

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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VET NEWS

May 2006

NOTICE

The Veterans Affairs Office will be closed on the following days due to county holidays:

May 10, Confederate Memorial Day
May 29, Memorial Day

TOP 10 ALL-TIME GREATEST WAR MOVIES (in order of popularity)

1. *The Longest Day*
2. *Battleground*
3. *All Quiet on the Western Front*
4. *The Bridge on the River Kwai*
5. *Pork Chop Hill*
6. *12 O'Clock High, Platoon, Sgt. York and Tora! Tora! Tora!*
7. *Midway*
8. *The Sands of Iwo Jima and To Hell and Back*
9. *A Bridge Too Far*
10. *Guadacanal Diary, From Here to Eternity, They Were Expendable and A Walk in the Sun*

WWII AND VIETNAM CERTIFICATES STILL AVAILABLE

The VA office still has certificates and pins available for presentation to WWII and Vietnam veterans. In addition, we have a limited number of pins for the Korean War veterans.

Contact the VA office to arrange for presentation at an appropriate ceremony.

MAY EVENTS

Confederate Memorial Day, May 10
Memorial Day, May 29
Mother's Day, May 14
American Legion Convention, June 23-25, Radisson Inn
DAV Convention, May 18-20, Radisson Inn
VFW State Convention, June 2-4, Radisson Inn

REQUIREMENTS FOR VAN/POV DRIVERS

Need copy of current DRIVER'S LICENSE

Need copy of current AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Must view DRIVER SAFETY VIDEO
If you are a DAV Van and/or POV Driver**

**Must sign SC Dept. of Public Safety Request
for Drivers Information—Form MV-20**

Must have a VAN DRIVER'S PHYSICAL EXAM

**Must complete Van Drivers' Questionnaire
VA Form May 1991-10-0043A**

Must complete a DAV VAVS Form 20

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE – DONATIONS NEEDED

The Lexington County Veterans Office has some medical equipment which can be loaned out to veterans or their families. We have wheelchairs, a hospital bed, potties, and walkers available.

If you are aware of any surplus or no longer needed equipment, please contact the VA office. We'll pick it up and make it available to veterans.

VA BUDGET INCLUDES CARE FOR RECENT WAR WOUNDED

Some 109,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are included in the 5.3 million patients VA expects to treat in fiscal year 2007. To that end, the Bush Administration proposed a \$33.2 billion budget for VA healthcare, an 8% increase in discretionary funding from last year.

The total amount proposed by the Administration for VA in 2007 is \$80.6 billion, an increase of \$8.8 billion, or 12.2% over last year. In addition to health care, the proposal includes a 14% increase in benefits spending. (*VFW Magazine*, April 2006)

TROOPS RECEIVE GIRL SCOUT COOKIES

I want to thank you all for the cookies. This means so much to us over here to have a little piece of home. And the cookies were great. Tyler annette ssg 400th qm eor



DONATIONS NEEDED FOR YARN MONEY

The Military Support Ministry needs donations for the purchase of yarn for hand-knitted flags for South Carolina families who have lost loved ones in Iraq. Please make your check out to the Harvest, P.O. Box 2383, Lexington, SC 29071. You may reach Janet Parson, co-founder, for more information at 803-553-0157.

Dianne Pardue of Ridge Spring has knitted over 40 flags. The flag measures 3 ft x 5 ft.



Ms. Pardue's granddaughter admiring the finished flag

In addition to the hand-knit flags, Military Support Ministry regularly sends care packages to troops. The Harvest, a church located in Lexington, is the official assembly point for these packages. "There is an urgent need for pencils and paper for school children in Afghanistan," said Parsons.

OPERATION THANK YOU

A Care Package Program geared towards supporting our troops in harms way. Ideas for packages:

Books, CDs, DVD's (used ok), playing cards, board games, small handheld games, white socks, phone cards, hard candy, prepackaged cookies, prepackaged crackers, beef jerky, and most of all, encouraging letters and pictures.

www.WeCareMilitary@aol.com

PLUCKING YOUR HEART AND PURSE STRINGS

The stories were heart-wrenching—tales of police officers who had to buy their own bulletproof vests, disabled firefighters who couldn't pay their bills and hospitalized veterans who had to share toiletries. Tales so grievous they attracted \$10 million from some 500,000 donors around the country. But only a fraction of that money helped the victims. Most of the money went into the coffers of a scam ring.

