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VET NEWS

MAY 2004

TO ALL LEXINGTON COUNTY WORLD WAR II VETERANS THANK YOU!

On May 29th, a nationwide celebration will be held in Washington, DC to dedicate the World War II monument. This monument is a lasting tribute to the many men and women who served in the armed forces and in support of the war effort during 1941-1946.

The Memorial Day weekend dedication on the National Mall will culminate an 11-year effort to honor America's World War II generation. The memorial was authorized by Congress in 1993 and construction began

in September 2001 after several years of fund raising and public hearings.

The official dedication celebration will span four days and will include a WWII-themed reunion exhibition, a service of celebration at the Washington National Cathedral, and an entertainment salute to WWII veterans from military performing units.

A number of local veterans organizations have planned events coinciding with the Washington event.



*Honoring our past...
to ensure the future*



MEMORIAL DAY ACTIVITIES

Memorial Day is the one day in the year when we stop to reflect on our departed veterans. Flags are placed on graves. Flags fly at half staff until noon. And the day is marked by programs conducted by many veterans organizations to recognize their fallen comrades.``

See the upcoming events calendar for particular events.

SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY CLAIMS PROCESSING TIME

Veterans or family members planning to file a service-connected disability claim with the Veterans Administration should be aware of the lengthy processing time to approve such a benefit.

Approval of a service-connected disability (i.e., any medical condition or injury that was incurred in, or aggravated by the veteran's military service) requires verification through service records and medical records that such an injury or illness occurred during military service. Medical records must be obtained from either the Military Personnel Center in St. Louis or from a VA hospital or possibly from earlier claims applications. These records must then be checked to determine if current health problems are a result of the prior injury or illness.

Sometimes, there is no record of treatment for the injury or illness. This would be true with Agent Orange and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome) claims that might be manifested many years after the exposure.

PTSD claims often require completion of a PTSD Questionnaire asking for specifics such as particular duty stations, incidents, personnel involved, with specific names, dates, times, units, etc. The more information that can be provided to the VA at the time of claims filing can shorten the approval time considerably.

Agent Orange claims require information showing that the veteran was assigned in either Vietnam or Korea (during a limited time period) and has a disability identified by the VA as being Agent Orange-related. Those disabilities include a number of cancers and diabetes mellitus. Those listed diseases are considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by military service even if there is no evidence of the disease during military service.

Contemporaneous records, such as letters to family members, diaries, journals, etc. may provide needed verification for a claim. Current statements from family members or fellow service members may also be provided to establish eligibility.

FLAG DISPOSAL CEREMONY

Once a year, the members of American Legion Post 7 in Lexington hold a special ceremony to destroy American flags which are worn, torn, or otherwise unserviceable. The flag code provides for the proper disposal of such unserviceable flags through a dignified service of burning.

This year's disposal ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 1 at 7:30 pm. at the American Legion Post 7 hut off Harmon Street. Also participating in the ceremony will be a color guard from White Knoll High School.

Anyone with unserviceable flags can bring them to the ceremony or can drop them by the County VA Office during normal working hours of 8-5, Monday through Friday.



ROAD TO VICTORY

The Road to Victory, Saluting the Greatest Generation, will be held at the Koger Center on Friday, April 30 at 7:30 pm. The presentation features the sights, sounds, and music of World War II.

Tickets are \$18.00; \$15.00 for military and senior citizens, and \$12.00 for students. Tickets are available at Capitol Tickets, (803) 251-2222.

VETERANS TRUST FUND

It's not too late to make a contribution to the South Carolina Veterans Trust Fund. The fund is managed by a board appointed by the Governor to assist veterans projects across the state. Primary funding is through a check-off on the income tax form. Organizations or individuals may wish to contribute directly to the Fund.

Donations can be mailed to: Veterans Trust Fund, 1205 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC 29201.

“ Soiled flags may be renovated by either washing or dry cleaning. Worn out flags should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning.”



BLUE STAR FAMILIES

The Blue Star Mothers is composed of mothers who have or had children serving our country in the United States military. This non-profit organization serves to support one-another, and to send support to our troops. They show support through flags displayed in the windows of their homes during war time - and actively support our troops.

Currently, the Blue Star Mothers of South Carolina, Lexington Chapter, is working to get yellow ribbons prominently displayed around the county to let our troops and veterans know we want to see them home safely.

Operation Home Front assists families of deployed soldiers. Chapter members provide assistance and support to family members who experience stress during the separations, meeting needs of their children, facing financial set-backs, or providing a helping hand during the time that their loved one is deployed away from home.

