



# LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

*"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"*

January/February 2016



Lexington, SC.

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## At A Glance Calendar January/February

<p>Weekly on Tuesdays in January</p> <p>Friday, January 1st</p> <p>Thursday, January 7th</p> <p>Friday, January 8th</p> <p>Saturday, January 9th</p> <p>Tuesday, January 12th</p> <p>Monday, January 18th</p> <p>Tuesday, January 26th</p> <p>Weekly on Tuesdays in February</p> <p>Monday, February 2nd</p> <p>Thursday, February 4th</p> <p>Friday, February 5th</p> <p>Tuesday, February 9th</p> <p>Wednesday, February 10th</p> <p>Friday, February 12th</p> <p>Saturday, February 13th</p> <p>Sunday, February 14th</p> <p>Monday, February 15th</p> <p>Tuesday, February 23rd</p> <p>Thursday, February 25th through</p> <p>Friday, February 26th</p>	<p>Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting @ 12 noon</p> <p>New Year's Day County Offices Closed</p> <p>Gaston Outreach</p> <p>Batesburg/Leesville Outreach</p> <p>Dang-it Dolls Workshop in Cayce</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day County Offices Closed</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting @ 12 noon</p> <p>Groundhog Day</p> <p>Gaston Outreach</p> <p>Chapin Outreach</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Ash Wednesday</p> <p>Batesburg/Leesville Outreach</p> <p>Dang-it Dolls Workshop in Cayce</p> <p>Valentine's Day</p> <p>President's Day County Offices Closed</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>SCACVAO mid winter conference</p>
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<p>Purple—Holidays/Special Days</p> <p>Blue—Outreach dates</p> <p>Red—County Offices Closed, No van scheduled and Special Notices</p> <p>Black—Director's appearances in the County</p>	<p>Brown—County Council Meetings</p> <p>Pink—Special Events throughout the County</p> <p>Orange—Director Out of Office</p> <p>Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings</p>
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### *From the Director...*

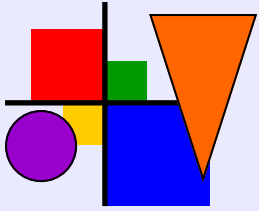
With the Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays behind us we again approach a new year. We, as your Lexington County team, are excited to serve you for another year. We do our best each day to serve and talk to as many Veterans and survivors as possible.

We will continue our scanning of paper files in an effort to go paperless with all files in order to keep pace with the Federal VA.

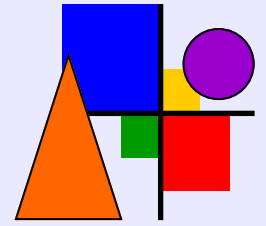
We will also undergo a major building renovation later this year that is projected to give us a new office setting in the spring of 2017. This will provide us state of the art facilities and major improvements to better serve everyone. It will also require us to move to the front of the building we now occupy and therefore, Veterans and survivors will not have to walk far to get to our office. We are extremely excited about this and look forward to the completion of this new office because it will provide us with many resources we don't have. We will keep you posted as developments occur.

We still have volunteer opportunities with our DAV van transporting Veterans to their appointments at the Dorn VA. If you would like to volunteer for this very valuable service, please contact us at 785-8400. Volunteer Veterans lead the Pledge of Allegiance at every Lexington County Council meeting and we are so proud of this opportunity to showcase our Veterans. If you, or someone you know would like to volunteer for either of these, please call us. Happy New Year!

It is an honor to serve Lexington County!



# AGENT ORANGE



Part of the United States' strategy in Vietnam was to conduct a herbicide program to remove foliage providing cover for the enemy. Agent Orange was the most widely used of the herbicide combinations sprayed. Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam were tested or stored elsewhere, including some military bases in the United States.

## **When & Where Agent Orange was Sprayed in Vietnam:**

The U.S. military herbicide program in South Vietnam took place between 1962 and 1971. Herbicides were sprayed in all four military zones of Vietnam. More than 19 million gallons of various herbicide combinations were used. Agent Orange was the combination the U.S. military used most often.

Heavily sprayed areas included:

- \* Inland forest near the demarcation zone
- \* Inland forests at the junction of the borders of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam
- \* Inland forests north and northwest of Saigon
- \* Mangrove forests on the southernmost peninsula of Vietnam
- \* Mangrove forests along major shipping channels southeast of Saigon



## **Eligibility for Disability Compensation:**

Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation if they have a service-connected disability and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.



## **Presumed Exposure Based on Vietnam or Korea Service:**

For the purpose of disability compensation, VA presumes that Veterans were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides if they served:

- \* In Vietnam anytime between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 (includes brief visits ashore or service aboard a ship that operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam. Check VA's list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that operated in Vietnam.
- \* In or near the Korean demilitarized zone anytime between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971. These Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides to qualify for disability compensation for diseases related to Agent Orange exposure (also called "presumptive diseases").