To protect against phony charities:

- ❖ Get printed materials from the charity before donating. Materials are no guarantee of legitimacy, but organizations that don't or won't send them are more likely to be bogus.
- ❖ Never provide a credit card or bank account number unless you initiate the phone call.
- ❖ Never respond to e-mail solicitations.
- ❖ Be aware that bogus charities may use names that mimic those of well-known organizations.
- ❖ Go to www.charitynavigator.org to identify legitimate charities; or visit www.guidestar.org for information on nonprofit organizations.
- ❖ Contact your state attorney general or secretary of state to learn which charities are allowed to operate in your state or to report suspicious activity. (*AARP Bulletin*, April 2006)

SCAM WATCH

Beware of anyone asking for money (typically \$299) or bank account information to help you enroll in a Medicare drug plan. This fraud has shown up in several states. Consumers should report cases to the police or call (877) 772-3379. Learn about such scams and how to avoid them at www.aarp.org/bulletin/consumer/medicare_scams.html.

DISABLED MILITARY RETIREES LEVELS OF COMPENSATION

- Combat-Related Special Compensation recipients are retirees with 20 or more years of service with combat-related medical disabilities. They receive concurrent receipt: their full military retirement pay along with their tax-free VA disability compensation.
- Twenty-year retirees who are rated 100 percent for individual unemployability are having their military retirement phased in during the next three years. Other military retirees with 20 or more years of service and service-connected disability ratings of 50 percent to 90 percent are receiving a phased-in

version of their retirement pay and full VA disability compensation.

- All other military retirees with fewer than 20 years of service, including Chapter 61 veterans, and all other military retirees with more than 20 years of service who are rated 40 percent disabled or less are still subject to the dollar-for-dollar offset.
- H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2005, provides concurrent receipt to retirees with 20 or more years of service who are rated less than 50 percent service-connected disabled. It eliminates the phase-in for all disabled veterans. It also allows Chapter 61 retirees to apply for CRSC, for which they currently do not qualify.
- H.R. 995 allows veterans who have combat-related disabilities to collect VA disability compensation and CRSC concurrently, regardless of their years of service.
- H.R. 1076 permits certain retired servicemembers with service-connected disabilities to receive both disability compensation from VA and either retired pay based on years of military service, or CRSC. Its Senate companion measure—S.845—permits military retirees to receive disability compensation and either retired pay or CRSC and eliminates the phase-in period.

REVERSE MORTGAGES

Until recently, there were two main ways to get cash from your home; you could seek your home, but then you would have to move; or you could borrow against your home, but then you would have to make monthly loan repayments. Now there is a third way of getting money from your home that does not require you to leave it or to make regular loan repayments.

A “reverse” mortgage is a loan against your home that you do not have to pay back for as long as you live there. With a reverse mortgage, you can turn the value of your home into cash without having to move or to repay a loan each month.

The cash you get from a reverse mortgage can be paid to you in several ways:

- all at once, in a single lump sum of cash;
- as a regular monthly cash advance
- as a “creditline” account that lets you decide when and how much of your available cash is paid to you; or
- as a combination of these payment methods.

No matter how this loan is paid out to you, you typically don't have to pay anything back until you die, sell your home, or permanently move out of your home. To be eligible for most reverse mortgages, you must own your home and be 62 years of age or older.

**VFW POST 8738 HOLDS
FLAG RETIREMENT
April 8, 2006**

(photos by Betty J. Carson, 2006-2007 Auxiliary President)



Candice Russell, Bugler is available to play "Taps" for fellow veterans: 803-358-0697 or clRussell@sc.rr.com

NAVY LOG OFFERED FREE TO SEA SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS

The United States Navy Memorial, located on Pennsylvania Avenue, in Washington, D.C., is a national memorial that honors those who served, and are serving, in America's Sea Services – Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine.

The focus of the U.S. Navy Memorial is not a particular type of ship, battle or conflict, but rather the

individual whose service and sacrifice is honored and celebrated.

