

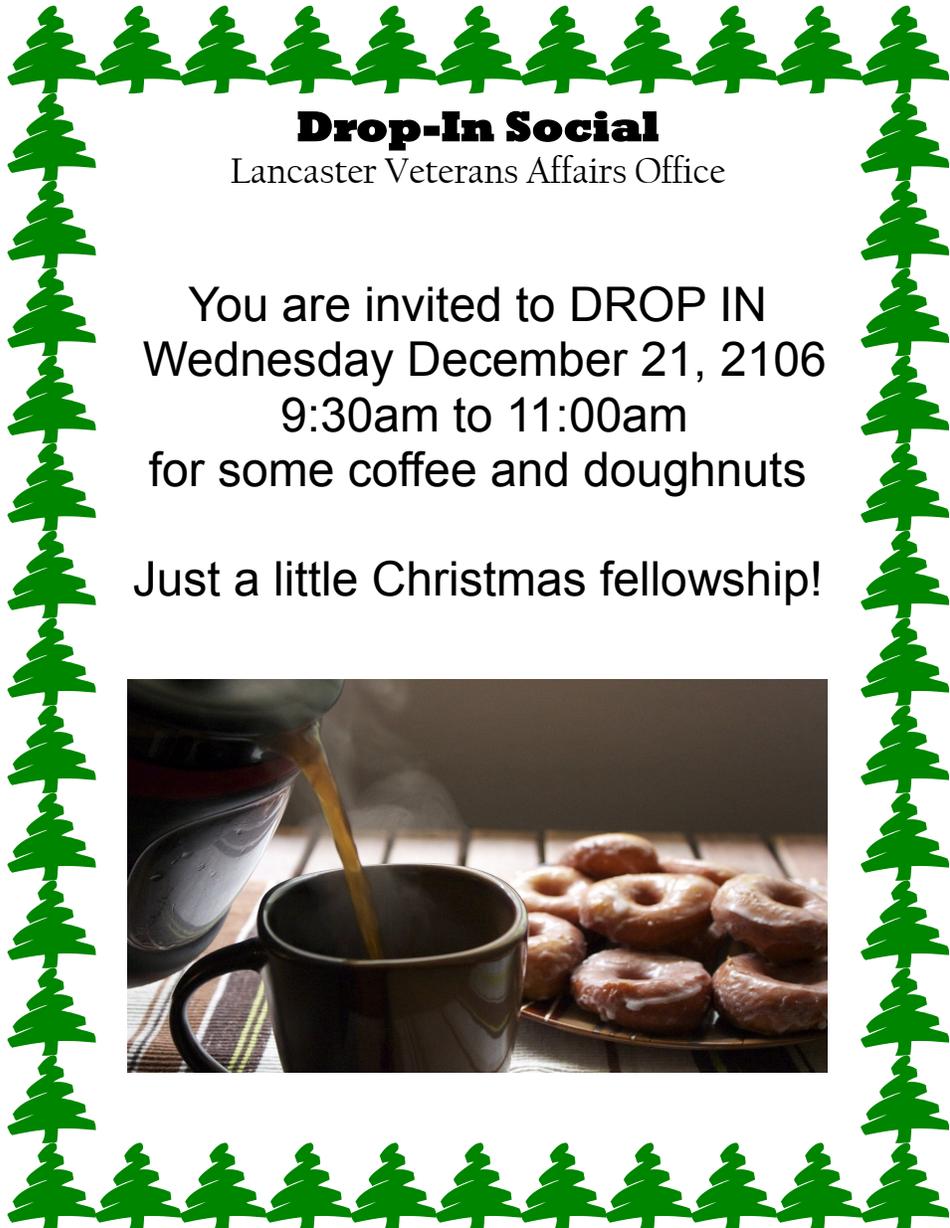


Serving Those Who Served

Lancaster County veteran News

Issue 59

December 2016



Drop-In Social

Lancaster Veterans Affairs Office

You are invited to DROP IN
Wednesday December 21, 2106
9:30am to 11:00am
for some coffee and doughnuts

Just a little Christmas fellowship!



Calendar of Events:

- Dec 5 — AL Post 31 meeting @ 6:00pm
- Dec 6 — Fort Lawn Veterans Service Grp
- Dec 12 — DAV meeting @ 7:00pm
- Dec 13 — IL-AL
- Dec 17 — IL-VFW meeting
- Dec 21 — Drop in, VA Office
- Dec 23-27 — VA Office Closed (Christmas)
- Dec 27 — MCL Meeting
- Jan 2 — VA Office Closed (New Years)

We have on site every Thursday a SCWorks representative. Starting September the VetCenter Counselor will be on location twice a week. For more information please call 803-283-2469.

