

Veterans Affairs Office of Lexington County

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EDITOR: *Debbie Myers*



VET NEWS

February 2010

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FEBRUARY OUTREACH PROGRAM DATES

Feb 2nd 9-12 Batesburg-Leesville
Feb 9th 9-12 Chapin

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

Please note regarding outreach: Appointments are **greatly** appreciated, and walk-ins will be assisted between appointments. Thank you for helping us better assist you!

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Feb. 8th Combat Wives Support Group-noon
Feb. 12th Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
Feb. 14th Valentine's Day
Feb. 15th Presidents' Day—
ALL COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED
Feb. 22nd George Washington's Birthday

PLEASE NOTE:

The Lexington DAV Van will **not run on Monday, February 15th**, as our office will be **CLOSED** that day due to the Presidents' Day holiday.



Historic WWII Destroyer Out Of SC Dry-Dock

Taken from news reports— After six months in dry-dock in South Carolina, repairs are complete to a famed World War II destroyer known as "the ship that would not die." The ship has a new hull and protective coatings throughout.

The Post and Courier of Charleston reports the USS Laffey left a dry-dock in North Charleston Monday and was taken to Pier November near Veterans Terminal. It will soon be relocated to the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in Mount Pleasant on Charleston Harbor.

The destroyer had leaks in its hull and has undergone millions of dollars of repairs in the last year. The state approved a loan of more than \$9 million to help with the repairs. Patriots Point Executive Director Dick Trammell said the ship will likely take a spot off the starboard side of the museum's primary attraction, the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown. At the time of this article, no date had been set for that relocation.

The USS Laffey became known as "the ship that would not die" after surviving kamikaze attacks during the war.

CAN YOU HELP. . .

The Volunteer Office at Dorn VA Medical Center is constantly in need of donations to support veteran patients. Their wish list includes:

- * Monetary gift cards for veterans
- * Funds for the Social Work Emergency Fund (Funds provide for meals, transportation, clothing, food, etc. for indigent patients)
- * Funds for patient coffee service
- * Funds for Welcome Kits for new patients (Cost - \$1.53 each) (These are delivered each morning to all new admissions)
- * New sweat suits and new underwear and lightweight elastic or draw string waist pants in all sizes
- * Monetary funds are needed to make soft pillows for patients receiving chemotherapy, hemodialysis and other treatments
- * Monetary funds are needed to purchase the following items: *personal care items for female veteran patients; *large print word find puzzles; *large print books; *chapstick; *non-skid socks; *knitted caps; *postage stamps; gasoline cards for patients living outside the Midlands area; *daily newspapers; *laundry detergent and *fabric softener
- * Funds for Avenue of Flags Memorial Park Flags (Cost \$25.00 each)
- * Funds for Dorn Oncology Outreach to Veterans Experiencing Cancer (DOVE) fund to include lodging, meals and transportation for patients
- * Funds to purchase refreshments for patient TBI meetings and Suicide prevention programs

Dorn also needs volunteers to assist patients, drive shuttle buses, or man the coffee cart



With tax season here, please note that you are given the opportunity to help veterans or active duty service personnel in need of financial assistance.

On the South Carolina income tax forms, 1040, there is a place to request that some of your refund or some additional payment go to either the SC Military Family Relief Fund or the SC Veterans' Trust Fund.

The **SC Military Family Relief Fund** - This fund awards grants to families of members of the SC National Guard or Reserves who are called to active duty as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Grants are distributed based on need, status and service-connected injury or illness.

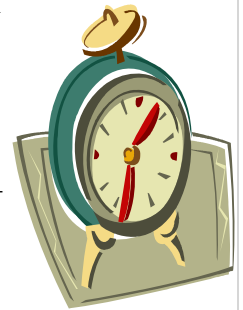
The **SC Veterans' Trust Fund** - This Trust Fund ensures that your voice is heard via supporting veterans' programs designed to benefit veterans and their families. This Fund complements many State and Federal initiatives. It is managed by veterans for veterans.

TIME TO SUBMIT THOSE ANNUAL REPORTS!

Anyone who receives an Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) or Medical Expense Report should call our office at 803-785-8400 as soon as possible to schedule an appointment for the completion of these forms.

Once your appointment is set, please gather the following information relating to your 2009 expenses:

- ◇ Computer printout from pharmacy itemizing medication expenses
- ◇ Paid receipts for doctor/hospital Expense, glasses and eye exams, hearing aids, dental care, over-the-counter drugs
- ◇ Itemization of total mileage accumulated while traveling to/from doctors, hospital, pharmacy
- ◇ Private medical insurance premiums



Also bring with you items relating to your **INCOME**, such as your Social Security 2010 award statement, checking/savings account information, IRA/stocks/bonds/mutual funds from 2009. Method of payment information for aid and attendance payment (if applicable) should be provided to us as well.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will **not consider** canceled checks as proof of payment, nor will Explanation of Benefits Statements (EOB) or prescriptions qualify as proof of expense. These forms should be **postmarked** by March 1, 2010 to avoid interruption of compensation payments.

