

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



GARY R. BAKER
DIRECTOR
JEAN FRICK
ASST. CSO

TELEPHONE: (803) 359-8400
FAX: (803) 808-2105

VET NEWS

November 2003

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

OUTREACH PROGRAM TO START

The Veterans Affairs Office will begin monthly visits to outlying towns beginning in November. This program will allow veterans and their family members to meet with Veterans Affairs Office staff in a setting closer to home.

The Veterans Affairs Office assists former and present members of the United States Armed Forces and their families to obtain benefits for which they are entitled. The office assists veterans with service-connected and non-service-connected claims, educational benefits, home loans, and burial benefits. The office certifies and records DD-214s and assists with correcting military records.

The schedule is as follows:

**Batesburg-Leesville- 1st Tuesday of every month at
Batesburg-Leesville Police Department Courtroom**
**Chapin- 2nd Tuesday of every month at Chapin Town
Hall Council Chambers/Courtroom***
**Swansea- 3rd Tuesday of every month at Swansea Town
Hall Council Chambers/Courtroom**

Sessions for each program will run from **8 am to 12 noon.**

* The initial program will be held at Chapin on Wednesday, November 12th since the 2nd Tuesday in November falls on Veterans Day, a holiday. Thereafter, the meeting there will be on the 2nd Tuesday of every month.

Attendees should contact the Veterans Affairs Office at (803) 359-8400 to arrange an appointment and discuss what documentation to bring to the meeting.

VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE WEBSITE

The Veterans Affairs Office website can be located at:
www.lex-co.com/VA/veterans-affairs-office.html

The website includes general information about the office and its responsibilities, flag flying days, discharge papers, additional links, burial benefits, calendar of events, ways to support our troops, and the full text of our newsletters.



**CELEBRATING
AMERICA'S
FREEDOMS**

VETERANS DAY ACTIVITIES

Veterans can be properly feted for Veterans Day this year. A number of events are scheduled for the midlands area to honor the men and women who serve and have served our country.

Nov. 6, 10:00 am	Veterans Day Program, Dorn VA Medical Center
Nov. 7, 8 am -3:30 pm	Homeless Veterans Standdown-Salvation Army, Columbia
Nov. 8-9	Celebrate Freedom Foundation, Camden, SC
Nov. 9, 3:00 pm	Veterans Day Parade, Lexington
Nov. 11, 11:00 am	Veterans Day Parade, Columbia

Dorn VA Medical Center always has an excellent program to honor veterans. Command Sergeant Major Russell Anderson, formerly the Command Sergeant Major at Fort Jackson, will be the guest speaker. The program begins at 10 am on November 6th in the Poat Auditorium.

The Homeless Veterans Standdown will be conducted on the 7th at the Salvation Army in Columbia. The Standdown provides resources including meals, human services, clothing, counseling, and medical and mental care.

Celebrate Freedom Foundation has an extensive program scheduled in Columbia and Camden on the 8th and 9th. Look at their website at:
<http://www.celebratefreedomfoundation.org>
for their complete schedule.

Downtown Lexington will be the site of a parade and ceremony at 3:00 pm on Sunday, November 9th. Bands, ROTC units, veterans organizations, school



groups and patriotic organizations will be participating. Korean War veterans will be the Grand Marshalls. At the conclusion of the parade, a ceremony will be held in Virginia Hylton Park with Congressman Joe Wilson as the guest speaker. A brief ceremony will follow at the

Lexington County Veterans Monument to retire the service flags and recognize major contributors and Monument Committee members. There is still time to sign up for a unit or float in the parade. Korean War veterans who wish to ride on a trolley and floats in the parade should contact the VA office.

Tuesday, November 11th will see the Columbia Veterans Day Parade, one of the largest in the country. This annual event will take place at 11:00 am in downtown Columbia.



COMFORT ITEMS- CHRISTMAS

Our troops overseas need to be remembered as the Christmas holiday season looms. The Blue Star Mothers have advised us that the troops can use:

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|--|---------------------------|
| DVD's | CDs |
| Small hand held games | Batteries |
| Books of card games | Tape players |
| Books (for both men and women) | Tapes |
| Anything small that could help relax a soldier | |
| Portable CD players | Magazines with US goodies |
| Christmas candy that does not melt | |

