

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE  
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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# VET NEWS

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

**December 2006**

## DATES TO REMEMBER

- 1<sup>st</sup> Pearl Harbor Program, Dorn VA 11:30 a.m.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Lexington County Christmas Parade 3:30 pm
- 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> American Legion Gift Shop, Dorn VA
- 7<sup>th</sup> Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 8<sup>th</sup> World War II Begins (1941)
- 10<sup>th</sup> Charity Ride 2:00 p.m.  
Christmas Dinner for Veteran & Families,  
VFW Post 8738 & Ladies Auxiliary furnishing  
food, 1:00 pm, Awards Program will follow,  
424 Cedarcrest Drive, Lexington, SC  
Please RSVP by December 8<sup>th</sup>: 359-8738
- 15<sup>th</sup> MCL Christmas Party 7:00 p.m.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Christmas Gift Bag Packing Dorn VA 8:00 a.m.
- 21<sup>st</sup> DAV Chapter 51 Christmas Party 7:00 p.m.
- 25-26<sup>th</sup> Office Closed for Christmas

## STAMPS FOR VETERANS

The Department of Veteran's Affairs, Veteran's National Stamp & Coin Club is looking for United States and Foreign Stamps, both "on" and "off" paper; United States and Foreign Coins and Paper Money; Sports Cards, Picture Post Cards (Old & New), First Day Covers before 1920; U.S. Hunting Permit Stamps, Catalogues for both Stamps & Coins; Albums, Stock Books, VCR's (including travel), Tapes, CD-ROM's, Mounts, Stock Pages, and Mounted Collections.

They will be given to our hospitalized Veteran patients who request them at no charge.

Please clip stamps off envelopes with a quarter-inch to one-half-inch margin around the stamps.

You may turn your stamps into the Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office, 605 West Main, Suite 101, Lexington, SC 29072.

## SAVE THE DATE

**February 5, 2007**

PLAN TO ATTEND

### *An Evening of Heroes and Legends*

Lexington School District One  
Educational Foundation

Presents an Evening of Heroes and Legends

Monday, February 5, 2007

6:30 pm Silent Auction

7:30 pm Keynote Address by the

**Navajo Code Talkers of World War II fame**

Lexington High School Cafetorium

*Lexington*  
SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE  
Where Children and Learning Are One

Please join the

Lexington School District One Educational Foundation

as we honor the fallen soldiers of

Lexington School District One for an evening of

### **Heroes and Legends**

Monday, February 5, 2007 • 6:30 pm

Lexington High School Cafetorium

*Special recognition for Thomas D. Caughman, Joshua L. Torrence & Almar L. Fitzgerald*

The Foundation will also honor the late

**Congressman Floyd Spence**

by naming the AFJROTC wing after him.

**Navajo Code Talkers of World War II**

will present the keynote address.

Please contact Lexington School District One Educational Foundation at  
803.808.4624 or cmcfarland@lexington1.net to reserve your ticket.





Shown on the left: Ladies Auxiliary Military Order of the Purple Heart Gamecock Unit 402, President Rhunette Haywood was elected Region IV President at the 73d Convention held in Los Angeles, California August 15-17, 2006. Region IV includes the states of SC, NC, TN, FL, AL, and MS. She also accepted a citation for First Place History and Scrapbook for Unit 402. On the right: Nancy Lee Birschbach, Mount Calvary, WI was elected National President.

### HONORING ARMY SERVICE

The U.S. has embarked on a campaign to thank all Army veterans from all generations. Called the *Freedom Team Salute Commendation*, it provides a free package of materials that is now available. The personalized package includes a lapel pin, decal, a certificate of appreciation and a thank-you letter. It takes four to six weeks to receive these mementos.

All you need is fill out and return a simple form or send a letter containing your name, address, former rank and stating that you received an honorable dis-charge. Information can be found at:

[www.Freedomteamsalute.army.mil](http://www.Freedomteamsalute.army.mil) or by writing  
*I./S. Army, Freedom Team Salute, 2511 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA 22202.*

### WORLD WAR I VETS: A FAST-FADING FEW

In October 2006, VA counted only 15 living American veterans of the “Great War.” If you know of any remaining WWI vets, please let us known and we will forward their names to VA.

