



**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**

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OPERATION RECONNECT



On March 24, Fort Jackson is offering the opportunity to see basic training close hand. For four hours, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, you can tour the facilities at Fort Jackson, see basic training up close, and eat with the trainees.

This is an excellent occasion to see how the warriors of today learn the rudimentary aspects of military life.

Call American Legion State Headquarters at (803) 799-1992 or (800) 642-7793 for further information and to make a reservation.

NEED YOUR DD214 QUICK?

Veterans often call the VA office and need a copy of their DD214 (discharge paper) to apply for benefits, for retirement, social security, etc. There are basically two ways to get a copy if you don't have your copy readily available:

- (1) Call your local VA office to see if a copy is already on file there. Generally, a DD214 is on file there if you previously filed a claim through the VA or if you took the precautionary step of recording it. More recent discharges are automatically sent to the VA office in the county where the veteran designates his/her home of record.
- (2) Contact the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis to obtain a copy. This can be accomplished by submitting a Form 180. The downside is that it may take 4-6 months to get a response back.

The time period can be shortened somewhat if you go online to the following site:

http://www.archives.gov/research_room/vetrecs/
You can place your request for a copy of your military records online, but then, within 20 days, you

need to send or fax a copy of the form with your signature.

A certified or recorded copy of your discharge should be readily available to you and/or your family for emergencies or for applying for benefits.

VIDEOTAPE PROJECT

American Legion Post 6 in Columbia has been awarded a \$3,931 grant from the SC Humanities Council. The grant will be utilized to produce oral and video histories of World War II veterans in conjunction with local veterans organizations and Lexington Elementary School.

Copies of the completed videotapes will be provided to schools, libraries, SC ETV, and the Library of Congress.

The VA office has been involved with some videotaping of veterans, however, as part of this project, we are looking for more volunteers willing to be videotaped about their World War II military careers.

Call the VA office if you can participate in this program.

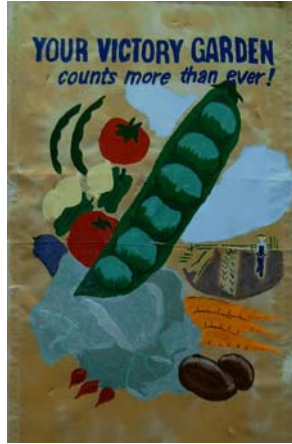


Uncle Sam Wants You, Rosie the Riveter, and Blue Star Banner in the Auxiliary Administration Building lobby

MURALS PRESENTED TO VA OFFICE

The VA office has received 6 large murals from the Pelion High School band. The murals were prepared for a patriotic program for the band during competition last fall. The murals, depicting images of World War II, have been mounted in the lobby of the Auxiliary Administration Building.

Photos of the murals can be seen elsewhere in this newsletter. They depict the victory gardens that were so popular during the war. Governments and corporations promoted this call for self-reliance. People in all areas, rural and urban alike, worked the soil to raise food for their families, friends, and neighbors. Victory gardening enabled more supplies to be shipped to our troops around the world.



One shows the familiar recruiting poster, "Uncle Sam Wants You."

Two others are the Blue Star and Gold Star banners.



During World War II, it was popular for families of servicemen and women to hang a banner with a blue star or series of blue stars, each star representing a member of the family who was in the military. If a member of the family was killed or died, a gold star was sewn over the blue star. These banners were generally hung in a front window or on the front door to show the sacrifices of the family.



Rosie the Riveter is also depicted in one of the banners. Rosie commemorates and interprets the important contributions that women made to the war

effort as increasing numbers of men joined the armed services

Over 6 million women from all backgrounds, and from all over the country, worked at industrial jobs that challenged traditional notions of women's capabilities and



ensured American productivity that helped to win the war. The sight of women outfitted in overalls and wielding industrial tools became an icon that was popularized in the 1942 song, "Rosie the Riveter," providing a nickname for all women who worked in wartime industries. Across the nation women worked in defense industries and support services including shipyards, steel mills, foundries, lumber mills, warehouses, offices, hospitals and daycare centers.

The sixth mural is a rendition of the flag raising on Iwo Jima. Five Marines and one Navy Corpsman are shown as they raise the US flag over the hotly-contested Mount Surabachi on Iwo Jima. Three of the Marines would be dead on Iwo Jima within a month; the Navy Corpsman would be awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic actions in treating wounded Marines.



A plaque recognizing the Pelion High School Band for this patriotic display will be placed in the lobby next to the murals.

HEALTH SCREENING

The Palmetto Health Alliance has awarded a \$1,500 grant to American Legion Post 6 to cover the expenses of a Health Fair. The fair will offer free prostate, blood pressure and diabetes screening. Health and veterans benefit information will be available.

Current plans are to have the Palmetto Health Alliance, Red Cross, Dorn VA Medical Center and other social services agencies participate. Private vendors will also be on hand.

The tentative date for the fair is May 3-4 at American Legion Post 6 in Columbia. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and drinks will be served to attendees.

WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL DEDICATION TRIP

It's not too late to get reservations to attend the May 29 dedication of the World War II monument in Washington. Check with the VA office to see where to get your reservations.

OUTREACH SCHEDULE

Mar 2 Batesburg-Leesville Police Department
Mar 9 Chapin Town Hall & Lowman Home
Mar 16 Swansea Police Department

Staff of the VA office travel to these outreach programs to assist veterans and family members who need assistance. We work on new or existing claims, help obtain military records or awards and decorations, and assist with other issues.

No appointment is necessary, however, we are at each location from 8-12. We will be at Lowman Home to talk to residents there on Mar 9 from 1-4 pm.

These outreach programs allow veterans and their families to obtain information locally. Of course, the VA office is also open to assist from 8-5, Monday through Fridays except for county holidays.