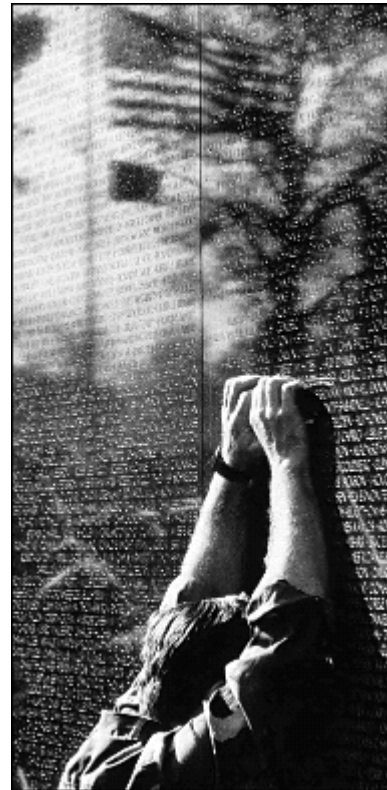
The troops are being given or have received general toiletries like toothpaste, baby wipes, etc. so the above items are more suitable. Also, many romance novels have been sent overseas; many of the male servicemembers don't care to read them so sports or military magazines or books are more appreciated.

The Veterans Affairs Office will continue to collect these items until November 14th when we'll put together a shipment to arrive for the holidays.

REMEMBER OUR POW/MIAs

This Veterans Day is another special time to remember our POWs and MIAs.

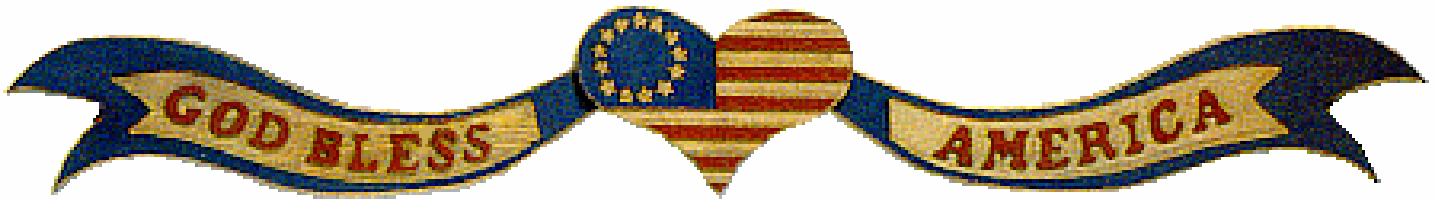
Recently, President George W. Bush proclaimed POW/MIA Recognition Day for September 19, 2003: *The sacrifice and service of America's veterans, including those who became prisoners of war or who went missing in action, have preserved freedom for America and brought freedom to millions around the world. On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we honor the extraordinary courage of the Americans who have been prisoners of war, and we pray for those who are still missing in action and unaccounted for. This Nation also remembers the challenges and heartache endured by the families of prisoners of war and missing in action. We seek answers for the families of those who are still missing, and we will not rest until we have a full accounting.*



DEATHS OR HOSPITALIZATION

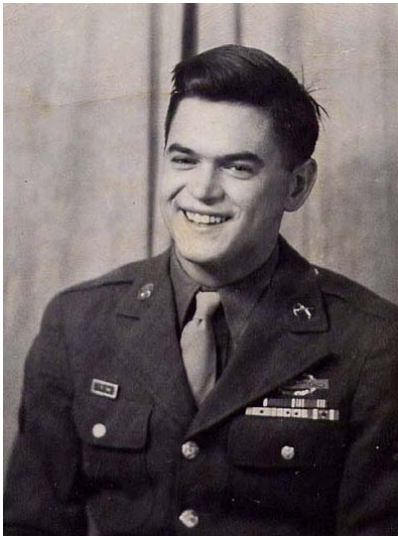
Keep the Veterans Affairs Office informed of any hospitalizations or deaths so the staff can visit or pay respects.

With the new patient privacy legislation, it is difficult for this office to know when a veteran or family member is hospitalized or moves into a nursing home or retirement community.



VIDEOTAPING VETERANS

Guy G. Wright was videotaped recently relating the story of his service in the Army during World War



II. Wright enlisted when he was 15 years old and served in the Philippines. Shortly after his 16th birthday, he was captured on Corregidor and imprisoned for 40 months.

In the videotape, Wright reveals his experiences as a soldier and a POW. Wright was also featured in an October

2 news article in the *Lexington Chronicle*.

The VA Office is looking for other volunteers to be videotaped in either private interviews or at school or civic presentations.

Each videotape will be edited with graphics added. Copies will be provided to the veteran, Library of Congress, local school, library, and to the VA office.

Funding for this project has been accomplished through donations to the Lexington Veterans Fund by various individuals and veterans organizations.

TWIN CITY NEWS ARTICLES

Louise Riley continues her stories of veterans from the Batesburg-Leesville area that served during World War II. Recently, articles in the *Twin City News* were published about two Navy men, Lewis Sheppard and Clyde Clark along with three Army veterans, Bud Mabus, William R. Carson, and Hazel Black

Ms. Riley spends time with each veteran asking pertinent questions and writing lengthy stories of these local veterans. Several stories have been continued in two or three issues.

