

# Veterans Affairs Office of Lexington County



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EDITOR: Debbie Myers

## VET NEWS

May 2008

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### PTSD POLICY UPDATE

The Department of Veterans Affairs has dumped a policy requiring combat vets to verify in writing that they have witnessed or experienced a traumatic event before filing a claim for post-traumatic stress disorder, said the chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. In the past, a veteran has had to provide written verification — a statement from a commander or doctor, or testimony from co-workers — that he or she was involved in a traumatic situation in order to receive disability compensation for PTSD from VA. The Defense Department uses the same rules in evaluating PTSD for disability retirement pay. The rule also slows the process as veterans wait for yet more documentation before their claims may be processed. Sen. Daniel Akaka [D-HI] said he asked VA Secretary James Peake if the rule was necessary, and asked that it be removed. Peake agreed. In the future, veterans will be diagnosed with PTSD through a medical examination with no further proof necessary, Akaka said, adding that he's been told that Peake has already informed VA regional offices of the decision.

[Source: Air Force Times Kelly Kennedy article 18 Feb 08 ++]

### \*\*\*EXTRA EARNINGS FOR CERTAIN MILITARY SERVICE MAY BE COUNTED FOR SOCIAL SECURITY PURPOSES\*\*\*

Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for your military service from 1940 through 2001 can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit. Special extra earnings are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training, but are **not** granted for inactive duty training.

**NOTE: Social Security cannot add these extra earnings to your record until you file for Social Security benefits. Also, you generally cannot receive credit for these special extra earnings if you are already receiving a federal benefit based on the same years of service.** (one exception to that rule is for active duty after 1956, military retirement benefits based on 1951-1956 is allowed.)

### HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

#### Dates To Remember

May 1st	National Day of Prayer
May 8th	V-E Day
May 9th	Military Spouses Day
May 9th	Confederate Memorial Day - County Offices Closed
May 11th	Mother's Day
May 17th	Armed Forces Day
May 22nd	National Maritime Day
May 26th	Memorial Day - County Offices Closed

\*\*\*Please note the DAV van will NOT run on May 26th. The office will be closed on that date.



#### How To Get Credit For Special Extra Earnings:

This information applies **only** to active duty military service earnings from **1940 through 2001**. Here is how the special earnings are credited:

- ⇒ Service in **1978 through 2001**: for every \$300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited an additional \$100 in earnings (max. \$1200) a year. Check with Social Security for more details
- ⇒ Service in **1957 through 1977**: You are credited with \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay
- ⇒ Service in **1940 through 1956**: If you were in the military during this period, you did not pay Social Security taxes. However, your Social Security record may be credited with \$160/month in earnings for military service from September 16, 1940, through December 31, 1956, **providing**: you were honorably discharged after 90 or more days of service, or you were released because of a disability or injury received in the line of duty; **or** you are still on active duty; **or** you are applying for survivors benefits and the veteran died while on active duty.

[source: NACVSO News, Feb-Mar-Apr 2007 issue]



# “TAKE PRIDE IN OUR FLAG AND COUNTRY”

Excerpts from RYAN S. PRICE speech, Veteran’s Day 2007, Batesburg-Leesville High School

“As our Commander-In-Chief said two years ago...“Those who have risked their lives for our freedom have the respect and gratitude of our nation on Veterans Day and everyday.”

- It is the *veteran*, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.
- It is the *veteran*, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.
- It is the *veteran*, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.”

“There are three key points I would like to make today and I aim my message primarily to the student body and to the JROTC Cadet Battalion in formation on the field. The points I want to make are simple and easy to understand, just as I would prefer, and I conclude them with my challenge to you. They are: (1) Take pride in our flag and our country; (2) Secondly, be thankful for those who fought for our freedom; and lastly, (3) My challenge to you, make a positive impact on our society.”

“In closing today, my challenge to you is to **make a positive impact on our society.**” I challenge you to do this because, quite simply put, you can! We live in the land of the free because of veteran service members, like those among us today. I would be willing to say that *nothing* makes a veteran more proud of what he has done for his country than seeing Americans, young and old, making a difference in our towns and communities. Whether you volunteer in the schools, churches, communities, or you enlist in the military to proudly wear this uniform, *make a difference.* There are so many unfortunate people in this world that may *never* enjoy the freedom that we have.”

