Winter Edition 2023-2024



Lexington
County
Veterans' Affairs
Office



"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

Lexington County Veterans' News





As a department in Lexington County government, we value honesty, respect, and service to country, patriotism, sacrifice and personal excellence. We acknowledge, respect and honor all Veterans for their service to America no matter how, when or where they served. We proudly pledge ourselves to creating and maintaining a customer service environment for Veterans and their survivors. We hold ourselves accountable to our customers, partners and each other. We have a passion for Veterans and firmly believe that excellence is not a goal, it is the standard. ¹

Your VA Office Family

Ed Lundeen
elundeen@lex-co.com
Director

Jennifer Parler
<u>iparler@lex-co.com</u>
Veterans' Affairs Supervisor

Kathy DeBerry

kdeberry@lex-co.com

Senior Benefits Counselor

Christy Rucker

crucker@lex-co.com

Benefits Counselor

Brittany Gunter brgunter@lex-co.com Benefits Counselor

Annastasia Blake
<u>ablake@lex-co.com</u>
Administrative Assistant

605 West Main Street, Suite B Lexington, SC 29072

Telephone # 803-785-8400 Fax # 803-785-0115

From the Director

December is upon us with all the festivities of the Christmas season and as this issue is being prepared, we are celebrating as an office family. We plan and prepare an office Christmas breakfast and gift exchange each year and these celebrations are always great. I look forward to this event with my work family every year.

2023 has been a great year for our office as we expanded to six full time staff and I have said it all year, this is the best VA team I have ever had since being appointed as your County VA Officer in 2011. It is an honor to serve Veterans and an honor to be surrounded by a great team. We look forward to a great 2024!

As we begin 2024 with this issue, we look forward to doing more claims, making more appointments and taking care of more Veterans than we did in 2023. The work we do is honorable and we love doing it and want to get better and better. The VA does make many changes throughout the year and we do internal training on a regular basis in order to keep pace with them. We want to always provide the best customer service possible.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and Happy Valentine's Day to all of you who take the time to read our quarterly office newsletter!

Enjoying the journey, Ed Lundeen

World War Il Victory Medal

The World War II Victory Medal was established by an Act of Congress on 6 July 1945 (Public Law 135, 79th Congress) and promulgated by Section V, War Department Bulletin 12, 1945. The medal was designed by Thomas H. Jones and approved by the Secretary of War on 5 February 1946. Consequently, it did not transition from a ribbon to a full medal until after World War II had ended. The World War II Victory Medal was first issued as a service ribbon, referred to as the "Victory Ribbon."

The Congressional authorization for the medal specified that it was to be awarded to any member of the United States military, including members of the armed forces of the Government of the Philippine Islands, who served on active duty, or as a reservist, between 7 December 1941 and 2 September 1945.

On 8 August 1946, the separate Merchant Marine World War II Victory Medal was established for members of the United States Merchant Marine who served during World War II.

The World War II Victory Medal was awarded for service between 7 December 1941 and 31 December 1946, both dates inclusive, with no minimum time in service requirement. The National Personnel Records Center has reported some cases of service members receiving the award for only a few days of service. As hostilities during the Second World War ended on 2 September 1945, there may be cases of service members who had enlisted, entered officer candidate school, or had been a cadet or midshipman at the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy or the U.S. Coast Guard Academy between 3 September 1945 and any date in 1946, receiving the medal without having been a Veteran of the period of active hostilities during the war; the reason for this late date is that President Harry S. Truman did not declare an official end to hostilities until the last day of 1946.

As every member of the United States Armed Forces who served from 7 December 1941 to 31 December 1946 was eligible for the medal, there were over twelve million eligible recipients, making the World War II Victory Medal the second most widely awarded military award of the United States, after the National Defense Service Medal.