## **Exposure not Presumed:**

A Veteran who believes he or she has a disease caused by herbicide exposure, but it is not a presumptive disease, must show an actual connection between the disease and herbicide exposure during military service. Veterans who do not meet criteria for presumed exposure to Agent Orange may be eligible for service-connection for related disabilities. This includes:

- \* Blue Water Veterans who served on ships off the shore of Vietnam that did not operate on the inland waterways of Vietnam, or who did not set foot in Vietnam.
- \* Veterans who served on or near the perimeters of military bases in Thailand during the Vietnam Era.
- \* Veterans who served where herbicides were tested and stored outside of Vietnam.

**Continued on page 4**

## Agent Orange continued from page 3

They must show that they were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service to be eligible for service-connection for presumptive diseases related to Agent Orange exposure. For diseases that are not presumptive, they must show that they were exposed to herbicides and that there is an actual connection between the disease and their herbicide exposure.



**EXCEPTION:** Blue Water Veterans with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma may be granted service-connection without showing inland waterway service or that they set foot in Vietnam. This is because VA also recognizes non-Hodgkin's lymphoma as related to service in Vietnam or the waters offshore of Vietnam during the Vietnam Era.

### List of Presumptive Diseases:

*\* Acute and Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy*

A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides and resolve within two years after the date it began.

*\* AL Amyloidosis*

A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.

*\* Chloracne (or Similar Acneform Disease)*

A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acne form disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10% disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.

*\* Chronic B-cell Leukemia's*

A type of cancer which affects white blood cells.

*\* Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)*

A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.

*\* Hodgkin's Disease*

A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen and by progressive anemia.

*\* Ischemic Heart Disease*

A disease characterized by reduced supply of blood to the heart, that leads to chest pain.

*\* Multiple Myeloma*

A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.

*\* Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma*

A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.

*\* Parkinson's Disease*

A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement.

*\* Porphyrria Cutanea Tarda*

A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.

*\* Prostate Cancer*

Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.

*\* Respiratory Cancers*

Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.

*\* Soft Tissue Sarcoma*

A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood, and lymph vessels, and connective tissues. Does not include: Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma).

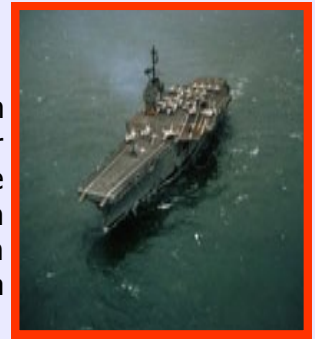
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## Agent Orange continued from page 4

### Agent Orange Registry Health Exam for Veterans:

VA's Agent Orange Registry Health Exam alerts Veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to Agent Orange exposure during their military service. The registry data helps the VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively. This comprehensive health exam includes an exposure and medical history, laboratory tests, and a physical exam. A VA health professional will discuss the results face-to-face with the Veteran and in a follow-up letter.



Important points about registry health exams:

- \* Free to eligible Veterans and no co-payment.
- \* Not a disability compensation exam or required for other VA benefits.
- \* Enrollment in VA's health care system not necessary.
- \* Based on Veterans' recollection of service, not on their military records.
- \* Will not confirm exposure to Agent Orange.
- \* Veterans can receive additional registry exams, if new problems develop.

To contact the VA about Agent Orange Registry Health Exams:

#### By Telephone

- \* Call your local VA Environmental Health Coordinator at Dorn VAMC: 803-776-4000 ext. 4710 or 6179
- \* TDD (for hearing impaired): 1-800-829-4833

#### In Person

- \* Go to your nearest VA health care facility and speak to the VA Environmental Health Coordinator: Dorn VAMC, 6439 Garner's Ferry Road, Columbia, 29209

January is National Blood Donor Month!



February is  
American Heart  
Month!

American Heart Month



*The woods are lovely,  
dark and deep,  
But I have  
promises to keep,  
And miles to go  
before I sleep,  
And miles to go  
before I sleep.*

*robert frost*

# IMPORTANT DAV VAN INFORMATION

The van runs on certain Mondays, Wednesdays & Thursdays taking Veterans to appointments at DORN VAMC for their scheduled appointments between 9am and 1pm. Currently, we have very few van drivers and are running the van on a limited schedule.

If you need to schedule a ride on the DAV van, please call the office for dates and space availability.



**WE ARE LOOKING  
FOR VOLUNTEER  
VAN DRIVERS!!!**

We presently only have three drivers and are desperate for new drivers.

If you are 18 or older or know someone who may be interested in volunteering to drive the DAV van at least one day a month, please contact the office at 803-785-8400.

The Van is running the following dates in January and February:

Thursday, January 7th  
Wednesday, January 13th  
Monday, January 25th  
Wednesday, January 27th

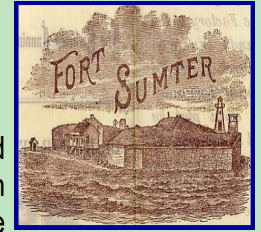
Thursday, February 4th  
Monday, February 8th  
Wednesday, February 10th  
Monday, February 22nd  
Wednesday, February 24



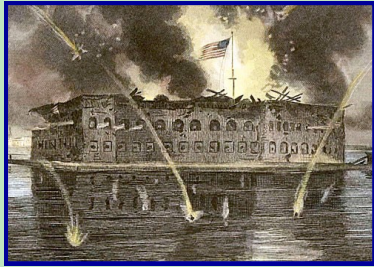
***Please call the office for space availability on these dates.***