“This leads me to my first point: **Take pride in your flag and country.**”

“Pride: we all know what it means, and we can relate to this well. As a student-athlete of B-L, I remember those Friday nights here in this stadium, and I know that very little has changed. We get that warm feeling of belonging as our Panthers take the field...As a young freshman, or KNOB, at The Citadel, I quickly learned about pride and its significance in overcoming adverse situations. As any veteran will attest, there are few things that you really count on when things get tough. The pride that you have in yourself, and your fellow comrades, is one of those few things. The purpose of any initial military training is to ultimately build camaraderie and esprit de corps amongst those who may, one day, go into battle.

Because of my experiences and my time in combat, I take great pride in our flag. Despite all of the trials and hardships that I faced while in Iraq, I made it my goal to keep the US flag flying. I flew flags for my loved ones and shipped them home. I went as far as asking an Army pilot, a friend of mine, to fly one of my flags in his Kiowa Warrior helicopter while patrolling the Iraq-Iran border..”

“I personally feel that the largest problem faced by the Iraqi people is the lack of pride in their country. This brings me to my next point: **Be thankful for those who fought for our freedom.**”

In saying this, I ask that you listen to the following passage. Some of you may have already heard this, but I find it rather appropriate for today’s ceremony:

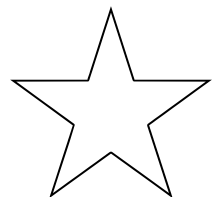
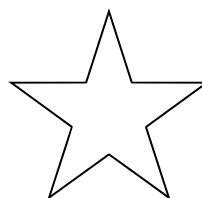
- It is the *veteran*, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.
- It is the *veteran*, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.
- It is the *veteran*, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.



**Ryan Price**, a native of Batesburg-Leesville, served in Iraq as a company commander during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His father served in Vietnam with the United States Marine Corps and his grandfathers served in World War II with the Army and Navy.

This kind of tradition and honor is what the proposed Armed Forces Monument, which organizers hope to build on the grounds of the Batesburg-Leesville National Guard Armory, will recognize within our own community.

If you are interested in furthering this effort, you may obtain more information by contacting **Jay Hendrix @ 413-7934 or Staff Sergeant Trey Anthony @ 803-532-2847.** Memorial bricks cost \$100, with order forms available at the **B-L Chamber of Commerce, Wiz’s Eatery and at the B-L National Guard Armory.**



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE HIRING AN IN-HOME CAREGIVER

### Seven Key Questions to Ask

Recent studies estimate that 24 million caregivers, or about 16 percent of the population, provide care to adults ages 50 years or older in the United States. Many states have or are considering laws to protect families from negligent or predatory providers. Right At Home, a national franchise of in-home supportive care, urges families to give the process of hiring a caregiver careful consideration. This list of seven questions to ask before hiring a caregiver is being provided as a guide in making that important decision.

- ⇒ What happens if the caregiver becomes ill or isn't available? If this is an issue, you want to make sure the agency or independent caregiver can make immediate arrangements to provide continuous care to the person in need.
- ⇒ Who has the legal responsibilities for social security and federal and state taxes? Also, make sure unemployment insurance is secured.
- ⇒ Is the caregiver legal to work in the U.S.? The agency must be able to provide legal documentation of the caregiver's status.
- ⇒ If the caregiver is injured, who is responsible for medical and other costs, such as unemployment? *Remember*, many homeowner insurance policies specifically *exclude* such injuries via clauses called *domestic employee exclusions*. This means the homeowner can be held responsible for the medical costs of an injured independent caregiver.
- ⇒ Have all proper checks, including criminal history background checks, etc been done and have prior work references been contacted? A reliable agency will have completed these checks before hiring the caregiver. Families who hire caregivers independently should conduct these checks at their own expense.
- ⇒ Is the caregiver bonded and insured to cover any injury to the client, damage or theft? In addition, when the agency says it is "bonded", family members should be sure to ask if their bond covers both injury *and* damages.
- ⇒ Assuming a family member is not available to supervise the caregivers at all times, what kind of documentation will be provided to substantiate proof of the completion of services?