One we know of is Robley Rex of Post 8639 in Okolona, KY. In July, he could be seen in Louisville handing out flags to National Guardsmen returning from Iraq. At 105, he said the secret to his longevity was marrying the right woman (his wife died in 1992 at age 91).



Region IV President Rhunette Haywood, Ladies Auxiliary Military Order of the Purple Heart Gamecock Unit 402, second from left, presents a \$250 check toward a new DAV van to Gary R. Baker, Director, Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office. Also shown left to right: Betty J. Carson, and Barbara O'Connor, VA staff members; Marilyn Grace, MOPH; and Jennifer Hendrix, VA staff.



Grand Marshalls: Tuskegee Airmen Association  
 Lexington County Veteran's Parade  
 November 5, 2006

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERAN'S DAY PARADE, NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>, 2006



**BLUE STAR MOTHERS & HELPERS PACK  
POPCORN AND GOODIES FOR THE TROOPS,  
NOVEMBER 11, 2006**

## **GOOD NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER**

If your military records were destroyed by fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO, you can now request a reconstruction of your file. If you have military records from World War II or the Korean era, you should take time to do this. It is important that your heirs are aware that your file of military records exist.

Submit all personal information you have in your military records and any other proof to:

National Personnel Records Center  
Military Personnel Records  
9700 Page Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63132-5100

The records you send in will allow them to create a new file for you and may give them leads to obtain other records of you from other sources. Doing this action will certainly not hinder you and may well make it easier to get VA assistance when you or your family need it.

## **VICTORY FOR VETERANS AS COURT BRINGS BACK JUDGES**

### ***Pending Veterans' Appeals Backlog Will be Reduced***

Chief Justice William Greene, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, has called up two retired federal judges to help the court deal with an unprecedented number of pending appeals. The decision has earned the praise of the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

This decision is a victory for veterans who would otherwise wait too long for a decision to be reached. Just a few years ago there were about 2,700 cases pending and the court was taking in less than 200 new cases per month. But the court is now taking in over 300 new cases per month and the number of pending cases has grown to over 5,800. The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims is in the judicial branch of government and reviews decisions rendered by VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals, which is in the executive branch of the federal government. Most of the court's decisions deal with disability compensation.

Other federal courts regularly recall judges, including the U.S. tax Court and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, but this is the first time the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has taken such action since it was created in 1988. (*What Every Veteran Should Know*, October 2006)

## **SECRETARY HAMMOND NAMES 10 ANGELS & SCROOGES**

Secretary of State Mark Hammond announced on November 15, 2006 the 2006 Scrooge and Angel recipients. Ten angels were honored at the press conference. The Angels honored represent organizations that exemplify charitable giving in South Carolina.

Angels recognized, with the percentage of their program expenses divided by their total expenses, are as follows:

- Aid Upstate from Greenville with 89.2%
- Aiken County Help Line, Inc. with 90.5%
- Cayce-West Columbia Dixie Youth Baseball, Inc with 88.4%
- Flowertown Players from Summerville with 89.4 %
- Goodfellas from Spartanburg with 93.2%
- Jasper County Neighbors United from Hardeeville with 83.0%
- Limos for Learning Corp from Laurens with 90.1%
- Operation First Response, Inc. from Culpepper, Virginia with 99.0%
- V Foundation from Cary, North Carolina with 83.6%
- Water Missions International from Charleston with 89.2%

This year's Scrooges, with the percentage of their program expenses divided by their total expenses, are as follows:

- American Association of State Troopers, Inc. from Tallahassee, Florida with 13.6%
- American Veterans Coalition from Gig Harbor, Washington with 7.3%
- Association for Firefighters and Paramedics, Inc. from Santa Ana, California with 3.9%
- Childhood Leukemia Foundaton, Inc. from Brick, New Jersey with 14.4%
- Disabled Veteran's Life Memorial Foundation of Arlington, Virginia with 16.1%
- National Association of Police & Lay Charities of Washington, DC with 20.4%
- South Carolina Ballet, Inc. of Greenville, South Carolina with 24.1%
- South Carolina Professional Firefighters & EMS Providers of Myrtle Beach with 4.5%
- United States Municipal Police Association, Inc. of Houston, Texas with 17.3%
- United States Public Policy Council of Fairfax, Virginia with 2.3%

The Scrooge and Angels lists are designed to educate the public about the need to check into a charity before making a donation. This can be done by checking the website at [www.scsos.com](http://www.scsos.com) or calling the toll-free number at 1-888-CHARITI (242-7484).