# The History of Fort Sumter



Fort Sumter was first built in the wake of the War of 1812, which had highlighted the United States' lack of strong coastal defenses. Named for Revolutionary War general and South Carolina native Thomas Sumter, Fort Sumter was one of nearly 50 forts built as part of the so-called Third System, a coastal defense program implemented by Congress in 1817. The three-tiered, five-sided fort's coastal placement was designed to allow it to control access to the vital Charleston Harbor. While the island itself was only 2.4 acres in size, the fort was built to accommodate a garrison of 650 soldiers and 135 artillery pieces. Construction of Fort Sumter first began in 1829 in Charleston Harbor, on a manmade island built from thousands of tons of granite. Construction of Fort Sumter was still underway when South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860.



Despite Charleston's position as a major port, only two companies of federal troops guarded the harbor. Commanded by Major Robert Anderson, these companies were stationed at Fort Moultrie, a dilapidated fortification facing the coastline. Recognizing that Fort Moultrie was vulnerable to a land assault, Anderson elected to abandon it for the more easily defensible Fort Sumter on December 26, 1860. South Carolina militia forces would seize the city's other forts shortly thereafter, leaving Fort Sumter as the lone federal outpost in Charleston. A standoff ensued until January 9, 1861, when a ship called the *Star of the West* arrived in Charleston with over 200 U.S. troops and supplies intended for Fort Sumter. South Carolina militia batteries fired upon the vessel as it neared Charleston Harbor, forcing it to turn back to sea. Major Anderson refused repeated calls to abandon Fort Sumter, and by March 1861 there were over 3,000 militia troops besieging his garrison. On April 11th, militia commander P.G.T. Beauregard demanded that Anderson surrender the fort, but Anderson again refused. In response Beauregard opened fire on Fort Sumter shortly after 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861. U.S. Captain Abner Doubleday ordered the first shots in defense of the fort a few hours later. Beauregard's 19 coastal batteries unleashed a punishing barrage on Fort Sumter, eventually firing an estimated 3,000 shots at the fort in 34 hours. By Saturday, April 13th, cannon fire had broken through the fortress's five-foot-thick brick walls, causing fires inside the post. With his stores of ammunition depleted, Anderson was forced to surrender the fort shortly after 2 p.m. in the afternoon. The bombardment of Fort Sumter would play a major part in triggering the Civil War. In the days following the assault, Lincoln issued a call for Union volunteers to quash the rebellion, while more Southern states including Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee cast their lot with the Confederacy.

Following Beauregard's bombardment in 1861, Confederate forces occupied Fort Sumter and used it to marshal a defense of Charleston Harbor. Once it was completed and better armed, Fort Sumter allowed the Confederates to create a valuable hole in the Union blockade of the Atlantic seaboard. Only when Union General William T. Sherman was poised to capture Charleston did the Confederates finally evacuate. Union forces would reclaim Fort Sumter on February 22, 1865. Robert A. Anderson and Abner Doubleday, the two commanding officers from the original siege of Fort Sumter, would both return to the fortress on April 14, 1865, for a flag raising ceremony.



After the Civil War, the derelict Fort Sumter was rebuilt and partially redesigned. It would see little use during the 1870s and 1880s and was eventually reduced to serving as a lighthouse station for Charleston Harbor. With the start of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the fortress was rearmed and once again used as a coastal defense installation. It would later see service during both World War I and World War II. In 1948, Fort Sumter was decommissioned as a military post and turned over to the National Park Service. It now attracts over 750,000 visitors every year.

## FLU SHOTS

Seasonal flu shots are now available for all registered and enrolled Veterans at DORN VA hospital.



Veterans can receive the flu shot during their regularly scheduled Primary Care or Specialty Care appointments or Primary Care Walk-in visits. Walk-ins are accepted Monday through Friday (except for Federal Holidays) between the hours of 8am to 4pm.



Veterans may also obtain their flu shot at any Walgreens location. The Veteran must show their VA medical ID card.

## Dang-it Dolls Workshops

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Saturday, January 9th  
and  
Saturday, February 13th  
from 10am to 3pm  
at the Cayce Masonic Lodge,  
1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.



There is something for everyone to do and this is the one place where  
**THE MORE THE MERRIER**  
really counts.



“...It is a proud privilege to be a soldier – a good soldier ... [with] discipline, self-respect, pride in his unit and his country, a high sense of duty and obligation to comrades and to his superiors, and a self confidence born of demonstrated ability.”  
— George S. Patton Jr.



## Lexington County Veterans Group

All Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 12 noon to 2:00 pm in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.

The Veterans group also participates in various social activities such as group lunches, group dinners with wives/significant other, boat trips on Lake Murray, participation in the Lexington County Veterans parade and other general group tours.

*For further information, please contact the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office at 803-785-8400.*



Picture on the left - (from left to right)  
E.C. Murray, Rolf A. Buchner, Gary Smith, Jerry Cook, Ernest Jones, Mike Egan at the grave of Donne Seyfer.