Veterans from the Batesburg-Leesville area who would like to be interviewed can contact the Twin City News or the Veterans Affairs Office.

CONCURRENT RECEIPT; VA HEALTH FUNDING

As this is being written, the dual issues of concurrent receipt and adequate funding for VA medical care are still up in the air.

The issue of concurrent receipt has resulted in legislation that the Administration has agreed to support. The bill would provide for a phase in of concurrent receipt over a 10 year period beginning in 2004. This legislation is pending passage by the House and Senate.

The House proposal expands the Combat-Related Special Compensation for all veterans rated 10% to 100% who qualified under the 2002 legislation. Those veterans would receive full concurrent receipt effective January 1, 2004.

All military retirees with more than 20 years of military service who are rated 50% or higher will have full concurrent receipt phased in over a 10 year period beginning January 1, 2004.

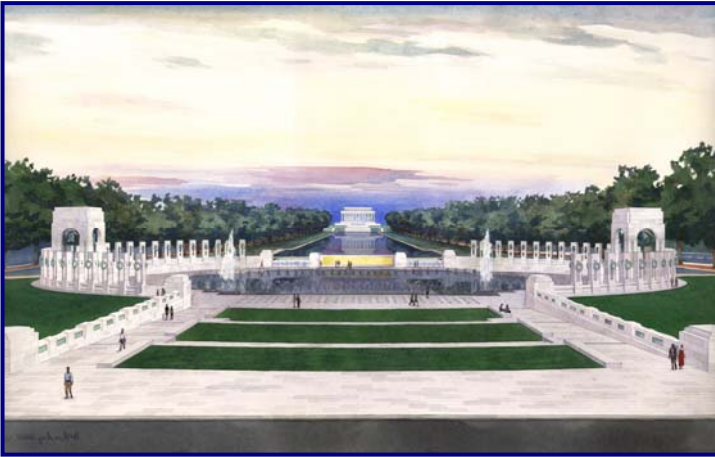
National Guard and Reservist retirees will be treated the same as active duty retirees in both programs.

The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and other veterans service organizations are fighting for a law that would fund VA health care on a mandatory rather than a discretionary basis. The funding is still almost \$2 billion short of what these veterans organizations deem appropriate. The war on terror will only make this situation worse, as wounded U.S. forces in Iraq and a rising number of recently medically retired troops seek treatment at the VA.



WORLD WAR II MONUMENT DEDICATION

On May 29, 2004, the National World War II Memorial will be dedicated in Washington, DC to all who served during World War II. The memorial will honor all military veterans of the war, the citizens on the home front, the nation at large, and the high moral purpose and idealism that motivated the nation's call to arms. The Second World War will be the only 20th century event commemorated on the Mall's central axis.



The memorial will be dedicated on Saturday, May 29, 2004 during a series of events in Washington and throughout the country. To learn more about the dedication plans, check out www.wwiimemorial.com

As part of the pre-dedication activities, veterans or their family members are encouraged to enroll them in the World War II Registry, a list of individual Americans who participated in the war effort as military or civilians. To search for currently enrolled honorees, or to enroll a family member or friend, go to the above website. Individuals who do not have internet access can contact the Veterans Affairs Office to get enrolled.

LEXINGTON VETERANS FUND

Thanks to all the individuals and veterans organizations that contributed to the Lexington Veterans Fund. Donations have been used to pay expenses for the Korean War Armistice program, Rally/Welcome Home for the Troops, videotaping supplies and equipment, and for the Proud To Be A Lexington County Veteran decals.

Call the VA office if you need any decals or want to participate in the veterans videotaping project.

You can still contribute to the Lexington Veterans Fund, P.O. Box 421, Lexington, SC 29071.



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Vietnam veterans may be interested in a growing organization in the midlands, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 303. Membership is open to Vietnam-era veterans (in-country veterans February 28, 1961-May 7, 1975)(era veterans August 5, 1964-May 7, 1975). The group meets at 7:00 pm on the third Wednesday of each month at 738 Meeting Street, West Columbia. Occasionally, the group meets at other locations; best to call ahead.

The VVA sponsors ice cream socials for patients at Dorn, conducts cookouts for Alston Wilkes Veterans Home, recognizes Blue Star Mothers, POW/MIAs, and participates in numerous patriotic events.

Frank Weick is the President, Fweick42@aol.com or (803) 788-9498.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Homeless Veterans Fundraiser at American Legion Post 6 on December 3 begins at 5:30 with dinner at 6:30. \$25 per person; \$40 per couple. Donations are accepted; participants may contribute items to be sold at a silent auction. Call John Bradley, Veterans Advocate at 255-4209.

American Legion Post 174 in Irmo annually provides a Christmas basket with turkey and fixings for needy veterans and widows. Contact the VA office if you know of someone in Lexington County who could use a basket.