The bronze medal is 1 ½ inches in width. The obverse is a figure of Liberation standing full length with head turned to Dexter looking to the dawn of a new day, right foot resting on a war god's helmet with the hilt of a broken sword in the right hand and the broken blade in the left hand, the inscription WORLD WAR II placed immediately below the center. On the reverse are inscriptions for the Four Freedoms: FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND WANT and FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND RELIGION separated by a palm branch, all within a circle composed of the words UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1941 1945.

The suspension and service ribbon of the medal is 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches wide and consists of the following stripes: $\frac{1}{16}$ inch double rainbow in juxtaposition (blues, greens, yellows, reds (Center), yellows greens and blues); $\frac{1}{16}$ inch White 67101; center $\frac{1}{16}$ inch Old Glory Red 67156; $\frac{1}{16}$ inch White; and $\frac{1}{16}$ inch double rainbow in juxtaposition. The rainbow on each side of the ribbon is a miniature of the pattern used in the World War I Victory Medal.

Although the World War I Victory Medal included clasps, the World War II Victory Medal did not. This was because Campaign medals were awarded instead.

War Time Dates

World War II: Dec. 7, 1941 through Dec. 31, 1946

Korean War: June 27, 1950 through Jan. 31, 1955

Vietnam War: Aug. 5, 1964, (Feb. 28, 1961 for Veterans who served "in country" before Aug. 5, 1964) through May 7, 1975

Gulf War: Aug. 2, 1990, through a date to be set

<u>Links</u>

https://scdva.sc.gov/

https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home

https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage

https://benefits.va.gov/columbia/

https://www.fisherhousecolumbiasc.org/

Numbers

- Veterans crisis line 24/7, 800-273-8255, press 1
- Vet Center counseling 803-765-9944

- Women Veterans Hotline 855-829-6636
- Homeless Veteran call center 877-424-3838
- VA pharmacy refills 800-293-8262
- VA claims self-help line 800-827-1000
- Mission Lexington (803) 785-6930



To all of you with birthdays during the months of December, January, and Feburary!

Thank you to everyone who Volunteered to say the pledge!

- Mike Gordon
- Mike Smith
- J. W. Hester
- Ed Lundeen

County Council Needs You!!



Veterans are still 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 please be present around 4:15pm. Contact the office at 803-785-8400, if you are interested.



Ed Lundeen will be at the libraries below:

Gaston library – 1st Thursday of each month between 10am – 12pm

Chapin library – 1st Friday of each month between 10am – 12pm

Cayce library – 2nd Thursday of each month between 10am - 12pm

Batesburg library – 2nd Friday of each month between 10am – 12pm

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We Will Be **CLOSED**

Christmas

Dec. 22nd 24th, 25th, & 26th

New Year's Day
January. 1st.

Martin Luther King
January 15th

Presidents' Day

February 19th

1

South Carolina Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers

The purpose of this Association is to assist Veterans Affairs Officers in the State of South Carolina in becoming more effective in performing their duties by studying, discussing and recommending improvement in Veterans Affairs; by investigating and providing a means for the exchange of ideas and experience between County Veterans Affairs Officers; and by encouraging education and assisting in the training of Veteran Affairs Officers. Annually the Association serves over 400,000 Veterans in the VA system in the state of SC. To accomplish this service, 46 Accredited County Veterans Affairs Officers and employees attend training. Two training sessions are held each year with one training session in Columbia and the other in the upper or lower part of the state. Representatives from the Federal VA, South Carolina VA and other agencies conduct the required training. These training sessions make us stronger as an Association in our service to each other and in our service to Veterans and their survivors. Education has always been the key to our success and we strive to be the most educated Veteran advocates. By attending the training sessions, our knowledge base is broadened and the tools necessary to assist Veterans and their survivors in securing the benefits they have earned are honed to better assist those that have served.