Picture on the right - (from left to right)  
E.C. Murray, Ernest Jones, Rolf A. Buchner, Jerry Cook, Mike Egan at the grave of Ron Lee.



# ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of January/February?



**January 1, 1892** - Ellis Island in New York Harbor opened.



**January 7, 1714** - A patent was issued for the first typewriter designed by British inventor Henry Mill.



**January 8, 1935** - Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo, Mississippi.



**January 11, 1964** - The U.S. Surgeon General declared cigarettes may be hazardous to health.



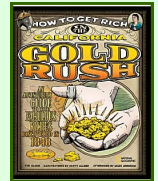
**January 15, 1870** - The donkey was first used to symbolize the Democratic Party in America.



**January 16, 1853** - French industrialist Andre Michelin was born in Paris. He started the Michelin Tire Company in 1888.



**January 20, 1981** - Ronald Reagan became president of the United States at the age of 69, the oldest president to take office.



**January 24, 1848** - The California gold rush began.

**January 25, 1947** - Gangster Al Capone died in Miami at age 48 from syphilis.



**January 27, 1945** - The Russian Army liberated Auschwitz death camp near Krakow in Poland.



**January 30, 1948** - Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi, India, by a religious fanatic.

**February 3, 1870** - The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, guaranteeing the right of citizens to vote, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.



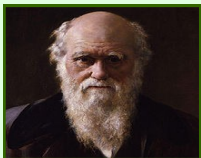
**February 6, 1895** - Legendary baseball player George Herman "Babe" Ruth was born in Baltimore, Maryland.

**February 8, 1910** - The Boy Scouts of America was founded by William Boyce in Washington, D.C.



**February 12, 1809** - Author and naturalist Charles Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, England.

**February 15, 1820** - Susan B. Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts.



**February 17, 1865** - Fort Sumter in South Carolina was returned to the Union after nearly a year and a half under Confederate control.



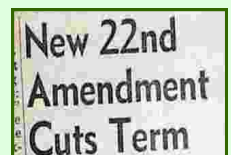
**February 17, 1909** - Apache Chief Geronimo died while in captivity at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.



**February 21, 1965** - Former Black Muslim leader Malcolm X was shot and killed in New York City.



**February 27, 1950** - The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, limiting the president to two terms or a maximum of ten years in office.



# Camp Lejeune Updates

As part of the VA's ongoing commitment to provide care to Veterans and their families, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will start the process of amending its regulations to establish presumptions of service connection for certain conditions resulting from exposure to contaminated drinking water at the U.S. Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, in North Carolina.



This process is in addition to the healthcare the VA already provides for 15 conditions to eligible Veterans who were stationed at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987, as a result of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012. The VA also provides reimbursement of healthcare expenses for those 15 conditions to eligible family members who resided at Camp Lejeune during that time period.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs recently met with senators and the Director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to discuss the creation of presumptions of service connection for diseases associated with the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune. The diseases that are currently being reviewed for potential presumptive service connection include kidney cancer, angiosarcoma of the liver, and acute myelogenous leukemia, which are known to be related to long-term exposure to the chemicals that were in the water at Lejeune from the 1950s through 1987. The chemicals are Benzene, Vinyl Chloride, Trichloroethylene and Perchloroethylene, which are known as volatile organic compounds, used in industrial solvents and components of fuels.

The VA will also work with ATSDR and potentially the National Academy of Sciences to evaluate the body of scientific knowledge and research related to exposure to these chemicals and the subsequent development of other diseases. The VA will carefully consider all public comments received when determining the final scope of any presumptions.

Veterans with health problems they believe are related to exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune may file a claim for disability compensation online at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov), or visit their local VA office.



For more information, Veterans and family members should contact the nearest VA healthcare facility by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune). For further information on Camp Lejeune: VHA Office of Public Health has a website on Camp Lejeune historical water contamination at: [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp).

The U.S. Marine Corps encourages all those who lived or worked at Camp Lejeune before 1987 to register for notifications regarding Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water at <https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clwater>.



## **Aid and Attendance Benefits**

A Veteran can receive housebound or aid and attendance benefits through the VA in one of two ways. The first is if you are a 100% service-connected Veteran; the other is through the non-service connected pension program. A surviving spouse can receive this benefit through survivor's benefits.

### **For service-connected Veterans**

If a Veteran is service-connected at the 100% rate and is housebound, bedridden, or is so helpless as to need the aid and attendance of another person, then payment of additional Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) can be considered. The amount of SMC will vary depending on the level of disability.

### **For non-service connected Veterans**

Veterans who are eligible for VA pension and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person may be eligible for an additional monetary payment. Veterans who are eligible for a VA pension and require the aid and attendance of another person, or are housebound, may be eligible for additional monetary payment. These benefits are paid in addition to monthly pension, and they are not paid without eligibility to pension.



Since Aid and Attendance and Housebound allowances increase the pension amount, people who are not eligible for a basic pension due to excessive income may be eligible for pension at these increased rates. A Veteran may not receive Aid and Attendance benefits and housebound benefits at the same time.

### **For Surviving Spouses**

Surviving spouses that are eligible for either DIC or surviving spouse pension may also qualify for housebound or aid and attendance benefits. The surviving spouse must meet the same healthcare requirement as listed above for a Veteran.