The heart of the U.S. Navy Memorial is the **Navy Log**. The *Navy Log* is the permanent public registry where Sea Service members and veterans can record their service information—name, duty stations, awards, photos and memories. The *Navy Log* may be viewed at the U.S. Navy Memorial, or via the Internet at : www.lonesailor.org.

The goal of the Memorial is to record the service history of all eligible uniformed individuals and veterans. Now through the end of July, 2006, all members and veterans of the Sea Service—active duty and reservists—are able to enroll in the U.S. Navy Memorial's *Navy Log* without charge and without any obligation.

Family members and friends can record service information for veterans who are deceased or those who are unable to record their own information.

To enroll your information or to enroll family members simply enter the appropriate information at: www.lonesailor.org.

If you have any questions, please contact the *Navy Log* Department of the U.S. Navy Memorial, at: 1-800-NAVY LOG (1-800-628-9564). (*What Every Veteran Should Know*, April, 2006)

**MILITARY FUNERAL
LEGISLATION INTRODUCED**

VFW-supported legislation that would severely restrict protests during military funerals at national cemeteries was introduced last week. HR 5037, *The Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act* would ban all demonstrations one hour before, during, and after a military funeral at a national cemetery. It would impose a 500-foot separation restriction, and would allow for fines and/or jail time for violations. It also encourages the states to enact similar bans for public and private cemeteries, as well as funeral home services.

We ask all VFW, American Legion, and veterans' advocates to contact their legislators and urge them to sign on as a co-sponsor of HR 5037 and to fully support its enactment into law.

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

VA and the National Cemetery Administration are not responsible for the provision of military honors. The Department of Defense (DoD) will provide for military honors at the funeral of any eligible veteran whose family requests them as of January 1, 2000. VA will facilitate the provision of honors with DoD, local military units or veterans groups for burials at national cemeteries.

The law includes the following provisions:

- The military funeral honors ceremony will consist of the folding and presentation of the flag and the playing of "Taps." Because of the number of funeral honors being requested, versus the number of buglers available, DoD has developed a "ceremonial bugle" consisting of a real bugle with an insert that plays "Taps" when switched on. The Lexington VA office has one that can be checked out.
- A detail to perform honors shall consist of two or more uniformed members of the Armed Forces, including Reserve Component members, with at least one member from the service in which the deceased member served.
- Authority is granted in the law to reimburse members of veterans service organizations (VSOs) and other authorized organizations for expenses when they participate with the military in the delivery of military funeral honors. These individuals are covered for purposes of liability and workers compensation.
- Pays Reserve Component members an allowance of \$50 a day and provides retirement points, which are allowed to accrue above the annual 75 point cap, for performing honor details. Covers Reserve Component members for liability and authorizes reimbursement for their travel over 50 miles.

It should be noted that the military services may provide additional elements during funeral honors in keeping with their military traditions.

The Department of Defense, in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Service Organizations and funeral directors associations, has developed a kit to assist funeral directors and others in requesting military honors. The kit includes: a military service directory for every state and county; a military funeral honors brochure; a list of frequently asked questions; an instructional brochure on how to fold the flag and a compact disc of "Taps." The kit will be provided to all licensed funeral directors, VSO headquarters, VA national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Weekly unemployment compensation may be paid to discharged servicemembers for a limited period of time. State laws govern the amount and duration of payments. To apply, veterans should immediately contact their nearest state employment office after leaving military service and present a copy of their military discharge, Form DD-214.

HOMELESS VETERANS

A number of VA benefits assist veterans "at risk" of becoming homeless, including disability compensation, pension and educational benefits. VA also provides health and rehabilitation programs for homeless veterans. VA's Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) Program provides health exams, treatment, referrals and ongoing case management to homeless veterans with mental health problems. The Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program provides biopsychosocial treatment and rehabilitation. VA has a growing number of Compensated Work Therapy/ Therapeutic Residence group homes, special day treatment centers and Comprehensive Homeless Centers. "Stand-Downs" are conducted for up to 3 days to provide general assistance, food, shelter, clothing, and offer information about VA health care and benefits.

VA has joined with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Social Security Administration, veterans service organizations and community nonprofit groups to assist homeless veterans. For information on benefits for homeless veterans, contact your Lexington County VA office.