*** Time is of the essence...Do NOT delay in getting these reports in to the VA***

VA Pension Program

Veterans with low income may be eligible for monetary support if the veteran had 90 days or more of active military service, at least one day of which was during a period of war. The discharge from active duty must have been under conditions other than dishonorable.

Payments are made to qualified veterans to bring their total income, including other retirement and/or Social Security Income, to a level set by Congress. A veteran cannot have high net worth, generally less than about \$80,000.

Pension with Aid & Attendance income limits are \$19,736.00 per year for a single veteran or \$23,396.00 for a veteran with one dependent. Un-reimbursed medical expenses may reduce countable income (Medicare premium, supplemental insurance, and cost of care at a facility).

The Housebound income limit is \$14,457.00 per year for a single veteran or \$18,120.00 for a veteran with one dependent.

The limit for a veteran who is not in need of Housebound or Aid and Attendance is \$11,830.00 per year or \$15,493.00 for a veteran with one dependent.

Widows may also qualify if the veteran had the required wartime service and the widow meets the net worth and income limits. The annual pension income limit is \$7,933, but increases to \$9,696 for housebound and \$12,681 for aid and attendance.

From left to right: Gary Baker, Lexington VA County Services Officer; Roger Rucker; Ed Gavin; Craig Brandt; Charlie Davis; Jim Bokanovich; Ted Powell and Matt "Doc" Becker at the December van drivers luncheon.

Photo courtesy of Delores Rucker



**DO YOU THINK YOU
COULD BE ONE OF OUR
VAN DRIVERS?**

If you are interested in serving our county's disabled veterans in this way, please call us at 803-785-8400 or come by our office for an application today! Thanks!

THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO !

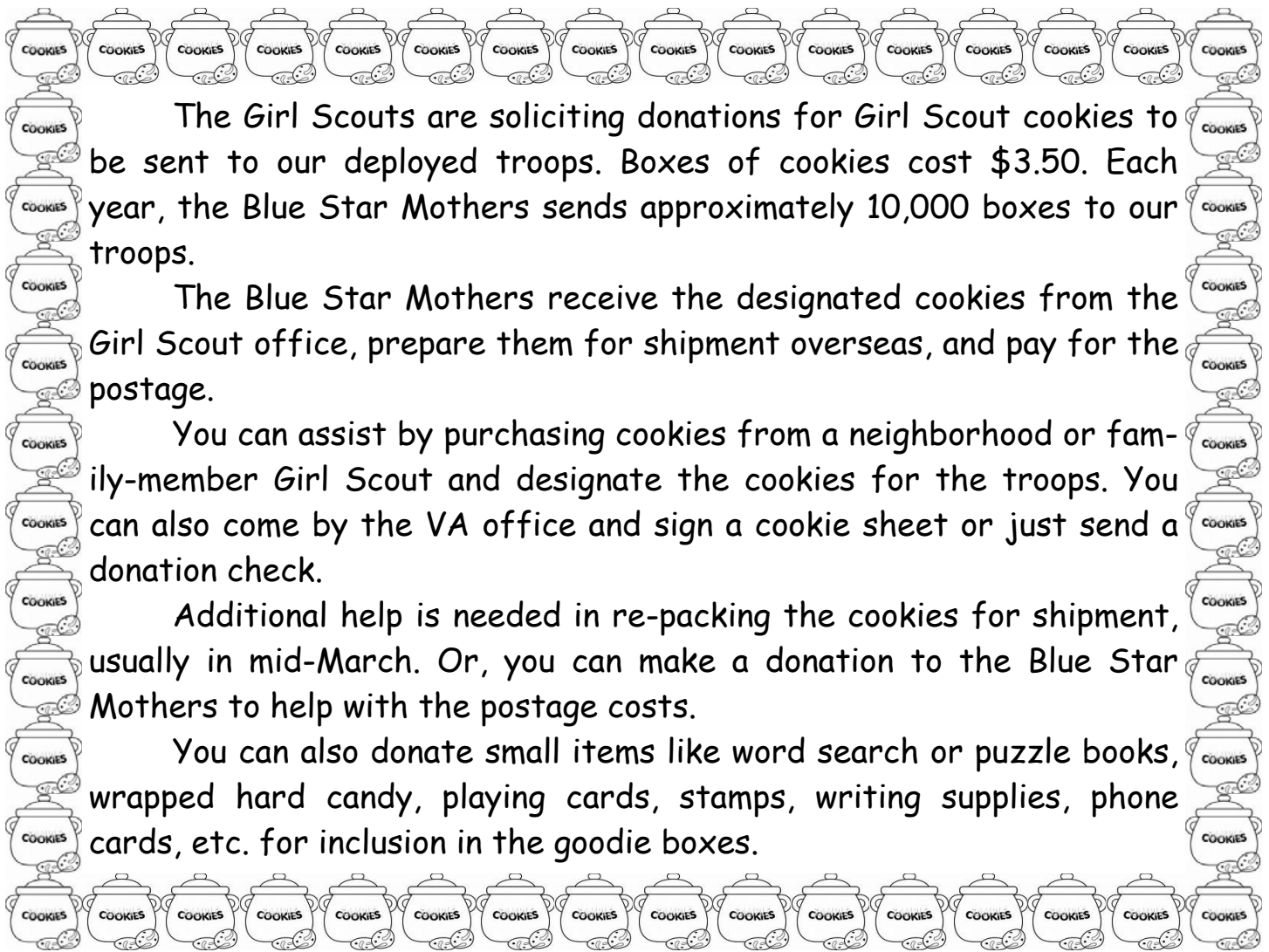
Debbie Myers, part-time VA Clerk since June 2007, resigned the end of January to spend more time with her family. Debbie has been an integral part of the VA Office in editing the newsletter and coordinating the operation of the DAV van.