### **Aid & Attendance (A&A)**

The Aid & Attendance (A&A) increased monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount if you meet one of the following conditions: 1 - You require the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment. 2 - You are bedridden, in that your disability or disabilities requires that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment. 3 - You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity. 4 - Your eyesight is limited to a corrected 5/200 visual acuity or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less.



### **Housebound**

This increase monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount when you are substantially confined to our immediate premises because of permanent disability.



## Aid and Attendance Benefits continued from page 11

You may apply for A&A or housebound benefits through our office or by writing the VA regional office where you filed a claim. If the regional office of jurisdiction is not known, you may file the request with any VA regional office. You should include copies of any evidence, preferably a report from an attending physician, validating the need for A&A or housebound type care. The report should have sufficient detail to determine whether there is disease or injury producing physical or mental impairment, loss of coordination, or conditions affecting the ability to dress and undress, to feed oneself, to attend to the wants of nature, and to keep oneself ordinarily clean and presentable. Whether the claim is for A&A or housebound, the report should indicate how well the applicant gets around, where the applicant goes, and what he or she is able to do during a typical day. This can be a statement from the attending physician or a VA form 21-2680 (examination for housebound status or permanent need for regular aid and attendance). In addition, it is necessary to determine whether the claimant is confined to the home or immediate premises. This can be a statement from the facility or a VA form 21-0779 (request for nursing home information in connection with claim for aid and attendance).



## C-123 Aircraft Agent Orange Exposure Claims



Any Air Force Veteran or Air Force Reservist who was assigned to one of the affected Reserve or active duty units as a ground, flight, or medical crew member on a contaminated aircraft and later developed a disability that has been linked to Agent Orange exposure should file a claim. VA has information indicating that few Air Force units (active duty and Reserve) had one or more of the contaminated aircraft during the period 1969 through 1986 (depending upon unit of assignment). VA compiled a list of these units and the dates on which they had the aircraft, which is publicly available at: [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/residue-c123-aircraft/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/residue-c123-aircraft/index.asp).

## Are You in NEED of Home Repairs?



### Weatherization Assistance Program...Working in your Community

'Making Communities Stronger, One Family at a time!'

Obtain needed repairs to your home through grant programs. The Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation & Weatherization Program is available to make repairs for low-medium income homeowners. Available to Veterans or Active Duty Members of any branch of the US military that are currently serving, have served, or their surviving spouse.

#### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

##### INCOME GUIDELINES:

Must identify and verify all sources of income for each household member. Verification of income must be within 90 days of submission

##### STATEMENT FROM FINANCIAL INSTITUTION:

Must submit last two (2) months of bank statements for all accounts.

##### PROPERTY TAX:

Must be paid current.

##### OWN OR BUYING A HOME:

Must have thirty (30) days ownership.

##### COPY OF DEED:

Must be registered and recorded.

##### DD 214:

Or other proof of service.

Contact Capital Rehab Management (Joyce Pue) at 803.661.5772 (O) or 803.261.5772 (C)

# January is National Soup Month!



# February is National Cherry Month!



## VA PARTNERS WITH YMCA OF THE USA TO SUPPORT VETERANS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) have refreshed and expanded their partnership to promote and enhance the health and well-being of Veterans and their families.

A new agreement will make it easier for Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities to work with local YMCAs to ensure that Veterans are connected to needed resources and opportunities in their communities.

“Since the Civil War, the Y has been a friend to service members and Veterans—the YMCA’s education scholarships were forerunners of the GI Bill,” said Secretary Bob McDonald. “I’m pleased to announce that VA and Y-USA have agreed to continue that legacy by further expanding our partnership.”

In communities where VA and the Y choose to work together, the partnership connects Veterans to VA services and benefits in the areas of employment, homelessness, healthy lifestyle programming, and reintegration into the local community.

“This enhanced agreement makes it easier for local VA facilities and YMCAs to collaborate on helping transitioning service members and Veterans connect to the resources and opportunities that they need,” said McDonald.

“Our nation’s Veterans, and their families, have dedicated so much in service to our country. The Y is honored to have the opportunity to show our appreciation by doing what we do best – improving the lives of individuals in the communities we serve,” said Kevin Washington, President and CEO of Y-USA. “There are many YMCAs across the nation that are already working with VA and providing services directly to Veterans, this formal acknowledgement between the Y and VA will make it easier for that work to continue, expand and flourish.”

VA is committed to working closely with nongovernmental organizations, such as Y-USA to identify new and innovative ways to support VA’s commitment to care for those who “have borne the battle” and their families. Strengthening collaborations within communities and with community-based organizations helps to achieve VA’s goal of improving the lives of Veterans, service members, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

While the collaboration might look different in each participating community, the mutual goals of improving the lives of Veterans and their families will remain consistent nationwide.



