

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



GARY R. BAKER
DIRECTOR
JEAN FRICK
ASST. CSO

TELEPHONE: (803) 359-8400
FAX: (803) 808-2105

605 WEST MAIN STREET
SUITE 101
LEXINGTON, S.C. 29072

VET NEWS

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SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AT CHRISTMAS

Veterans organizations in Lexington County were active in supporting veterans and their families during the Christmas season. American Legion Post #174 of Irmo furnished food baskets for 26 Lexington County veterans and family members. American Legion Post 173 from Columbia provided Walmart gift cards to some needy veterans. American Legion Post 193 in Chapin provided more than 60 toys for the Marine Corps League's Toys for Tots program.

The Veterans Formation hosted a successful fundraiser for homeless veterans on December 3. The VFW Post 8738 from Lexington conducted a dinner and gift for homeless employed veterans and provided each with clothes. Lexington County veterans were also seen participating in gift wrapping at Dorn VA Medical Center.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| Jan. 6 | Outreach- Batesburg-Leesville |
| Jan. 8 | VAVS Meeting,
Dorn VA Medical Center |
| Jan. 10 | Veterans Assistance Program-
AL Post 6 |
| Jan. 13 | Outreach- Chapin |
| Jan. 17 | Veterans Formation
Bethlehem Baptist Church |
| Jan. 20 | Outreach- Swansea |

DONATIONS NEEDED

Our homeless veterans are in need of some basic necessities. Providence Home in Columbia, a shelter for homeless veterans needs towels, sheets for single beds, and pillow cases as well as clothing. Cash donations are also needed. If you can help, call Steve Wilson at Providence Home at 779-2925 or 622-4172(c).

Hospitalized veterans at Dorn VA Medical Center can always use comfort items (toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, mouthwash, hand or face lotion, deodorant) but no shaving lotion. They can also use current magazines (less than 6 months old) or books.

Please check the article on Blue Star Mothers concerning assistance to our troops serving overseas.

MAC RISH

Wyman M. Rish, Lexington County Veterans Affairs Officer from July 2001 to January 2003, died December 19 after a lengthy illness.

Mac was born in Columbia and graduated from Brookland Cayce High School and the University of South Carolina. He later received a Masters degree from Ball State University. He joined the US Air Force in 1966 and retired as a pilot after 20 years with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Mac was the Mayor of West Columbia for 12 years and had just been re-elected to serve another term.

Mac is survived by his wife, Katherine "Kathy" Williams Rish and a son and daughter. He was buried at Celestial Memorial Gardens.

WORLD WAR II MONUMENT TRIPS

World War II veterans who would like to attend the dedication of the WWII monument in Washington, DC on May 29 can take advantage of several tour arrangements.

Carolina Tours is arranging a tour from May 27-31. Please see the attached flyer.

American Legion Post 6 is working on plans to go by train to the festivities. Call Chuck Morrissey at 750-1949 or 530-7726 (c) for information.

For either tour, reservations need to be made soon.

NEW AVIATOR BOOK

Rebecca Pipin, reporter for WIS-TV, has written a book, Honoring South Carolina's World War II Heroes of Flight. The book focuses on 23 veterans of World War II who served in various aviation units. Included are Lexington County veterans Murray Price, Henry Gibson, and Grady Patterson.

The book is dedicated to Marine Corps pilot Dan McCollum of Irmo who died in a plane crash in Pakistan in 2002.

LTC Horace "Sally" Crouch, one of the Doolittle Raiders is featured as is State Senator John Drummond, and the late Senator Strom Thurmond along with a number of other veterans of the air wars.

The book is lavishly illustrated by Eddie Sutton of Williston. Copies are available from Celebrate Freedom Foundation, 455 St. Andrews Road, Suite C1, Columbia, SC 29210, (803) 772-2945. Complimentary copies are available to schools upon request.

BLUE STAR MOTHERS COLLECT DONATIONS

The Blue Star Mothers are continuing to solicit items to be sent to military serving overseas. Popular items among the troops are DVDs, hand-held video games, books, and magazines. The Mothers have been collecting comfort items and other material since last year. Many individuals and groups have been making donations to the Blue Star Mothers. The group, however, has been funding the shipment of the large amounts of items personally or through some donations.

The Mothers have also instituted two programs, one to assist Iraqi orphans, "Operation Desert Child", and the other to help families of military personnel, "Operation Homefront." In Operation Desert Child, the group plans to adopt an Iraqi orphanage and collect clothing, bedding, and toys for the children for children in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Operation Homefront is geared to assisting families who have suffered financial setbacks while family members have been activated. The families can use retail gift certificates, grocery gift certificates, and contributions of toys, children's clothing, and tickets to children's events.

If you can help through donations of these items or by providing a donation to assist them in these projects, contact the Blue Star Mothers at 808-6485 or 206-6088 or contact the VA office.