2023-2025 Officers

Dwight L. Bradham, President - Aiken County Director of Veterans Affairs

Kenisha L. Grimes, 1st Vice President - Orangeburg County Director of Veterans Affairs

Edward "Ed" Lundeen, 2nd Vice President - Lexington County Director of Veterans Affairs

Albertha Woodard, Secretary - Fairfield County Director of Veterans Affairs

David J. LeBlanc Sr. , Treasurer - Charleston County Director of Veterans Affairs

Robin Ghent, Judge Advocate - Lancaster County Director of Veterans Affairs

Ronald Elvis Jr., Immediate Past President - Horry County Director of Veterans Affairs

All WWII Veterans are eligible for VA health care!

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that all World War II Veterans are now eligible for no-cost VA inpatient and outpatient health care.

Under this expansion, all WWII Veterans who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Dec. 31, 1946, are now eligible for VA health care, regardless of their length of service or financial status. These Veterans will not have to pay inpatient or outpatient copays, enrollment fees, or monthly premiums.

VA is reaching out by phone and mail to encourage WWII Veterans who are not currently enrolled in VA care to apply today. Veterans who enroll may also keep their private providers, Medicare, and most other insurance to meet their health care needs.

"These members of Greatest Generation answered the call to serve when our nation — and the world — needed them most. Now, it's our job to serve them in every way that we can," said **VA under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal**. "We are proud to provide world-class, low- or no-cost health care to these heroes at VA, and we encourage all of them to enroll today."

All WWII Veterans are encouraged to enroll in VA health care — the best, most-affordable health care in America for Veterans. Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings.

Veterans who were not approved for VA health care in the past due to income limits should apply again; income levels no longer apply due to this expansion. VA cannot automatically enroll these Veterans in health care; WWII Veterans must apply for VA health care if they are not currently enrolled.

While World War II Veterans will no longer have to pay inpatient or outpatient copays, they may still have to pay modest medication or urgent care or long-term care copayments in some cases, depending on their eligibility and service connection.

This expansion is made possible through the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022 (Cleland-Dole Act), signed in December 2022.

To apply for VA health care, visit VA's health care enrollment website, call 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411), or visit your nearest VA medical center or clinic.



How to safely file for a claim

VA wants you to know there are some predatory companies, not recognized by VA, that are targeting you by offering to assist you with your VA benefit claim. These companies charge absurd fees or require you to pay a portion of your VA benefits. VA will never charge you to apply for the benefits you may be entitled to. If you think you're entitled to benefits, please review the following preventive measures to help guard against fraud and scams.

- Apply directly to your VA or your local VA county office. If you plan to file a claim, you may submit your claim in person at any regional office, county VA office, or online. The VA will help you gather the evidence you need to support your claim. There are no costs or hidden fees to file a claim for benefits.
- Be cautious of media advertisements from companies who provide information about the recent changes in law for toxic-exposure benefit claims and suggest Veterans can only obtain VA benefits with their help. These companies may not be recognized through the VA and may be trying to charge Veterans illegal fees. Use of the VA Office of General Counsel (OGC) Accreditation Search to confirm and validate the credentials of anyone offering claims assistance.
- Do not sign a contract agreeing to pay an unauthorized company a fee to help you with your VA claim. There are accredited Veterans Service Organizations, agents and attorneys who may assist you.
- Be cautious of companies claiming to be contacting you on behalf of the VA.
 Contact VA directly at 1-800-827-1000 if you are unsure about the authenticity of a message you've received.
- Review all documents thoroughly. Never sign a blank form for someone else to complete later. They should always review the completed form before signing and retain a copy of the completed form for their records.

VA and FCC make it easier for Veterans to get internet access

If you receive a qualifying VA pension, VA and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are making it easier for you to get connected to the internet.

Qualifying VA pension recipients will now be able to more easily confirm their eligibility to participate in two FCC benefit programs (Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program), often without needing to submit paperwork to the FCC.

This makes it even easier for qualifying Veterans to get discounts on internet and phone services. Certain service providers may also offer a subsidized device, like a laptop or tablet, to qualifying Affordable Connectivity Program participants.