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

*crushing* LOVE  
CUPID I'M YOURS  
HUGS & KISSES  
SWEETHEART  
BE MY VALENTINE  
BE MINE XOXOXO  
KISS ME  
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE  
*and they lived happily ever after*



LEXINGTON INTERFAITH COMMUNITY SERVICES

## 2015 Holiday Basket Wish List

- Ham or Turkey (frozen or canned)
- Canned Sweet Potatoes
- Canned Collards
- Stuffing Mix
- Cranberry Sauce
- Cornbread Mix
- Green Beans
- Dessert Mix (Complete kit)



Please deliver to LICS by the following dates:

Thanksgiving: Wednesday, November 11th

Christmas: Wednesday, December 9th

Questions? Anna Smith  
Director of Community Relations  
Extension 228 | [anna@licssc.org](mailto:anna@licssc.org)

*You may pack a basket or box and bring it completed, or simply bring the items and we will prepare. Feel free to add a personal note or prayer for the family.*

**"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" - Matthew 25:40**

216 HARMON STREET, LEXINGTON SC 29072  
803 957 6656 | 803 957 3414 fax | [www.licssc.org](http://www.licssc.org)





# Falling Behind in Your Mortgage/ Worried about Foreclosure?

## SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES

SC HELP- approved Housing Processing Agency

### MAY BE ABLE TO HELP AT NO COST

Homeowners worried about foreclosure due to reduction in income caused by unemployment or underemployment, reduction in self-employment income, death of a spouse, catastrophic medical expenses or divorce May Be Eligible for one or more of the following programs administered by SC HELP:

#### MONTHLY PAYMENT ASSISTANCE :

pays mortgage up to \$36,000 or 24 months whichever comes first while homeowner is seeking employment and a return to self-sustainability

#### DIRECT LOAN "CATCH UP" ASSISTANCE:

pays up to \$36,000 on past due mortgage to bring current; provided, homeowner can now maintain pay monthly payments

•MPA & DLA are both 5 year forgivable loans if you continue to reside in property



#### COMBINATION OF MONTHLY AND DIRECT ASSISTANCE:

pays past due mortgage up to \$25,000 and makes monthly payments for a combined total of \$36,000

#### TRANSITION ASSISTANCE FOR DEED-IN-LIEU OR SHORT-SALE:

provides \$5,000 grant to help transition families from homeownership to rental housing if:

1. Application with SC HELP completed FIRST
2. Permission for short-sale or deed-in-lieu of foreclosure granted by mortgage company
3. Money distributed AFTER execution of deed completed

#### How To APPLY

### South Carolina Legal Services:

1 888 257 1988

Or

1 855 435 7472

Apply online at

[www.SCHELP.gov](http://www.SCHELP.gov)



South Carolina  
Legal Services

Balancing the Scales of Justice

Andrea E. Loney, Esquire  
Executive Director  
2109 Bull Street, P.O. Box 1445, Columbia, SC29201  
Email: [andrealoney@sclegal.org](mailto:andrealoney@sclegal.org)  
Fax: 803-744-4191  
[www.sclegal.org](http://www.sclegal.org)

SC HELP  
Mortgage help for homeowners.





# South Carolina Legal Services

*Balancing the Scales of Justice*

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[www.sclegal.org](http://www.sclegal.org) | [www.lawhelp.org/sc](http://www.lawhelp.org/sc) | [www.probono.net/sc](http://www.probono.net/sc)



South Carolina Homeownership  
and Employment Lending Program

300-C Outlet Pointe Boulevard  
Columbia, South Carolina 29210  
[www.scmortgagehelp.com](http://www.scmortgagehelp.com)

## Pre-Registration Information

South Carolina Homeownership and Employment Lending Program have been awarded \$295,431,200 in funding from the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Hardest Hit Fund to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. South Carolina Legal Services will help you gather and submit the documents to apply for mortgage assistance.

1. Full name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Complete Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_
3. Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell phone Number \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you or the co-borrower own and live in the property as a primary residence? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Was your original first mortgage amount less than \$729,750? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the name of your mortgage company? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Is your mortgage current or delinquent? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are you or the co-borrower unemployed? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If yes, are you getting unemployment compensation? \_\_\_\_\_
10. If you are no longer getting unemployment compensation, when did it stop? \_\_\_\_\_
11. If still employed, please give your anticipated date of termination or reduction in hours? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you or the co-borrower had a significant reduction in your income? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Why was the income reduced? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Are you able to complete an online application? \_\_\_\_\_

## How to Apply:

Fax this Form to: 803 799 9420

Call:

**SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES**

**1 888 257 1988**

Or

**855 HELP 4 SC**

Submit an application at

**[www.SCHelp.com](http://www.SCHelp.com)**

## County Council Needs You!

Veterans are needed to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at County Council meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. County Council meetings start at 4:30pm, so you would need to be present around 4:15pm. Contact the office at 803-785-8400, if you are interested.



## VA Funding to Help the Homeless



Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Robert A. McDonald announced 12.8 million dollars in renewal funding through the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program to 20 community agencies that currently provide transitional housing

with supportive services for homeless Veterans under the Transition in Place (TIP) model.

As a key component of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) plan to eliminate homelessness among Veterans, VA's GPD program provides per diem payments to help public and nonprofit organizations establish and operate supportive housing for specific homeless Veteran populations, which includes the innovative TIP approach to assist homeless Veterans transition from homelessness. TIP encourages rapid movement from transitional housing to permanent housing which enables Veterans to live as independently, as possible, while increasing housing stabilization.