In Flander's Field

by John McCrae

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow,
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky,
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead.

Short days ago,

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved and now we lie,
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe
To you, from failing hands, we throw,
The torch, be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us, who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow,
In Flanders Fields.



DORN VAMC GROUP VISITATION GUIDELINES

WJB Dorn VAMC welcomes volunteers or visitors to spend time with our veterans. Here are a few things to remember when visiting them:

- Visiting hours are from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The following wards can accommodate groups of visitors: 3 East, 3 West, 3 South, 4 South, 4 West, SICU (2 North), and 5 East in Building 100 and Psych East in Building 106.
- Before visiting, stop by the ward's nurse station and ask for the head nurse. Introduce yourself and your organization. Ask the nurse which veterans can and can't be seen.
- When entering a veteran's room, knock on the door and ask if he or she would like visitors. If the veteran declines, wish them a good day and visit someone else.
- Please keep any information a veteran shares about his or her condition and/or personal life confidential.
- Please do not offer veterans food or drinks; many are on restricted diets. If visiting during mealtime, you may offer to help set up the veteran's tray (i.e., open milk cartons, silverware packets, etc.). If a veteran asks for water, please check with the nurse for approval.
- You may escort patients around the hospital with approval from the head nurse. Always check in with the nurse before leaving and upon returning.
- Enjoy yourself! Our veterans are very happy to have someone with whom they can talk and listen—even if it is just small talk!

REGULARLY SCHEDULED VOLUNTEERS

The VAVS Volunteer Program at the Dorn VA Medical Center provides needed services to both inpatients and outpatients. While on our premises as an individual registered through our Voluntary Service Office, you are classified as an "Regularly Scheduled Volunteer." There are some important things you should know that will ensure your safety and the safety of our staff and patients.

Volunteers do not. . .

- Give food or drink to any patient without first checking with the patient's nurse.
- Administer medication.
- Adjust traction.
- Handle bedpans or urinals.
- Turn or remove a patient from bed.
- Change linen on occupied beds.
- Exchange food items on patient trays.
- Operate or adjust equipment requiring technical knowledge.

- Raise or lower a patient's bed without first checking with the patient's nurse.

Publicity

All pictures of patients must be cleared with the Public Affairs Officer, Voluntary Service Officer or staff that are in charge before any pictures are taken. Any release of these photos or other personal patient information must be reviewed and approved by the Public Affairs Office.

Infection Control

Since you may have direct patient contact you need to know something about the transmission and prevention of disease. **All volunteers need to be aware of the following:**

- Do not handle any item that has blood or body fluids. Report it to the nurse immediately.
- Do not wipe up fluids, even if you know what it is. Put a clean paper towel over it and report it to the nurse.
- Do not enter an isolation room.
- Do not touch or remove bed linens in a patient's room that is occupied.
- Do not touch a patient unless you wash your hands, before and after. Whenever possible, wear non-sterile gloves.
- Keep your fingernails trimmed and cleaned.

Hand Washing

Hand washing is generally considered **the most important single procedure for preventing hospital-acquired infections**. All volunteers are encouraged to wash their hands more frequently than they would outside the hospital setting. Hands should be washed when you begin work; before and after you come into contact with a patient or equipment; before and after breaks, meals, and use of the restroom, and after contact with soiled or contaminated matter or equipment.

Weapons

Some weapons that may be legal to carry for self-protection are illegal on VA property. Examples of these are: all firearms, hand guns, explosive devices, mace, pepper gas, stun guns, and knives with a blade length of over 2.5 inches.

To register as a VAVS volunteer, contact Janet Kaufman at (803) 695-6780 at Dorn.

ESTATE PLANNING

The old adage, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes" still holds true. Although the estate tax is encountering a series of legislative changes and could

possibly be repealed, most advocates believe that some sort of estate tax will remain in place.

Estate planning addresses more than planning for the potential of tax due at death. Estate planning is a process that determines how assets will be managed, when selected assets will be transferred, and to who those assets will pass. It also addresses your welfare and needs, including planning for your healthcare if you are no longer able to care for yourself. However, the key factor is that it provides you with the postmortem control and carries out your wishes regarding how you want your wealth to be distributed.