Discounts to help Veterans get online

These FCC programs help people get online. The Lifeline program gives eligible households a discount for internet and phone services. The Affordable Connectivity Program provides eligible households with a monthly discount toward internet service.

They offer a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from a participating provider if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price of the device.

Veterans can sign up for the programs through the FCC National Verifier or by contacting a participating internet service company. Veterans who want assistance signing up for the FCC's programs can get help from their VA care team through a Digital Divide consult.

Other Veterans can also receive benefits

Along with qualifying VA pension recipients, other Veterans are also eligible for Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program. You can qualify based on your household income or participation in other federal programs, though you may need to submit additional paperwork as part of the application process.

To see if you qualify, visit the Lifeline or Affordable Connectivity Program websites https://www.fcc.gov/acp or https://www.fcc.gov/acp or https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/ss20220624-get-connected-telehealth

VA can also help you determine your eligibility through your VA care team and a Digital Divide Consult. The Digital Divide Consult helps connect Veterans with Lifeline, the Affordable Connectivity Program, and other programs to help with internet access.

VA has already helped more than 100,000 Veterans across the country through the Digital Divide Consult process.

If you want assistance getting internet access so you can connect with loved ones, online resources, or your VA services, VA wants to help you!

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Wellness Wednesday Seminars for the US Department of Veterans Affairs

Click the link below to register for these classes!

https://www.cvent.com/c/calendar/a66e4100-024f-4394-b9c8-1eb784a40434

• Transitioning Successfully into Retirement - 12pm Eastern

13 December 2023 at 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm ET US Department of Veterans Affairs

Description

This session will discuss the importance of managing cash flow, which benefits can stay with you after retirement, how to protect retirement savings, and the importance of estate planning.

Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 | Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. (ET) | Location: via Zoom

• Transitioning Successfully into Retirement - 3pm Eastern

13 December 2023 at 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm ET US Department of Veterans Affairs

Description

This session will discuss the importance of managing cash flow, which benefits can stay with you after retirement, how to protect retirement savings, and the importance of estate planning.

Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 | Time: 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. (ET) | Location: via Zoom

• 12pm (ET) - First Steps to Financial Freedom

17 January 2024 at 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm ET US Department of Veterans Affairs

Description

This session will cover the basics of budgeting, banking and credit, emergency savings, investing, and planning for retirement.

Date: Wednesday, January 17, 2024 | Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. (ET) | Location: via Zoom

• 3pm (ET) - First Steps to Financial Freedom

17 January 2024 at 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm ET US Department of Veterans Affairs

Description

This session will cover the basics of budgeting, banking and credit, emergency savings, investing, and planning for retirement.

Date: Wednesday, January 17, 2024 | Time: 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (ET) | Location: via Zoom

• 12pm (ET) - Fundamentals of Wills, Trusts, and Power of Attorney

21 February 2024 at 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm ET US Department of Veterans Affairs

Description

In this session, we will discuss best practices for ensuring your assets are distributed as you wish and to whom you wish.

Date: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 | Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. (ET) | Location: via Zoom

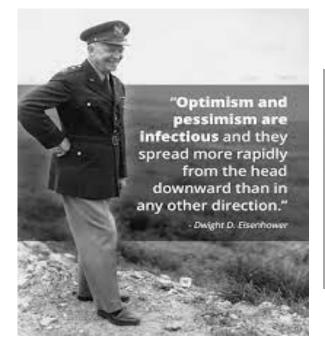
• 3pm (ET) - Fundamentals of Wills, Trusts, and Power of Attorney 21 February 2024 at 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm ET

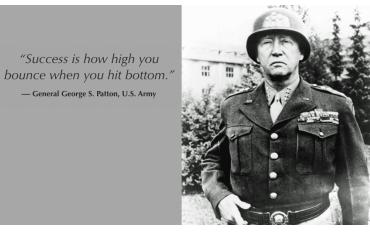
US Department of Veterans Affairs

Description

In this session, we will discuss best practices for ensuring your assets are distributed as you wish and to whom you wish.

