

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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VET NEWS

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Color Guards from Lexington High School, Irmo High School, White Knoll High School, Pelion High School, and Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School in formation at the Rally/Welcome Home.

TROOP RALLY HELD ON SEPTEMBER 7

More than 200 people braved some nasty weather to attend the Rally/Welcome Home for Our Troops on Sunday, September 7. The event, originally scheduled for Lexington School District #1 Stadium, was held at White Knoll High School gymnasium.

Col. Keith Coln, Commander of the 169th Fighter Wing at McEntire Air National Guard Station and a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, was the keynote speaker. Col. Coln presented the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office with a US flag which was carried in a F-16 on a flight over Iraq.

ROTC units from Lexington High School, Irmo High School, White Knoll High School, Pelion High

School, and Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School participated with color guards and unit members. Members of the White Knoll band provided patriotic music before and after the program.

Constance Flemming sang the National and Lisa Baker sang the service songs with veterans and family members standing during the appropriate service song. Veterans who have recently returned from military duty and family members of those still serving were recognized.

Senator Jake Knotts and the Lexington County Legislative Delegation presented the Order of the Silver Crescent to Col. Coln on behalf of Governor Mark

Sanford. Congressman Joe Wilson and Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum brought greetings to those in attendance. The Gold Star Wives and Mothers and Blue Star Wives and Mothers were also recognized.

Major Robert Bullock sang God Bless the USA with the program ending with Amazing Grace performed by the Palmetto Pipes and Drums followed by Taps.

Several organizations had display tables set up to provide information to attendees.

Thanks to all the sponsors and committee members who made this event possible!



TerryLynn Cooper, Anne Smith, and Ann Ricard of Blue Star Mothers at their booth.



Col. Coln, right, presents the US flag which was flown over Iraq to Gary Baker, Lexington County Veterans Affairs Officer.



Congressman Joe Wilson, Col. Keith Coln, World War II veteran Murray Price, and vocalist Constance Flemming.



Redd Reynolds along with two returned veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom, MSG Glenn Housand and TSG Stacey Lucius.



COMFORT ITEMS ARE STILL NEEDED!

Contact the Blue Star Mothers or VA Office

VETERANS DAY ACTIVITIES

This year's Veteran Day Activities start with Celebrate Freedom Air & Ground Show which will have a 3 day program on November 7-9 at the Kershaw County Airport in Camden. Call (803) 772-2945 for information.

The Lexington County Employees Committee is sponsoring a parade in downtown Lexington on Sunday, November 9 at 3:00 pm. A ceremony will follow in Virginia Hylton Park. Veterans organizations, bands, ROTC units, and other supporters are invited to participate. Korean War veterans will be the parade Grand Marshals. See the attached flyer for further information.

The Columbia Veterans Day parade will be held on Tuesday, November 11 at 11:00 am.

AGENT ORANGE

The VA has been informed by the Department of Defense that herbicides used in Vietnam such as Agent Orange were also used to defoliate areas in the Korean demilitarized zone in 1968 and 1969, at Fort Drum, New York in 1959, and were tested at other locations.

The VA applies a presumption of service connection if there is competent evidence that a veteran was exposed to herbicides during military service and has a disease which VA recognizes as being associated with herbicide exposure.

Any veteran who may have been exposed to herbicides and has associated diseases should contact the VA or Veterans Affairs Office.

WAR INFORMATION SHEET

Attached to the newsletter is a sheet from the Department of Veterans Affairs showing statistics on the service members who served in each of our wars. The number of battle deaths, other deaths, and woundings are listed as well as the number of living veterans. The last surviving veteran of each war is also listed.

The bottom line is that approximately 25,625,000 veterans are still living of which 17,578,500 are war veterans. Lexington County is the home to almost 24,000 veterans.

BETTY CARSON

Betty Carson has joined the staff of the VA Office as part-time clerk. She formerly worked in the Clerk of Court's Office. She is the Secretary of the Lexington Monument Fund.

USMC & NAVY WWII POWs

Sailors and Marines who were prisoners of war between December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946 are authorized to receive promotion back pay. The pay goes to those sailors and Marines who were selected for promotion but were not available to accept the promotion because of their internment. Surviving spouses are also entitled to the back pay.

The Army granted a one grade promotion to POWs who were due the promotion effective on the date of their capture. The Navy and Marine Corps gave back pay based on the rank on the date of capture. This new legislation corrects this inequity.