Contact Us:

Lancaster County VA
1033 West Meeting St
PO Box 1809
Lancaster SC 29721
Phone: 803-283-2469
Phone: 803-416-9497
VAOffice@lancastercountysc.net

Lawyers 4 Vets

For low income veterans

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. Beginning May 15, 2014, Lawyers 4 Vets will assist Veterans by appointment only with:

- ◆ Obtaining identification (Social Security, South Carolina ID, birth certificates)
- ◆ Child support and visitation issues in South Carolina
- ◆ Expungements and pardons in South Carolina
- ◆ Consumer protection
- ◆ Simple wills and healthcare power of attorney

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

Free counseling for war time veterans VetCenter

A counselor from the Vet Center is available twice a month in Lancaster for war time veterans and their dependents. The Vet Center offers a wide range of services to help you make a successful transition from military to civilian life. You have earned these benefits and there is no cost to you or your family members.

- Individual & group Counseling
- Family Counseling for military related
- Bereavement counseling for families
- Military sexual trauma
- Outreach & education
- Substance abuse assessment & referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation & referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues



Cost-of-living Adjustment (COLA)

Information for 2017

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for more than 65 million Americans will increase 0.3 percent in 2017.

The 0.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to more than 60 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2017. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 30, 2016.

The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$127,200.

The earnings limit for workers who are younger than "full" retirement age (age 66 for people born in 1943 through 1954) will increase to \$16,920. (We deduct \$1 from benefits for each \$2 earned over \$16,920.)

The earnings limit for people turning 66 in 2017 will increase to \$44,880. (We deduct \$1 from benefits for each \$3 earned over \$44,880 until the month the worker turns age 66.)

There is no limit on earnings for workers who are "full" retirement age or older for the entire year.

www.ssa.gov/news/cola/

Wreaths Across America

Kershaw City Cemetery

Remember. Honor. Teach. On December 17, 2016, wreaths will be placed on veteran gravestones at Kershaw City Cemetery. For more information please visit www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org





LARS Program

Now available for Local Veterans

Our office has partnered with the following Veterans Service Organizations; The American Legion Post 31 and the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 14, to provide free transportation to veterans in need.

At this time these organizations have purchased prepaid tickets that can be used for local trips only (grocery store, bank, local private doctor, etc.).

You will need to contact our office at 803.283.2469 to obtain a ticket or two depending on if you need a round trip. These tickets do not expire. You will then have to call LARS at 803.285.6956 to schedule your reservation on their vehicle.

We do have a limited quantity of tickets and they will be issued on a first come first serve basis.

Charlotte VA Health Care Clinic

Now Open

3506 W. Tyvola Rd, Charlotte NC 28208

If you are interested in transferring or starting your care at the new Health Care Clinic, you can contact them by phone or make a visit. To call 1-704-357-3500 option 3 for enrollment. If you are enrolled please call 1-704-329-1300 ext. 81550 to get scheduled for your first time appointment. If you want to make a visit please go to the enrollment section with your DD214. They will get you set up that day with a health care appointment!

Meet a Local Veteran

Highlighting Veterans—One at a time

Hopefully you have enjoyed reading about some of our local veterans. If you are interested in being featured please contact us at 803-283-2469 to set up an interview.

Lancaster DAV Van Schedule for December 2016:

Columbia:	Rock Hill:
Thursday, Dec 1	Friday, Dec 2
Wednesday, Dec 7	
Thursday, Dec 8	Friday, Dec 9
Wednesday, Dec 14	
Thursday, Dec 15	Friday, Dec 16

Please note that these dates may be subject to change due to volunteer driver availability.

SC Works - Veterans Services

Do you fall in one of the following categories?

- A veteran with a service connected disability (have a percentage from VA)
- A veteran that is homeless or feel that you may be homeless
- A veteran lacking a high school diploma or GED
- A veteran who has been released from incarceration within the last 12 months
- A recently separated service member who has been unemployed for 27 weeks or more in the last 12 months or 18 to 24 years old

One on One Case Management and Individual Employment Plan

- Career/job counseling, local labor market information on jobs and employers in the area
- One on one assistance in tailoring resumes for area jobs
- Help with expanding your job search area and how to search
- Providing referral for jobs, family support, social service, and other community programs

If you would like to make an appointment to meet with a member of the SC Works Staff just call 803-313-7385 or come into a SC Works Office.