## "AID and ATTENDANCE" AN UNDER-USED BENEFIT

Washington—The Department of Veterans Affairs is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of wartime veterans of an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance. Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of his or her potential eligibility. The Aid and Attendance benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing homes or assisted-living facilities.

Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the congressionally mandated legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly benefit if they have large medical expenses, including nursing home expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement.

To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self support and in need of regular personal assistance. The criteria for the Aid and Attendance benefit include the inability to feed oneself, to dress and undress without assistance, or to take care of one's own bodily needs. People who are bedridden or need help to adjust special prosthetic or orthopedic devices may also be eligible, as well as those who have a physical or mental injury or illness that requires regular assistance to protect them from hazards or dangers in their daily environment.

For a wartime veteran or surviving spouse to qualify for this special monthly pension, the veteran must have served at least 90 days of active military service, one day of which was during a period of war, and be discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Wartime veterans who entered active duty on or after September 8, 1980 must have completed at least 24 continuous months of active military service.

If all requirements are met, VA determines the Aid and Attendance benefit by adjusting for unreimbursed medical expenses from the veteran's or surviving spouse's total household income. If the remaining amount falls below the annual allowed income threshold, VA pays the difference between the claimant's income and the Aid and Attendance threshold. Current thresholds range from \$18,234 for single veterans with no dependants to \$21,615 for a veteran with one dependent, adjusted upward for additional dependents. The threshold for a surviving spouse alone is \$11,715.

Further information and assistance in filing a claim may be found by calling 1-800-827-1000. Online claims are available at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) . from any local veterans service organization.



## QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

*“A veteran is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to The United States of America, for an amount up to and including my life.”*

-Author Unknown

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

If you would like to receive this newsletter by mail each month, please call our office at 803-785-8400 and let Debbie know you would like to be added to our mailing list.

## MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of the Wives of Vietnam Veterans is scheduled for Monday, May 12th, 2008 at noon.

These meetings are hosted by David Cox of the Columbia Vet Center and are open to wives / significant others of Vietnam Veterans. The meeting location is 605 West Main St., Lexington, and is held in the auditorium. New attendees are always welcomed!

Please call 785-8400 for more information.

## S.C. CONFEDERATE RELIC ROOM AND MUSEUM History Comes Alive in Photos

[Taken from Article by Jeff Wilkinson, The State Newspaper, 3/31/08]

The depth of Abraham Lincoln's eyes grabs you first. Taken by pioneer photographer Alexander Gardner in 1863, just 11 days before Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, the print is one of the most famous images of the 16th president of the United States.



At 17 inches high and 13 inches wide, the rare contact print contains a level of detail, depth and emotion nearly impossible in the digital age.

It is one of 50 remarkable vintage images now displayed at the **S.C. Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum**, from the David L. Hack Collection of the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia. It is the first South Carolina visit for the collection. This exhibition will be available until **June 28th**.

Hours of operation for the S.C. Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, which is housed in the same mill building as the State Museum, are **Tuesdays to Saturdays 10 a. m. to 5 p.m.** Hours also include **the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 5 p.m.** Ticket prices are as follows: \$4.00 for ages 21 and older, under 21 years old are admitted free. The admission price on Sundays is \$1.00 per person.

Joint tickets for the Confederate Relic Room and the SC State Museum are \$6.00. These tickets enable you to visit both places once within a seven day period.



301 Gervais Street  
Columbia, SC 29214-0001  
803-898-8095

 ALL LEXINGTON COUNTY OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING DATES IN MAY:

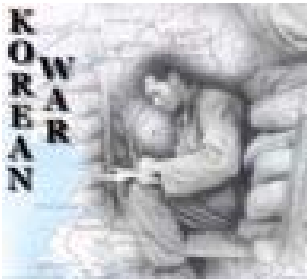
⇒ May 9th: **Confederate Memorial Day**

⇒ May 26th: **Memorial Day**

## WE NEED YOU!!!

As our DAV van participation increases, so does the need for drivers. Volunteer Van Drivers are the key to the success of this program. If you could serve in this way, whether one day a week or one day a month, we can use your help. Please call or come by our office for more information or to pick up an application.





## KOREAN VETERANS

*"The Forgotten Warriors"*

**Rolling Thunder SC3** along with other area Veterans will be honoring the military personnel who served our country in the Korean Conflict. We are inviting the public to come and help us show our appreciation to the men and women who served in the "Forgotten War".