Preferences and priorities change over time, and laws do as well. It may be necessary to adjust your plan each year to reflect these changes.

Before planning your estate, you need to understand the probate process. At your death, your estate is recorded at probate court and inventoried. All the assets you own, both individually and jointly are recorded at the fair market value at the date of death. A court cost is charged based on the total inventory value. If your estate, including assets held in trust, is equal to or greater than the current federal unified credit, which is currently \$2,000,000 in 2006, then you must file an estate tax return with the Internal Revenue Service. The ultimate goal of estate planning is to reduce or eliminate “death tax” owed, thus increasing the amount of wealth transferred to your heirs.

The first step in planning for your estate is establishing a will. This legal document allows you to dictate how specific assets are passed, provide guardianships, make charitable bequests, and create trusts. Once the will or trust is in place, strategies for transferring wealth can be applied.

One of the simplest and most important planning tasks is to wisely choose your beneficiary designations. Retirement plan proceeds, such as an IRA or 401(k) and life insurance, will pass via the beneficiary designation, not through the will. It is vital to review your beneficiary designations regularly in order to avoid family disputes or the creation of income tax issues.

Gift-giving is the most common technique for transferring wealth during your lifetime. An individual can make gifts up to \$1,000,000, thus transferring assets out of the estate. In addition, there is an annual exclusion allowing you to transfer up to \$12,000 to someone without incurring a gift tax. Married individuals can “split” the first with their spouse, allowing a total of \$24,000 to be transferred tax free per donee each year. It is important to remember that if payments are made directly to an educational institution or a medical facility

on behalf of someone, those payments pass free of a gift tax burden.

It is important to plan not only for death, but for the possibility of disability or incapacity. Unless arrangements are made prior to death, a court-supervised conservatorship proceeding may be required, possibly allowing a person unknown to you to make decisions on your behalf. You should, therefore, select the person or persons you wish to care for you and your estate in the event you become incapable.

Even the simplest estates warrant professional assistance, and attorneys, accountants, and financial planners offer valuable help in protecting the estate you have worked so hard to build. And remember – you can’t take it with you, but you can preserve it and pass it on for the generations to come.

A RACE AGAINST TIME

Efforts to raise \$1.5 million for renovations to the Medal of Honor Museum in Mount Pleasant have reached the halfway point. The urgency to get it completed is brought home by the realization that hundreds of veterans, including the nation’s highest award for bravery, are dying every day. Three Medal of Honor recipients have died since March 23, 2006.

Since the Civil War, the Medal of Honor has been awarded to about 3,400 members of the armed services, including 37 from South Carolina. Of the 115 living recipients, six live in the Palmetto State.

Someone stole seven medals, some of them dating back to the Civil War which resulted in the installation of a new security system.

Located on the hangar deck of the World War II aircraft carrier USS Yorktown, the museum is part of the Patriots Point military history complex that includes a destroyer, submarine, aircraft and replica of a Vietnam War-era river boat support base.

One feature planned for the revamped facility is called “The Fog of War.” Visitors will travel down a 32-foot ramp through an octagon-shaped tunnel as battlefield images are projected on panels surrounding the walkway.

Special lighting and sound effects will simulate explosions and tracer bullets zipping overhead. Transducers under the ramp will cause the walkway to “rumble” at the sound of explosions and movements of vehicles.

The museum also needs to teach the values that the medal represents—honor, duty, courage, integrity and patriotism—as well as heroism. It needs to comment on what America is fully about.

About \$800,000 is needed to finish the renovations. Contact your Veterans group about contributions.

THE DAV TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Transportation Network (TN) is a nationwide volunteer-based transportation program de-

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MAY OUTREACH PROGRAM

May 2 nd	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
May 9 th	9-12	Chapin
May 16 th	8-12	Swansea

NEW OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office:	785-8400
From Batesburg-Leesville:	332-8400
From Chapin:	941-0231

These are toll-free calls

The DAV TN can provide transportation to inpatients, once discharged from the medical center. Social workers are asked to notify the HSC at least one day in advance so that transportation arrangements can be made.

The DAV TN vans arrive between 8:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Schedules vary depending on the number of patients transported and the timing of appointments.