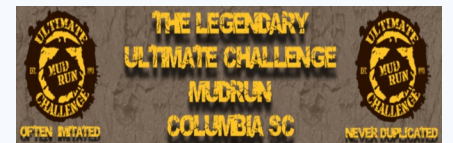
Icehouse Amphitheater, West Main Street; 6 to 10pm
For more information, visit their website at
lexingtonwinewalk.com.



Saturday, May 19th

25th Annual Ultimate Challenge Mud Run

Valley Ridge Road, Gaston; 8:30am to 12pm For more
Information visit their website at
ultimatechallengemudrun.org or call 803-477-0541.



Monday, May 28th
through
Saturday, August 4th

Lexington Blowfish Baseball Season

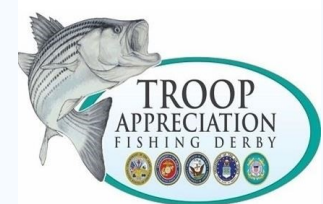
Lexington County Baseball Stadium; Games start at
7:05pm For more information, visit their website at
goblowlfishbaseball.com.



Wednesday, June 20th

Lake Murray Troop Appreciation Fishing Derby

Pine Island Country Club
For more information, visit their website at
lakemurraycountry.com or call 803-781-6491.

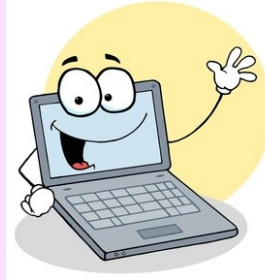


"Courage is contagious.
When a brave man takes a stand,
the spines of others are often stiffened."
- Billy Graham





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 Batesburg/Leesville in May or June and no outreach in Gaston in June.

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:

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:

**Thursday, May 10th
Confederate Memorial Day**

**Monday, May 28th
Memorial Day**



VA Updates and Improves Assistance Program for Transitioning Service Members

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ongoing efforts to help transitioning service members navigate and understand VA's various benefits, the agency recently updated VA's briefing portion of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) – an interagency initiative authorized as a voluntary program in 1991 under the National Defense Authorization Act and made mandatory under the VOW to Hire Heroes Act in 2011 to help service members adjust to civilian life.

The new VA briefing is designed to be more collaborative and stimulating, helping service members make informed decisions about their health care, employment, housing and other benefits.

Because no two transitions are the same, the updates deliver elements relevant to service members based on where they are in their career and life. The redesign will encourage whole-health support for service members and their family members, to include relevant information about Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and allow time to identify local VSO representatives.

The updates, released this month, incorporated suggestions made by Veterans, VSOs and post-9/11 Veterans groups, including taking a more holistic view of a service member's new life, as well as the psychosocial aspects of the transition to civilian life.

VA will now work to fully integrate TAP objectives into the military lifecycle, and as an added benefit, will begin implementing a post-transition Veteran survey. To view VA's updated curriculum, visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/TAP/>.

Improvements



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Start Strong - Serve Strong - Reintegrate Strong - Remain Strong

2018

FORT JACKSON

EMPLOYER'S DAY

January 25
March 1, 22
April 19
May 17
June 21

Time: 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.
4600 Strom Thurmond Blvd,
Army Continuing Education System Center, 2nd Floor

The event is free to Veterans, Transitioning Service Members, Retirees, and Spouses. For more information contact (803) 751-1127/4109.

News Tidbits from Dorn VAMC



The ground breaking for the new parking garage on the

Dorn VAMC campus will be held before the end of June. Dorn has also received approval to have a second garage built on the campus. Stay tuned for more updates.

Veterans can now use *my* healthvet to make requests



to schedule appointments. You can now schedule and manage your primary care and certain specialty care VA appointments online through the health portal at participating VA facilities. If you need help with online scheduling, please dial 1-877-470-5947. For TTY assistance, dial 711. The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. CT.



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.

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

Happy Mother's Day



A Time to Remember

Memorial Day is a time to remember, to honor and show our respect For all men and women who gave up their lives for the country they fought to protect. Although we cannot picture all of their faces nor recognize each person's name, we give thanks today for those brave United States soldiers. When called by our country, they came.

Happy Father's Day



Featured Medal:

National Defense Service Medal

The National Defense Service Medal is a military service medal of the United States military originally commissioned by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Created in 1953, the National Defense Service Medal was intended to be a "blanket campaign medal" awarded to any member of the United States military who served honorably during a designated time period of which a "national emergency" had been declared.

As of 2010, with an issuance span of sixty years, the National Defense Service Medal is the oldest service medal still in circulation by the United States armed forces, followed second by the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal which has been active since 1961. Combat and meritorious decorations (such as the Medal of Honor, Silver Star, Purple Heart and Commendation Medals) are older still, but are considered personal decorations and are classified under separate award criteria from service medals.

In the years since the creation of the National Defense Service Medal, it is authorized only for the following time periods:

- * June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1954 for service during the Korean War
- * January 1, 1961 to August 14, 1974 for service during the Vietnam War
- * August 2, 1990 to November 30, 1995 for service during the Gulf War
- * September 11, 2001 to a date to be announced for service during the War on Terrorism

The National Defense Service Medal is awarded to anyone who serves on active duty in the United States military during the above time periods. For service in the Gulf War, members of the military reserve (in good standing) or National Guard were initially awarded the NDSM when called to active duty service, but this was later expanded to include all members of the Reserve or National Guard in good standing on the Reserve Active Status List (or equivalent) during the eligibility period. For service in the War on Terrorism, Selected Reserve and National Guard members need only to have been in good standing to receive the NDSM, and no active duty service is required. Inactive Ready Reserve and Retired Reserve are not eligible to be awarded the NDSM unless called to active duty.

The National Defense Service Medal is authorized to Cadets and Midshipmen at the service academies after they are sworn into service, as well as pre-commission officer candidates/trainees at the Officer Candidate Schools or Officer Training Schools of the various U.S. services; but is not granted to discharged or retired Veterans who did not serve in one of the above time periods; nor is it authorized for Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Cadets and Midshipmen who enlisted in the inactive reserve (i.e., Obligated Reserve Section or ORS) during qualifying periods.

The National Defense Service Medal ranks eleventh out of twenty-nine in the order of precedence of service medals. There is no time limit imposed for the medal's issuance, meaning that someone who joins the military for simply a few days, and then receives an entry level discharge, would technically be entitled to the NDSM; in practice, however, military clerks will not add the NDSM on a DD Form 214 if the service member performed duty for less than 90 days from the completion of their initial entry training. This accounts for the medal's omission from a large number of "uncharacterized" and "entry level" separation documents.

Multiple awards of the National Defense Service Medal are authorized for members of the military who served in more than one of the eligible time periods; such additional awards are denoted by service stars. A second award of the medal is not granted for reenlisting during the same time period or transferring between branches of service.



Picture of Global War on Terrorism Medal.

Coming in the Next Issue...

Death/Burial Benefits. My healthVet, What is a DD214 or discharge Papers