This event will be held at the **Grand Strand Senior Center** located at **1268 21st Avenue, N. Myrtle Beach, S.C.** at **1:00 p.m.** on **June 28, 2008.**

We are looking for all **Korean Veterans**, their immediate and/or surviving family members who can be there. *Let the Grand Strand give you the acknowledgement that is long overdue.*

Donations will be accepted, and will benefit the **Korean Veterans Tribute** or **The Families of the Wounded Fund**. Checks should be made payable to: **RTSC3** with a memo note of "Korean Tribute".

Donations can also be mailed to: **RTSC3, Korean Tribute, P.O. Box 370, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29597**

For more information, please contact:

Bill De Vaughn  
843-685-1793  
[pbsc@sc.rr.com](mailto:pbsc@sc.rr.com)

Bill Matthews  
215-337-1089  
[wcmatt@gmail.com](mailto:wcmatt@gmail.com)



### RESOURCES, NOTES, NEWS... from the SC State Office of Veterans Affairs

- John Gibson from the **VA Regional Office** is the homeless veterans' coordinator. His contact # is 803-255-4310, ext. 3167
- The **SCOVA** office in the Dorn VAMC recently relocated from the Urgent Care Clinic area of the *first floor* to across the hall of the Audiology Clinic (Room 1B139) , but remains on the *first floor*.
- The South Carolina Office of Veterans Affairs website address is:  
**[www.govepp.state.sc.us/va](http://www.govepp.state.sc.us/va)**
- Bills pending before the SC General Assembly potentially affecting veterans can be found by going to **[www.scstatehouse.net/cgi-bin/web\\_index.exe](http://www.scstatehouse.net/cgi-bin/web_index.exe)** Once on that site, click on "Veterans and Military Affairs" within the index search box.

## MAILING OF PACKAGES TO TROOPS CONTINUES

The Blue Star Mothers of SC, in an ongoing effort, continue mailing packages to our currently deployed troops. The cost of sending these packages, which include personal items, cards with sentiments of thanks and well wishes from home, and of course, GIRL SCOUT COOKIES, has been over \$6000 this year to date. At the time of this printing an estimated 400 packages have been mailed this year. While these efforts continue, more funds are needed to cover postage.

CAN YOU HELP in this effort?

Go to the website [www.bluestarmotherssc.com](http://www.bluestarmotherssc.com) or call 803-206-6088 for more information or to make a donation.

Subject: many thanks from Iraq

You give credit to the motto, "DUM SPIRO SPERO". As a native son of South Carolina, I say "Thank You".

Sincerely,

SSG James P  
Miller



PS. The photo is of my men.

Just so you know, I am going to ensure a majority of these cookies make their way into the hands of our wounded soldiers at the 86th combat support hospital in Baghdad. These soldiers are not only away from their families, but are away from their unit family as well. Cookies always make anything seem a little bit better.

LTC Kevin Zurmuehlen  
Joint Contracting Command Iraq-Afghanistan

# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE TROOPS

Subject: THANKS!

Just wanted to say thanks from Baghdad Iraq. We just received three great big boxes of girl scout cookies.

I'll make sure these get out to the guys and gals!

Thanks again,  
Major Woodruff

A SPECIAL DONATION...

AND A CHALLENGE!

Thanks to VFW Post 8738, who presented a check to the Blue Star Mothers of SC for help with the cost of mailing packages to our troops! The Post donated \$200, which was MATCHED by individual lifetime VFW members, Mr. and Mrs. Don Kendall.

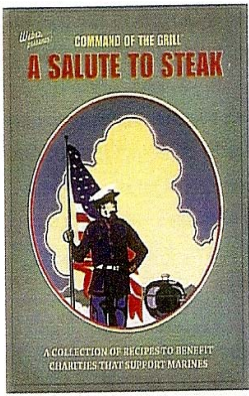
Mr. and Mrs. Kendall, along with POST 8738 Commander Ernie Norton, have issued a challenge to like-minded individuals and organizations to MATCH their donations!



I just received three boxes of girl scout cookies from your organization today. I would just like to say thank you so much for the cookies, and for thinking about us over here. With the war now on its sixth year, many Americans it seems, have forgotten that we exist over here, unless of course you have family or a spouse serving. Its just nice to know someone still cares. Again thank you so much for the cookies, they will be distributed out to Soldiers tonight.