## PERILS OF PAYDAY LENDING

In August, a U.S. Defense Department report on predatory lending practices urged service members and their dependents to make prudent decisions to manage person finances. The report said: “. . . predatory lending undermines military readiness, harms the morale of troops and their families, and adds to the cost of fielding an all volunteer fighting force.”

On September 30, Congress passed provisions that:

- ❖ Cap interest rates at 36 percent APR for loans to members of the military and their spouses.
- ❖ Prohibit the use of a personal check or other method to access the borrower's bank account.
- ❖ Prohibit using the title to a borrower's vehicle as collateral for a small loan.
- ❖

Payday lenders advance money--up to \$300, according to state law--to borrowers for a fee of as much as 15 percent for a period not to exceed 31 days. The lender cannot renew or “flip” the loan with the borrower. More than 1,100 licensed payday-lending storefronts operate across South Carolina already, and their numbers are growing. This past year, 52 new payday lenders opened--amounting to one per week.

The typical payday loan in South Carolina is for two weeks. That means the loan has an annualized interest rate (APR) of 390 percent. If you borrowed \$300 and paid it off with a new loan every two weeks, after a year you would have paid \$1,170 and would still owe \$300.

*(South Carolina Update, AARP, Fall, 2006)*

## ADVANCE DIRECTIVES HELP YOU CONTROL YOUR FUTURE

Under state and federal law all competent adults have the right to make their own medical care decisions, including what treatments to accept, reject, or stop. People also have the power to name someone else to make health care

decisions for them if they become incapacitated. Legal and health professionals encourage people to establish advance health directives (health care powers of attorney or living wills) to make sure these desires are carried out.

Two helpful forms can be found online. The South Carolina Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging offers forms for both a living will and a health care power of attorney that have been approved by the South Carolina legislature.

The “Declaration of a Desire for a Natural Death,” South Carolina's living will form, allows a person to direct that life sustaining treatment not be provided in the event of a terminal condition or permanent unconsciousness. It also allows a person to state his or her wishes about tube feeding. While this form is helpful in preventing unwanted treatment, it is designed to address only specific medical situations.

The use of a health care power of attorney is recommended. In this more flexible document, the individual can name an individual an agent to make the health care decision for him or her, and also specify his or her desires for medical treatment at the end of life.

Another document mentioned by the Office of Aging is called “Five Wishes.” The Five Wishes document provides opportunities for individuals to appoint a health care agent, specify medical treatments they do or don't want, and inform caregivers of things that could be done to make them more comfortable in the final days (eg., playing certain music). The Five Wishes form is not freely available in South Carolina and has to be ordered for \$5.00.

For more information, visit the Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging at:

[www.state.sc.us/ltagov/aging/index.html](http://www.state.sc.us/ltagov/aging/index.html)

or Aging with Dignity at:

[www.agingwithdignity.org](http://www.agingwithdignity.org)

*(South Carolina Update, AARP, Fall, 2006)*

## TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is generally defined by the medical community as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain.

Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. The severity of a TBI may range from "mild," i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness to "severe," i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury.

TBI is considered to be a "signature wound" of the current war. TBI veterans face many problems, similar to that of PTSD veterans. TBI is not easily diagnosed or identified in many and can be missed because there are often no physical signs like those suffering from gunshot wounds, amputations, etc. The American Legion has heard many stories of these veterans "falling through the cracks" as a result of their "hidden wounds."