Date: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 | Time: 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (ET) | Location: via Zoom





Lexington Events!

Fourth Annual Downtown Santa Scavenger Hunt

It's time for the fourth annual Downtown Santa Scavenger Hunt again and we have lots of giveaway prizes!

Here's how it works:

First, like this post https://www.facebook.com/TownofLexingtonSC/ and tag two friends to be entered to win a gift certificate to one of the participating restaurants! Next, find Santa's friends in downtown Main St. restaurants {they'll have a Downtown Santa tag on them so you know you've found the right one}. Then, match 6 out of 18 Santas to the correct business.



2023 SNOWBALL FESTIVAL

AT ICEHOUSE AMPHITHEATER

107 W. Main Street, Lexington, SC 29072

UPDATED SCHEDULE

Thursday, November 30

4-8pm - Christmas Craft Fair

Friday, December 1

4-8pm - Christmas Craft Fair 6:30pm - Carolighting Ceremony

Sunday, December 3
3pm - Christmas Parade

Saturday, December 16
9am-1pm - Carnival

Thursday, December 21
6pm - The Grinch (PG)

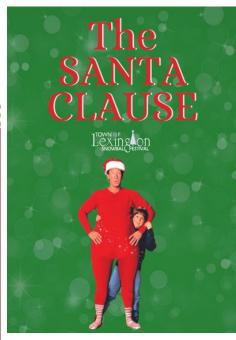
Friday, December 22 6pm - The Santa Clause (PG)

VISIT ICEHOUSEAMPHITHEATER.COM FOR DETAILS









Biography Template

Pledge of Allegiance County Council Meeting



(Please fill out and return to the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office)

Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office 605 West Main Street, Suite B Lexington, SC 29072 803-785-8400 803-785-0115 fax ablake@lex-co.com

We are always looking for Veterans to volunteer to say the pledge at the beginning of the County Council meetings every 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month. This program allows Veterans to have their military experience to be recognized and honored.

The County Council Meetings are held in the
Council Chambers located on the second floor of the
County Administration Building
212 South Lake Drive
The meeting starts at 4:30, and we will meet you inside the chamber at 4:15 on the right hand side close to the podium.

Bio Template

Name:
Contact Information (number and/or email address):
Served in Branch and Dates of Service:
Veteran of Wars:
Military Medals and Awards:
Lives where:
Works at or retired from: (if retired – number of years worked)
Volunteer work or organization:
Married to:
Number children:
Number grandchildren:
Number great-grandchildren:



Farm to Table Cooking Classes-December 16th class

When we come together to prepare a meal and eat with our friends or family, we are building lasting connections through the shared experience of eating together. For those that are struggling and feeling isolated, preparing a meal with trusted peers is a great way to create joy and purpose in their lives. Our Farm to Table cooking classes, taught by Farm to Flame Chef Jason Dersch, offer our Warriors the opportunity to learn new recipes and connect with their peers each month at the BRBR!

Veterans and First Responders are eligible to participate in this class. Spouses may also attend, as long as they fill out their own registration form and attend the class with the Veteran or First Responder. Farm to Table cooking classes fill up quickly, so please be advised that you may be asked to participate in a later course due to capacity.

Have You Tried our FREE

Yoga and Tai Chi Classes Yet????

Veterans, Active-Duty service members, First Responders, and their immediate family members are eligible to attend any of our four FREE yoga and tai chi classes throughout the week, every week! Yoga and tai chi have been found to have numerous mental wellness benefits through the guided movements and controlled breaths it requires.

Any and all skill levels are welcomed to attend these classes. Please see our event calendar https://www.thebigredbarnretreat.org/events to sign up for your yoga or tai chi class today!