Operation Enduring Freedom - Middle East sends needed items to soldiers serving in Operation Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Afghanistan, anywhere in the Middle East. For information on their needs, check their website at <http://www.bluestarfamilies.com>.

Jammies for GIs assists wounded American Soldiers who go to Military Hospitals for care in the war zones of the Middle East and are transferred to other locations outside the Area for further care. When they are transferred, they leave in hospital gowns. This project provides pajamas. They have an immediate need for pajamas in sizes Large and Extra Large.

Operation Desert Child provides winter clothes for homeless Iraqi children. Cards & Letters to Troops - Churches, schools, and organizations are encouraged to send cards and letters to deployed troops. This may include drawings from children.

Operation Shoe Box - Project of the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. to send a shoebox size package to deployed troops. South Carolina has integrated this into the Operation Enduring Freedom project.

Gold Star Banners - Blue Star Mothers participate in the Military honors of our brave and honorable fallen soldiers. The presentation of the Gold Star Banner is given to the Mother and wife of our American Hero at the grave site. The Gold Star Banner is given in reverence and humility of the brave and ultimate sacrifice our fallen hero has made in our fight for freedom.

Check out their website at <http://www.bluestarfamilies.com>. They need donations and other assistance.

DISABILITY RATINGS

The VA Office is often asked questions about a combined rating in which the veteran has more than one rated disability. The combined rating is based on the whole man principle of 100%.

The combined rating is not the simple addition of the various separate rated disabilities but instead utilizes the Combined Ratings Table, a chart in the Federal Regulations. This chart considers the efficiency of the individual as affected first by the most disabling condition, then by the less disabling condition or conditions in the order of severity. Thus, a person having a 60 percent disability is considered 40 percent efficient. Proceeding from this 40 percent efficiency, the effect of a further 30 percent disability is to leave only 70 percent of the efficiency remaining after consideration of the first disability, or 28 percent efficiency altogether. The individual is thus 72 percent disabled.

NON-SERVICE CONNECTED DISABILITY PENSION

The Veterans Administration administers a pension program to provide financial support to certain disabled wartime veterans with limited income.

Eligibility for the program requires the honorably discharged veteran to have 90 or more days of military service one day of which must have been during a period of war. The veteran must have a disability that the VA has evaluated as permanent and total. Finally, the veteran's annual income must fall below \$9,894 and must be below \$12,959 if the veteran has one dependent.

The amount of VA payment is the difference between the veteran's annual income and the above amounts. If the veteran has been determined to need aid and attendance or is permanently housebound, income limitations rise to \$16,509 and \$12,092 for the veteran.

The income limitation rises to \$19,167 and \$15,156, respectively, for the veteran with one dependent.

As of December 27, 2001, veterans aged 65 or older do not need to meet the disability determination to be eligible for the pension.

Call the VA Office for further information.

THE VETERANS' VOICE

The Veterans' Voice is a free monthly publication which serves as a sounding board for veterans issues and concerns. It is provided free of charge to VA facilities, VFW and American Legion Posts, military posts, and to elected officials.

The VA office receives copies monthly. If you would like to see the publication, contact the VA office or come by and see what the publication looks like. You can also view the publication on www.theveteransvoice.com.

EVENTS OF NOTE

April	30	Road to Victory, Koger Center, 7:30 pm
May	1	Flag Disposal Ceremony- AL Post 7, 7:30 pm
	2	Loyalty Day- VFW Post 8738, 1 pm
	4	Outreach, Batesburg-Leesville, 8-12 noon
	7	Vietnam Veterans Program, Dorn VA
	11	Outreach, Chapin, 8-12 noon
	15	Armed Forces Day
	18	Outreach, Swansea, 8-12 noon
	28	Memorial Day Program, Dorn VA, 10 am
	29	Brunch & Ceremony, Brookland Cayce HS- AL Post 130, 11:30 AM Ceremony & Dedication Viewing, VFW 8738, 12:30 pm
	31	Program- VFW 6740, 9 am Breakfast & Ceremony, Chapin- AL Post 193 Program, Deepwood Estates- AL Post 7, 11:30 am

Please call ahead for any schedule changes

STATE VETERANS BENEFITS

In last month's VetNews, we provided an attachment concerning State benefits for veterans. At the April meeting of the SC Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers (SCACVAO), copies of a new brochure from the State Office of Veterans' Affairs were made available. The material from that brochure is attached for your information.

Call the VA Office or the State Office of Veteran's Affairs for additional copies.

... We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ...