More information about VA's homeless programs is available at [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless). Community organizations seeking details and/or more information, may contact the National Grant and Per Diem Program office at <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp> or by calling 1-877-332-0334.

### OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES



**Batesburg/Leesville Outreach** is the 2nd Friday of the month at the Batesburg/Leesville Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

**Chapin Outreach** is the 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 10a.m. to 12 noon.



**Gaston/Swansea Outreach** is the 1st Thursday of the month at the Gaston Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

**Please note the change in time for Chapin Outreach.**

*Appointments are strongly encouraged. Call the office at 803-785-8400 to schedule a time.*

**THERE WILL BE NO OUTREACH IN CHAPIN ON JANUARY 1, 2016.**

### DID YOU KNOW...

The VAMC Dorn now has a food pantry. Any Veteran in need may participate in the program. He or she must contact Voluntary Services and they will direct you to the food pantry. To contact Voluntary Services call (803) 776-4000 extension 6780.







## Winter Word Search

F S N O W M A N Y P V W R U E  
 X I U E I L I G O F I A R H Y  
 U C R C T U O L D N G K L I A  
 C S E E G I A Z T S O R F B R  
 C N O N P R H E O M H Q C E G  
 H M E P B L R W C Y P K M R I  
 I P D E E K A L F W O N S N M  
 L O A G T O Q C I Z U C P A U  
 L R Z A K O C P E I J J D T Z  
 Y T H O T C H O C O L A T E J

chilly  
 fireplace  
 frost  
 hibernate  
 hot chocolate  
 migrate



penguin  
 polar bear  
 snowflake  
 snowman  
 white  
 winter

## Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day, February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. It is also a legend that traverses centuries, its origins clouded in the mists of time with ethnic cultures and animals awakening on specific dates. Myths such as this tie our present to the distant past when nature did, indeed, influence our lives. It is the day that the Groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter sleep to look for his shadow. If he sees it, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. If the day is cloudy and, hence, shadow less, he takes it as a sign of spring and stays above ground. The groundhog tradition stems from similar beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe, and for centuries the custom was to have the clergy bless candles and distribute them to the people.



Mark your  
 calendars as the  
 County Offices will  
 be closed on:

Friday, January 1st  
 Monday, January 18th  
 Monday, February 15th



## Job Hunting?

The VA medical center and regional office is hiring Veterans.



Visit [USAjobs.com](http://USAjobs.com) for more information.



American Red Cross

### Emergency Communication Services

Serving active duty service members and their families, DoD civilians and families serving overseas, National Guard and Reserves, and veterans.

**1-877-272-7337**

## Lawyers 4 Vets

Lawyers 4 Vets connects lower income Veterans living at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines with local attorneys who provide one-on-one pro bono legal advice or representation. Lawyers 4 Vets will assist Veterans by appointment only with:

1. Obtaining identification (Social Security, South Carolina ID, birth certificates, etc).
2. Child support and visitation issues in South Carolina.
3. Expungements and pardons in SC.
4. Consumer protection.
5. Simple wills and healthcare power of attorney.



Veterans seeking information about the clinic should call 1-877-289-6000.



## News from VAMC Dorn

A new three story parking structure will be built on the VAMC Dorn campus. Construction is to begin in the Spring of 2016.



The State of SC and the Department of Mental Health has approved three more VA nursing homes to be built in the state. That would bring the total number in the state to six. The locations for the new VA nursing homes are: Columbia, Florence, and Gaffney. Currently there are VA nursing homes in Anderson, Columbia, and Walterboro.

## FYI...

The 2016 VA disability and pension rates will not include a cost of living increase.

It is also unlikely that there will be a cost of living increase from Social Security. Unfortunately, there will be an increase in the Medicare Part B premiums to \$159.30 per month.

**COST OF LIVING**

*Mark your calendar...*

*The SC Veteran's Rally will be held April 28, 2016 on the State House grounds.*



The VA has a new website anyone can access for all VA questions, SEP user guides, regulations, policies, laws and any other VA resources. The website is: [www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov).

**Website**

Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to **838255**

**Support Matters.**



**Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Confidential help for Veterans and their families



## VA Announces New Rules Regarding Service Animals in VA Facilities

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) announced that it has revised its regulation regarding the presence of animals on VA property. The updated regulation will ensure VA practices remain consistent with applicable federal law. It will also assist individuals entering VA facilities in developing a clear and consistent understanding of the criteria governing facility access for service animals.

"As I have traveled to VA facilities throughout the country, I have heard from many Veterans about what a vital role their service animals play in their lives," said Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "The revised regulation will ensure Veterans and employees have clear guidance regarding the presence of service animals in our facilities. VA remains committed to ensuring America's Veterans have access to the health care benefits for which they are eligible."



Under the revised regulation, only dogs that are individually trained to perform work or tasks on behalf of an individual with a disability will be considered service animals. Other animals will not be permitted in VA facilities, unless expressly allowed as an exception under the regulation for activities such

as animal-assisted therapy or for other reasons such as law enforcement purposes. The regulation further confirms that service animals may access VA property subject to the same terms that govern the admission of the public to VA property, and may be restricted from certain areas on VA properties to ensure that patient care, patient safety, and infection control standards are not compromised.