Class Schedule

All yoga and tai chi class sessions are held at:

830 Lorick Road, Blythewood, SC 29016 (the Cabin Garage)

Mindful Movement: Mondays at 6:30PM

iREST Yoga Nidra: Tuesdays at 5:30PM

Tai Chi: Wednesdays at 5:30PM

<u>Chapin American Legion</u> <u>Post 193</u>



LET'S PLAY BINGO!

Chapin American Legion Post 193 hosts BINGO on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the OLE Oak Barn, 1155 Holy Trinity Church Road, Little Mountain, SC. Admission is \$3.00, and Game packets (13 games) are just \$20.00. Doors open at 5:30 pm and games begin promptly at 7:00 pm. Concessions are available on-site so please no outside food or beverages. Ages 6 and up can play! All proceeds benefit Chapin American Legion Post 193 New Building Fund.



Monday Morning Veterans ONLY Breakfast

Every Monday morning unless otherwise posted on our website https://www.americanlegionpost193.com

Coffee is on at 7:30 am with breakfast served from 8:30am-9:15am. The cost is \$6.00 per person. (Eggs including made to order, hash browns, grits, various types of meat, fruit, a yogurt bar, and homebaked goods, juice, and coffee.)

Chapin American Legion Post 193 102 Lexington Ave, Chapin, SC 29036

This is a Veteran ONLY event to foster fellowship and conversation



This looks like FUN! If you would like to join Chapin American Legion Post 193 on a cruise, please see the information on the next page.

Chapin American Legion Post 193 is actively recruiting new members! We are a dynamic Post and one of the fastest growing Posts in the State of SC For more information, please contact our Post Adjutant, Steven Goulet, at (803) 553-2806 or adjutant@americanlegionpost193.org

Chapin American Legion Post 193 is also conducting a fundraising Military Appreciation Cruise in conjunction with Dream Vacations. Come join us as we set sail November 9-16, 2024, aboard the Norwegian Joy on a cruise of the Western Caribbean. Pricing includes gratuities, specialty dining, shore excursion credit, a premium drink package, and more. It is per person double occupancy. For more information contact Betty Barrett, Dream Vacations consultant, babarrett@dreamvacations.com, (803) 618-6011. Each cabin booked and sailed provides our Post will funds to help us in our mission of serving Veterans and the local community. See you onboard!



MILITARY APPRECIATION CRUISE

Find your happy place on board Norwegian Joy. Enjoy a rush like no other as you race in the middle of the ocean on a thrilling two—level race track. Stroll along the Waterfront, a quarter-mile oceanfront promenade that connects you with the ocean while experiencing some of Norwegian's signature dining venues, bars and stunning views. Be pampered in luxury in our new, spacious and beautifully appointed Concierge accommodations. Enjoy vacation experiences that will delight your senses and calm your soul on Norwegian Joy.

PRICING IS <u>PER CABIN</u> BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY AND INCLUDES: UNLIMITED BEVERAGES, SPECIALTY DINING, WIFI, SHORE EXCURSION CREDIT, GRATUITIES & TRAVEL INSURANCE





NORWEGIAN JOY NOV 9, 2024 - NOV 16, 2024

Balcony Mini-Suite \$3690.00

Balcony \$3380.00

Inside \$2660.00



DREAM VACATIONS BETTY BARRETT babarrett@dreamvacations.com 803-618-6011

ASK ABOUT THE 2-FOR-1 AIRFARE SPECIAL!



Are You A Veteran? Military Discounts May Apply! Save More Money With A Cruise First Certificate - Ask Me How



Lexington County Veterans Group

- If anyone has another person in mind for special guest speaker, share the information with Rod, the Group Leader.
- We miss all our members that are absent and hope to see you soon!

Thank you for being supportive and reach out to members



All Lexington County Veterans are cordially invited to attend the weekly meeting. The group meets on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm at The American Legion Post 7. The address is 200 ¹⁸

American Legion Drive (off Harmon St.) Lexington, SC 29072



Jennifer

Kathy

Christy

Brittany

Annastasia

Wishes everyone a