She has been active with the Blue Star Mothers and an active participant in Task Force Marshall deployments.

Debbie was honored at a drop-in on her last day of work, January 29 with her beloved van drivers. Gary Baker, Veterans Affairs Officer, presented her with a certificate of appreciation.



Left - Debbie with Gary Baker receiving her certificate of appreciation. Right - Debbie with husband, Dan Myers and grandson, Nate. Photos courtesy of Delores Rucker.



The Girl Scouts are soliciting donations for Girl Scout cookies to be sent to our deployed troops. Boxes of cookies cost \$3.50. Each year, the Blue Star Mothers sends approximately 10,000 boxes to our troops.

The Blue Star Mothers receive the designated cookies from the Girl Scout office, prepare them for shipment overseas, and pay for the postage.

You can assist by purchasing cookies from a neighborhood or family-member Girl Scout and designate the cookies for the troops. You can also come by the VA office and sign a cookie sheet or just send a donation check.

Additional help is needed in re-packing the cookies for shipment, usually in mid-March. Or, you can make a donation to the Blue Star Mothers to help with the postage costs.

You can also donate small items like word search or puzzle books, wrapped hard candy, playing cards, stamps, writing supplies, phone cards, etc. for inclusion in the goodie boxes.

NEW PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

Presumptive Conditions for Exposure to Agent Orange

Last fall, VA Secretary Shinseki approved adding three more conditions to its list of presumptive illnesses due to Agent Orange exposure: Parkinson's Disease, ischemic heart disease (coronary artery disease), and hairy cell leukemia.

The VA is currently issuing the regulations necessary to make this change. Any claims for these three conditions will be finalized when the regulations are finalized, probably in the next few months.

Any veteran with a current diagnosis of these three conditions, or any surviving spouse of a veteran whose death was caused by or contributed to their death, should contact the VA office.

Presumptive Condition for ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)

The Department of [Veterans Affairs](#) established ALS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease), as a service-connected disease on September 23, 2008.

Any honorably-discharged veteran with a diagnosis of ALS is eligible for service connected disability benefits. This benefit is available regardless of when or where the veteran served. The benefit includes disability pay, lifetime health care, and death benefits

Widows of those veterans who died of ALS in years past are eligible for the VA widows' monthly benefit. Survivors of veterans who died from the disease are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation, enrollment in VA's healthcare program for survivors, educational assistance and vocational assistance, among other benefits

SAVE THE DATE . . .



Honor Flight Columbia is still soliciting applications from WWII veterans to participate in a one-day flight to Washington, DC to visit the WWII Memorial. The veterans are given a grand send-off and welcome home. In between, they are treated royally as they tour the WWII Memorial, Vietnam and Korean War Memorials, Arlington National Cemetery, and other sites of interest.

All expenses for the WWII veterans are paid by Honor Flight. Check the Honor Flight website at www.honorflightsc.com or come by the VA office for an application. The next flight is scheduled for April 21, 2010.

The Midlands Chapter of Blue Star Mothers presents

The 2010 Palmetto Patriots' Ball

Where: Medallion Center, Columbia, SC

When: Saturday, May 22, 2010

6pm—until

Keynote speaker—Oliver North



Tickets are now available.

For details, go to: www.palmettopatriotsball.org

DID YOU KNOW . . .

The Veterans Affairs Officer conducts outreach programs twice a month for veterans or family members needing assistance with VA benefits.

On the first Tuesday of each month, the program is held at the Police Department courtroom in Batesburg-Leesville. The program on the second Tuesday is held in the Town Council chambers in Chapin. Sessions run from 9 am to noon.

There is no formal program, just the opportunity for veterans or family members to seek assistance on VA benefits. Appointments are not