DATES TO REMEMBER

Mar 2 Outreach, Batesburg-Leesville, 8am-noon
Mar 5 Persian Gulf War Program, Dorn VA, noon
Mar 9 Outreach, Chapin, 8am-noon
Mar 16 Outreach, Swansea, 8am- noon
Mar 17 St. Patrick's Day
Mar 19 Korean War Program, Dorn VA, noon
Mar 20 First Day of Spring
Mar 24 Reconnect, Fort Jackson
April 3 Community Cares, Chapin
April 24 Retiree Appreciation Day, Fort Jackson
May 29 World War II Monument Dedication

THE WALL THAT HEALS

The Heritage Motorcycle Rally and the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 780 proudly invite you to participate in the activities welcoming *The Wall That Heals* to Brittlebank Park, Charleston, SC from April 14th to April 18th, 2004. *The Wall That Heals* is a half-scale replica of the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial** in Washington, D.C. designed to travel to communities throughout the United States.

The Wall That Heals, allows the many thousands of veterans and supporters who have been unable to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to do so within their own communities. *The Wall That Heals* features a traveling Museum and Information Center providing a comprehensive educational component to enrich and complete visitors' experiences. The Museum chronicles the Vietnam War era and the unique healing power of the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial**, while the Information Center serves as a venue for people to learn about friends and loved ones lost in the war.

Since its dedication, *The Wall That Heals* has visited more than 150 cities and towns throughout the nation, spreading the Memorial's healing legacy to millions. The schedule for *The Wall That Heals* while in Charleston is as follows:

Thursday, April 15 – 1100 – Reading of the 896 SC Names On The Wall

Thursday, April 15 – 1200 – Remembrance Ceremony and Wreath Laying

Thursday and Friday, April 15 & 16 – School and Educational Visits

Thursday through Sunday – Visitors are welcomed at The Wall

Sunday– 1000 – Tribute Ride from Ladson Fair Grounds to Magnolia Gardens Cemetery then on to Brittlebank Park to The Wall That Heals

If you, your Service Organization, ROTC Unit, school, union, church, club, civic or social organization, family, etc wish to be a part of this historical event, you are needed and welcomed. All organizations are encouraged to participate in the **Remembrance Ceremony and Wreath Laying**. Volunteers are needed to help escort visitors, to put *The Wall* up and down and provide security. Please contact the Vietnam Veterans of America at the following numbers for more information. Also, please pass this information to a friend or neighbor and show that Charleston remembers its Veterans. **843-762-7546, Fax: 843-762-7566,**

EEmail: bikergunny@msn.com



MANDATORY FUNDING FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE

These notes are extracted from a position paper by the Disabled American Veterans:

The current discretionary funding method for veterans' health care is broken. As a result, the needs of our nation's sick and disabled veterans are not being met. For two consecutive years, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has not received its appropriation in a timely fashion. On January 22, 2004, four months into the current fiscal year, the Senate passed the Omnibus Appropriations Act, which contains the spending levels for VA programs for fiscal year 2004. Although the VA health care budget was increased by approximately \$2.6 billion above last year's level, it was still nearly \$600 million less than recommended in *The Independent Budget* and the Congressional Budget Resolution.

The lack of a consistent and reliable budget process has prevented VA from adequately planning for and meeting the growing needs of veterans seeking health care. VA's enrolled patient population grown from 2.9 million in 1996 to nearly 7 million in 2003, a 134 percent increase. However, appropriated funding for VA medical care only increased 44 percent from \$16.6 billion in 1996 to \$23.9 billion in 2003. Continued funding shortfalls, combined with rising costs for medical care and increased demand for services, have resulted in unprecedented waiting times for routine and specialized medical services nationwide.

In May 2001, President Bush created the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for our Nation's Veterans (PTF). The PTF identified a significant mismatch between demand for

VA services and available funding, which, if left unresolved, would delay veterans' access to health care and threaten the quality of care provided, in the PTF's estimation. As an option, the PTF suggested full funding should occur through modifications to the budget and appropriations process, by using a mandatory funding mechanism...

We strongly believe that mandatory funding will provide a comprehensive solution for VA's health care funding crisis and that all enrolled veterans should be included under a mandatory funding mechanism.

Because of their extraordinary sacrifices and contributions, veterans have *earned* the right to free health care as a continuing cost of national defense. Mandatory health care funding would not create an individual entitlement to health care, nor change the VA's current mission. Guaranteeing veterans' health care funding would, however, eliminate the year-to-year uncertainty about funding levels that has prevented the VA from being able to adequately plan for and meet the growing needs of veterans seeking treatment...

Those special few who fight our wars and serve in our Armed Forces do so at great risk to their own health and life and make extraordinary sacrifices for all other citizens of our country. Only through their willingness to serve and sacrifice do we enjoy the freedoms we have, in the strongest and most prosperous nation on earth. All citizens do not personally serve in our military, but each of our citizens has a responsibility to provide for the common defense. Veterans' benefits are a continuing cost of war and national defense. Accordingly, citizens willingly and gratefully contribute to this national burden in part through their support of veterans' programs. Veterans' programs are a priority for the American people, and they should always be a priority for our representative government.

To many veterans, the availability of medical care through the Department of Veterans Affairs means the difference between health and sickness, life and death. The difference between prompt medical care and delayed medical care can also mean the difference between recovery and chronic illness, life and death. Under-funding of the VA's medical care system has already resulted in long waiting times for many sick and disabled veterans needing medical attention. Veterans needing medical attention for illnesses will wait longer for appointments, and some veterans will be denied care altogether. For them, the course Congress chooses means the difference between health and sickness or, for some, life and death.