DANIEL R. LAPE  
SGM, USA  
4-3 BCT OPS SGM  
FOB Kalsu, Iraq





Just in time for BBQ season comes ***Command of the Grill: A Salute to Steak***, featuring 80 recipes from U.S. Marines. Sponsored by Weber Grills, the book includes profiles of some of these proud Americans, as well as grilling tips. The entire cost of each sale will go to charities that directly benefit families of those wounded or killed in the line of duty.

These books may be ordered by going to the following websites:

[www.weber.com](http://www.weber.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

For more information on the organizations benefiting from this effort, go to [www.commandofthegrill.com](http://www.commandofthegrill.com) where you will find links to these charities.



**Semper Fidelis**



## 218TH SOLDIERS ARRIVE HOME

(from Lexington Chronicle article 4/24/08 by Jim McGowan)

About 200 members of South Carolina's 218th Brigade arrived stateside on Thursday morning. Aircraft carrying soldiers touched down at Pope Air Force Base adjacent to Ft. Bragg near Fayetteville, N.C. around 7 a.m.

This is the second group to return. About 160 returnees arrived several weeks ago. Some of the soldiers make their home in West Columbia and other towns in Lexington County. The balance of the soldiers is expected to return by mid-May.

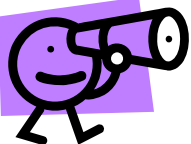
**WELCOME HOME, 218TH !!!**



## A NOTE OF THANKS

I recently flew out of Columbia, SC, with over 200 other folks. At the airport we were each given a box of Girl Scout cookies, they were in our seats when we loaded. Thanks. They were very much appreciated. We had some left from that flight and they flew on with some of us to Djibouti, Africa on a C130. Attached is a picture of me with cookies on the C130. Thanks. Your support is appreciated.

Chief Haggerty, USN



Look for the Lexington County Office of Veterans Affairs Booth at the upcoming Poultry Festival in Batesburg-Leesville on Saturday, May 10th.

# LETTERS OF THANKS FROM IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN



**Team  
Crazy  
Horse**

**Kandahar,  
Afghanistan**

Ma'am:

Just wanted to send a note to you and the Blue Star Mothers to thank you for the case of Girl Scout cookies. They were enjoyed by the Soldiers in the Headquarters as well as by the Security Teams, as pictured here (I am on the far right). We run daily missions down Route Irish and other routes in Baghdad. Things are busy but that makes the time go by. It is really nice that Patriots like you care enough to send things to the troops. We appreciate it, believe me!

Thank you again, All the Way!

**John**



To: info@bluestarmotherssc.com  
Subject: Thank You!

Ladies,

We would like to express our most sincere thanks for all the support you have provided throughout our deployment. We are an eleven-man embedded training team responsible for training and mentoring Afghan forces in Southern Afghanistan. We served in the hottest part of the country last summer and were moved to the coldest part for the winter.

Our soldiers were exhausted and morale was starting to slip, but the girl scout cookies arrived just after we returned to Kandahar. They brought with them a touch of home and reminded each of us, once again, that we are loved and supported in all our efforts here. The girl scouts had written "Victory Starts Here" with an arrow pointing to the pull tab on some of the box tops...if they only knew how right they were! Please pass our thanks on to the wonderful girl scouts responsible for helping with the care packages. They really made us smile and helped us push on during the final weeks of our deployment.

It is easy to feel we are fighting a "forgotten war" here in Afghanistan because the national media refuses to cover anything here unless there are casualties. However, you have reminded us that although America may not be getting information on what we are achieving here, there are still true patriots that hold our efforts in high esteem and keep us in their thoughts and prayers. Thank you so much for all you do!

Sincerely,

**The Men of Team Crazy Horse**  
FB Maholic - Kandahar, Afghanistan  
[pictured above, left]

## VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE OF LEXINGTON COUNTY 605 West Main Street, Suite 101

### MAY OUTREACH PROGRAM

May 6th	9-12	Batesburg/Leesville
May 13th	9-12	Chapin
May 20th	9-12	Swansea
May 27th	9-12	West Columbia

### TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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