Any former Navy or Marine POW and surviving spouse should contact their branch or VA office for further information.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov. 6, 10 am	Veterans Day Program, Dorn VA
Nov. 7	Homeless Veterans Standdown-Salvation Army
Nov. 7-9	Celebrate Freedom Air & Ground Show
Nov. 9, 3 pm	Veterans Day Parade, Lexington
Nov. 11, 11 am	Veterans Day Parade, Columbia
Nov. 27	Thanksgiving Day

VETERANS TRUST FUND

Each year, taxpayers in South Carolina can designate a portion of their refund or add-on an amount to their tax payment for the Veterans Trust Fund. This fund also accepts donations from individuals or groups.

The Fund is designed to:

- (1) Make better the lifestyle of nursing home veterans
- (2) Assist with transportation initiatives to and from VA hospitals
- (3) Assist veterans groups in keeping patriotism alive
- (4) Help establish memorials honoring veterans
- (5) Support educational scholarships
- (6) Assist with established homeless veterans programs

During this past year, the fund has assisted several veterans in emergencies such as emergency medical expenses and assisting with housing to replace damaged or destroyed houses.

Further information may be obtained from, or donations made to Veterans Trust Fund of SC, 1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 477, Columbia, SC 29201, telephone (803) 734-0200.

VIDEOTAPING

The Veterans Affairs Office has begun videotaping veterans as part of the Greatest Generation Project. The office received funding from the Lexington Veterans Fund and also was recipient of a donated video camera and tripod.

Initially, World War II and Korean War veterans are being videotaped. The videotape will be edited and combined with still photos and transferred to a DVD. Copies of the DVD will be provided to the veteran, Library of Congress, Lexington County Library, sponsoring group, and the VA Office.

Veterans who would like to tell their military experiences should contact the Veterans Affairs Office to arrange a video session. Videotaping can take place at a speaking engagement at a school, civic or church group, or can be conducted at the VA Office or other suitable location.

KOREA DEFENSE VETERANS OF AMERICA

The Korea Defense Veterans of America is a national organization of former and current military who have served or are currently serving in the Republic of Korea since July 27, 1954.

The organization has worked to get approval from Congress for the Korea Service Medal which should be available for distribution around the first of 2004. The group is also working to get Department of Defense approval for the United Nations Medal and ROK Defense Medal.

The website for the organization is: www.kdvamerica.org. Ed W. McKnight, 15 Staffordshire Way, Simpsonville, SC 29681, telephone (864) 228-2784 is the State Commander.

CERTAIN VETERANS MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR CO-PAYMENT REFUNDS

Veterans who are insured by Hartford Life Insurance Company or USAA Life Insurance Company may be eligible for a refund of their VA co-payments.

A recent settlement by the two companies and the Department of Veterans Affairs involves payments for care provided by VA to insured veterans with Medicare or TriCare supplemental coverage from January 1, 1995 through December 31, 2001.

Veterans who fall into these categories must request the refund of their co-payments prior to April 1, 2004. VA will notify veterans who may be eligible, however, any veterans who believe they may be eligible may contact the VA at 1-866-258-2772 between 8 am and 8 pm EST, Monday through Friday.

VETERANS FORMATION

On the 3rd Saturday of each month, a Veterans Formation is held at Bethlehem Baptist Church, 1218 Lyon Street, Columbia. These Formations or resource fairs provide a full course meal, human services and other community resources, camaraderie and entertainment to homeless veterans.

Over 80 human services organizations have provided services at the Formations including educational opportunities, job training and placement, housing, alcohol and drug treatment, medical and mental care, transportation, clothes, food, entitlement benefits, and various forms of counseling.

A number of veterans organizations, including Dorn VA, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of SC, Military Order of the Purple Heart, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and a host of organizations and individuals have supported these Formations.

Plan to attend. For more information, call the Veterans Formation, Salvation, 2025 Main Street, Columbia, SC 29201, (803) 765-0260, ext. 27 or 28.

DID YOU KNOW?

...Veterans with a vehicle bearing a disabled veteran ("V" tag), Purple Heart, or Medal of Honor license plate is exempt from municipal parking meter fees.

...Totally disabled veterans may receive free hunting and fishing licenses.

... Permanently and totally disabled veterans may enter any state park without charge. The veteran must show disability documentation or apply for a free "Palmetto Passport."

...Special license plates may be obtained from the Department of Public Safety for the following:

- National Guard
- National Guard Retirees
- Purple Heart Recipients
- Disabled Veterans
- US Armed Forces Retirees
- Ex-Prisoners of War
- Medal of Honor Recipients
- Pearl Harbor Survivors
- Normandy Invasion Survivors
- Marine Corps League.

...Free Tuition is provided to children of certain veterans attending South Carolina state-supported institutions.