TBI patients need special attention and may first present to psychiatry or a primary care clinic. Proper screening of all veterans concerning their veteran status and exposure to blasts will possibly help to identify a TBI patient earlier and get them the proper treatment. VA providers must be sensitive to the military history of all the patients they see. It is what makes VA and its health care so unique.

### SOME LEXINGTON COUNTY VAN PASSENGER RULES

To better coordinate the available van drivers, we are asking you to schedule your Dorn VA Medical Center appointments **between the hours of 9:00 am. to 2:00 pm., Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday.**

The van driver is only permitted to stop the van for rest stops and/or emergencies, or to pick up and discharge passengers at designated pick-up points.

Passengers should not ask the driver to make side trips to take care of personal business.

STATISTICS ON LIVING WORLD WAR II U.S. VETERANS (estimated)			
9/30/06	3,242,000	9/30/14	954,000
9/30/07	2,889,000	9/30/15	773,000
9/30/08	2,551,000	9/30/16	616,000
9/30/09	2,230,000	9/30/17	484,000
9/30/10	1,929,000	9/30/18	373,000
9/30/11	1,649,000	9/30/19	283,000
9/30/12	1,393,000	9/30/20	210,000
9/30/13	1,161,000	9/30/21	158,475

### GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR (as of Sept 30,2006)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	1,384,968
Deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan	165,000
Battle Deaths	2,333
Other Deaths (In Theater)	707
Non-mortal Woundings	50,508
Living Veterans*	588,923

\*VA estimates does not include those still on active duty and may include veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

U.S. VETERANS AND DEPENDENTS ON BENEFIT ROLLS AS OF SEPTEMBER 2006				
	Veterans	Children	Parents	Surviving Spouse
Civil War		3		
Indian Wars				
Spanish-American		113		125
Mexican Border		18		70
World War I	9	3,831		7,596
World War II	429,518	15,636	227	232,745
Korean Conflict	226,467	3,423	419	61,423
Vietnam Era	1,103,561	9,819	3,614	151,507
Gulf War <sup>1</sup>	700,560	12,461	776	12,826
Nonservice Connected	329,856	20,362	2	186,074
Service Connected	2,725,82	28,362	6,418	313,091

<sup>1</sup> For compensation and pension purposes, the Persian Gulf War period has not yet been terminated and includes veterans of Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ONE AND ALL!**

*From*

*The Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office*



*605 West Main Street  
Suite 101  
785-8400*

*Gary R. Baker  
Barbara O'Connor  
Jennifer Hendrix  
Betty J. Carson*

**REWARDS OF VOLUNTEER  
VAN DRIVERS**

Volunteer van drivers do not get paid. The real reward is far greater than money—the unique opportunity to glimpse into the heroic lives of people all around us. So, when you see a van loaded with veterans on some highway in South Carolina, on its way to a VA hospital or clinic for the day, give the passengers a thumbs-up salute. They are extraordinary. They are unforgettable. From those of us who value what we have, they deserve a moment of recognition, and so much more.

So volunteer to drive the DAV red, white, and blue van one day a week, or one day a month. Wear your driver cap and photo ID with pride. You are gaining a quick glimpse in the heroic lives of those who helped fight for your freedom.

**HALL OF HONOR**

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor currently is under construction in New York's Hudson River Valley at the New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site. The mission of the Hall of Honor is to collect and preserve stories of Purple Heart recipients from all branches of service and generations. The stories will be recounted through a series of exhibits, live and videotaped interviews with veterans, and the Roll of Honor, an interactive computer program detailing the stories of each recipient. The Hall of Honor is the first national museum that recognizes the more than 1.7 million Americans wounded or killed in action, and it will become the nation's sole repository dedicated to the preservation of these stories of sacrifice. To find out more about the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor or to submit your story, visit:

[www.mysparks.state.ny.us/heritage/  
purple\\_hrt.asp](http://www.mysparks.state.ny.us/heritage/purple_hrt.asp)

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE  
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY  
605 West Main Street, Suite 101  
Lexington, SC 29072  
(803) 785-8400**

**DECEMBER OUTREACH PROGRAM**

December 5th	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
December 12th	9-12	Chapin

**TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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