ASSISTED LIVING

A number of our veterans and widows are seeking housing assistance through various nursing or assisted living facilities. The VA office does not recommend facilities. We do maintain a listing of area facilities and literature from several.

Veterans and/or widows whose finances meet VA criteria and who need the aid and assistance of another person or who is housebound may get financial help from the VA to reside in such a facility.

VIDEOTAPE VOLUNTEERS

We need you! We're still looking for veterans to be videotaped. Generally, the videotaping takes about an hour to 1 ½ hours. The videotape will be edited and each veteran provided a personal copy.

Veterans of any period are encouraged to be videotaped to tell the story of their military experience.

Contact the VA office to arrange an interview.



VAN TRANSPORTATION

The VA office is exploring the acquisition of a van to transport veterans to Dorn VA Medical Center, the VA Regional Office, or other veterans functions. During the next few months, we will be looking at the need, funding sources, and volunteer van drivers.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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| 1- | New Year's Day |
| 17- | Operation Desert Storm began (1991) |
| 19- | Martin Luther King holiday |
| 20- | Battle of Khe Sanh began (1968) |
| 16 | Battle of the Bulge concluded in favor of the Allies; 77,000 Allied casualties. (1945) |
| 20 | International Military Tribunal established in Tokyo, Japan, for the prosecution of war crimes. (1946) |
| 22 | American army makes amphibious landing at Anzio and Nettuno, Italy. (1944) |
| 30 | North Vietnam launches unsuccessful Tet offensive.(1968) |
| 31 | Battle of Hue began (1968) |

ATTENTION FORMER POWS

The VA is contacting all former POWs to make them aware of benefits affecting them. The VA has expanded its programs to cover illnesses found to be related to captivity, including cirrhosis of the liver. According to VA Secretary Anthony Principi, "New policies make it easier for former POWs to obtain compensation if they were detained for 30 days or more and develop other illnesses.

Former POWs have a special eligibility for enrollment in the VA health care system and are exempt from copayments for inpatient and outpatient visits.

Any former POWs should contact the VA or VA office to obtain information on the benefits to which they may be entitled.

**REMEMBER- RECORD YOUR DD-214
(DISCHARGE PAPERS) AT THE VA
OFFICE**

CONCURRENT RECEIPT

President Bush signed into law legislation to phase in concurrent receipt over the next 10 years. Concurrent receipt provides for service-connected disabled military retirees to receive their VA disability without offsetting their retired pay. The policy applies to retirees with a service-connected disability of 50% or higher. The payments become effective as of January 1, 2004 and will be included on retirement checks received February 1, 2004. The schedule is as follows: 100% disability, \$750 per month; 90% disability, \$500 per month; 80% disability, \$350 per month; 70% disability, \$250 per month; 60% disability, \$125 per month; and 50% disability, \$100 per month.

BATTLES OF THE KOREAN WAR

The VFW Magazine is offering a limited supply of a 136 book, Battles of the Korean War. Only 300 copies of the book remain. The book contains 140 illustrations and photos, combat chronology and color reference map, and accounts of more than 30 major actions. The books are available for \$16 from VFW Magazine, ATTN: Korean War Book, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111, (816) 968-1167, fax (816) 968-1169 or shanson@vfw.org.

VETERANS TRUST FUND

The Veterans Trust Fund was created in 1995 to serve the needs of South Carolina's veterans by supporting programs, both public and private, for veterans. The Fund works to improve the lifestyle of veterans in nursing homes, assists with transportation programs at VA Medical Centers, assists veterans groups, established memorials honoring veterans, supports scholarships, and assists with homeless veterans programs.

Contributions to the Veterans Trust Fund can be made through the check off on the South Carolina income tax form. All taxpayers are urged to contribute to this fund to better veterans programs.

For further information, contact the Veterans Trust Fund, 734-0200.

KOREA DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL

A new medal, the Korea Defense Service Medal, has been approved for veterans who served in Korea on or after July 28, 1954 for thirty consecutive or for sixty non-consecutive days, or who meet the following criteria:

- Be engaged in combat during an armed engagement, regardless of the time in the area of eligibility;
- Is wounded or injured in the line of duty and requires medical evacuation from the area of eligibility;
- While participating as a regularly assigned aircrew member flying sorties into, out of, or within the area of eligibility in direct support of military operations. Each day that one or more sorties are flown in accordance with these criteria shall count as one day toward the 30 or 60 day requirement;



Personnel who serve in operations and exercises conducted in the area of eligibility are considered for the award as long as the basic time criteria are met. Due to the extensive time period for KDSM eligibility, the non-consecutive service period for eligibility remains cumulative throughout the entire period.

The medal was authorized in December 2002 but has not been available except by purchase. The Department of Defense is working on procedures for the award of the medal. Indications are that the medal will be available early this year.