## **NEW**

## **SOUTH CAROLINA POW MEDAL**

South Carolina Veterans who were prisoners of war during a war time period are eligible to receive a new special state POW medal for their time in captivity. The POW medal was created by the Legislature in a June 2014 law that authorizes the Governor to present the award to South Carolina residents who are on federal



POW lists. Any former POW who received an honorable discharge and is a South Carolina citizen can apply for the medal. Former prisoners from WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, or other conflicts are also eligible. Surviving spouses or descendants can also apply for the medal once.

If you live in Lexington County or know someone who does and they meet the above requirements, please call the Lexington County VA office at 803-785-8400 with their name and contact information.



# WINTER



For basic information and questions,  
please check out our webpage at  
[www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx)

A list of the  
Veterans Service Organizations in Lexington County  
and copies of the newsletter are also on our webpage.



# Medical Expense Report (MER)



For Veterans and Surviving Spouses receiving Non-Service Connection Pension Benefits, the VA may be able to pay you at a higher rate if you identify expenses the VA considers allowable. The higher rate is only paid if you are NOT receiving the maximum benefit from the VA. Medical and dental expenses paid by you may be deductible from the income VA counts when determining your benefit entitlement.

Any medical or dental expenses that you paid for a member of your household (self, spouse, child, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed may also be counted. Below are examples of expenses you should include, if applicable:

• Hospital expenses • Doctor's office fees • Dental fees • Prescription/non-prescription drug costs • Vision care costs • Medical insurance premiums • Monthly Medicare deduction • Nursing home costs • Hearing aid costs • Dental fees • Home health service expenses • Expenses related to transportation to a hospital, doctor, or other medical facility.

These expenses may be listed on a **VA Form 21P-8416 – Medical Expense Report (MER)** - and submitted anytime for the previous year. For example: Medical Expense Reports for 2014 may be submitted anytime before the end of 2015.



## IMPORTANT NOTES

- Do not include any expenses for which you were reimbursed. If you receive reimbursement after you have filed a MER, promptly notify the VA office handling your claim.
- If you are not sure whether a particular expense can be allowed, furnish a complete description of the purposes of the payment. The VA will let you know if an expense cannot be allowed.
- You may be asked to verify the amounts you actually paid. Keep all receipts or other documentation of payments for at least three years after the VA makes a decision on your medical expense claim. If you are unable to provide documentation of the claimed medical expenses when asked to do so by the VA, your benefits may be retroactively reduced or terminated.

***South Carolinians across the state faced record rainfall, leading to widespread destruction and flooding. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those who lost their lives in this tragedy and all the families affected by the devastating flood.***

***The State of South Carolina received a major federal disaster declaration for multiple counties. This declaration means that families can receive individual assistance for:***

- 1. Temporary Housing Assistance.***
- 2. Repair Assistance.***
- 3. Replacement Assistance.***
- 4. Permanent or Semi-Permanent Construction.***

***Register your damage as soon as possible with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by visiting [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov) or calling 1-800-621-3362.***

***There is also local information on the Lexington County Website at [www.lex-co.sc.gov/Pages/GeneralAssistance.aspx](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/Pages/GeneralAssistance.aspx).***



## ***Featured Medal:***

# ***Kuwait Liberation Medal***

The Kuwait Liberation Medal was approved by the Kuwait Council of Ministers for award in five classes, generally according to the rank of the recipient. The medal was offered by the Chief of Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces on July 16, 1994.

A nation of seafarers and ship builders, Kuwait chose as their coat of arms, the traditional dhow. Falconry is the sport of Kings in the Persian Gulf, and the falcon in the arms is seen as a symbol of Kuwaiti prowess. The official symbolism of the colors is that black symbolizes battlefields, white is for deeds, green is for the meadows, and red is for the blood of Kuwait's enemies.

This medal is awarded to members of the Military Coalition who served in support of Operation Desert Shield or Desert Storm in one or more of the following areas between August 2, 1990 and August 31, 1993: Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, that portion of the Arabian Sea that lies north of 10 degrees north latitude and west of 68 degrees east longitude, as well as the total land areas of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. To be eligible, a service member must have been:

1. attached to or regularly serving for one or more days with an organization participating in ground/shore (military) operations;
2. attached to or regularly serving for one or more days aboard a naval vessel directly supporting military operations;
3. actually participating as a crew member in one or more aerial flights directly supporting military operations in the areas designated above;
4. serving on temporary duty for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days. These time limitations may be waived for members participating in actual combat operations.

The Government of Kuwait offered the Kuwait Liberation Medal to members of the Armed Forces of the United States by letter dated July 16, 1994. The medal was accepted by Secretary of Defense William J. Perry per memorandum dated March 16, 1995.



## **About Our Office**

This office is employed by Lexington County not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and VA Hospitals. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: Service-Connected disability and Non-Service Connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits.



***Coming in the Next Issue...***

***Presumptive Disabilities,  
Patient Advocates,  
and Ft. Jackson Cemetery.***