Michael E O'Donnell

Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Representative
SC Department of Employment and Workforce—Veteran Services SC Works
803-313-7385—Lancaster
803-328-3881 Ext 110 — Rock Hill
modonnell@dew.sc.gov

SC Works

Are you work ready? Contact Lynda!

Lynda Burke

Veterans Coordinator Catawba/LVER
SCDEW/SCWORKS
705 North White Street
Lancaster SC 29720
803-313-7388 (work)
803-287-5930 (cell)
lburke@dew.sc.gov

SC National Guard

Service Member and Family Care

Brad M. Ware is the Employment Advisor with the SC National Guard.

You may contact him at:
National Guard Armory
126 Airport Road
Rock Hill, SC 29732
Cell—803-288-2635

Email—Brad.m.ware.ctr@mail.mil

House passes Legion-supported veteran bills

Capitol Hill

On Sept. 26, the House passes three veterans-related bills that the American Legion supports. These bills include:

- **H.R. 5392, No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act.** The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a plan that ensures each phone call and text message to its Veterans Crisis Line are answered in a timely manner by a qualified person. The bill was developed after reports stated calls to the VA's crisis line were going to voicemail.
- **H.R. 3216, Veterans Emergency Treatment Act.** The bill would clarify VA's obligation to provide emergency care for veterans and prohibit VA from transferring a medically unstable veteran. The bill was developed after a VA medical center's emergency room refused to help a veteran with a broken foot.
- **H.R. 5162, Vet Connect Act of 2016.** The bill would require VA to share medical record information with com-

munity providers in order to provide care or treatment to a shared patient.

VA Expiring Authorities Act

The Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act was passed by both the House and Senate and now awaits signing from President Barack Obama. This bill would extend for one year a number of VA programs and authorities, including a requirement to provide nursing home care to veteran with service-connected disabilities; a pilot program to provide child care assistance for veterans receiving intensive health-care services; a referral and counseling services program for veterans at risk of homelessness; and authority to provide certain housing assistance for homeless veterans.

House approves Veterans' Appeal modernization legislation

On September 14, the House passed H.R. 5620, The VA Accountability First and Appeals Modernization Act. The bill would:

- Shorten the firing/demotion/appeals process for rank and file VA employees

from more than a year to no more than 77 days;

- Remove the Merit Systems Protection Board from the firing/demotion/appeals process for VA senior executives;
- Provide VA whistleblowers with a means to solve problems while offering them protection from reprisals;
- Give the VA secretary the authority to recoup bonuses and relocation expenses from misbehaving employees;
- Give the VA secretary the authority to reduce the pension of senior executives convicted of felonies that influenced their job performance; and
- Reform the VA's broken disability benefits appeal process.

The bill now awaits consideration by the Senate.

*Wishing you all the joys
and happiness
of the holiday season.
May you be blessed
with peace, love and joy!*



Critical Home Repair Program

Habitat for Humanity of Lancaster County has now received a grant for critical home repair for veterans and the elderly. If you are interested in more information or want an application please contact our office.

You can also call 803-283-1203 to speak to someone with Habitat for Humanity of Lancaster County. There are certain eligibility criteria that will need to be met.

Direct Deposit

What is the fastest way to enroll or make a change to Direct Deposit? The fastest way is to call 1-800-827-1000. They will be able to change it over the phone. To enroll you will need to know your routing and account number along with the amount that will be deposited. If you are changing direct deposit you will need to know your old routing and account number along with your new information.

The American Legion

The American Legion Supported Passage of the Veterans Accountability Act as a temporary fix to help veterans get the health care they need. The Legion supports a strong VA that ultimately relies less and less on outside care, rather than move toward vouchers and privatization.

Next Meeting—Dec 5, 2016 @ 6:00pm.



Disabled American Veterans

We are very active in helping local veterans. Since July 2015 the DAV has spent over \$2200.00 helping veterans ranging from motel rooms for homeless veterans, to picking up and delivering medications. We have donated wheel chairs, walkers, crutches and batteries for electric wheel chairs. We work closely with Lancaster VA office and have supplied LARS tickets for veterans to use that services. Please all members come to the meetings—there is no limit what we can accomplish. Next Meeting August 15 at 7:00pm.

Fort Lawn Veteran Service Group

Open to all Veterans who want to attend. We meet at the Fort Lawn Community Center the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. The address is 5554 Main St, Fort Lawn, SC 29714. If you need more information please contact Jim Gladden at 803-320-3537 or Lynda Burke at 803-287-5930.

American Legion

Indian Land Post 250

Meets second Tuesday of every month at 7:00pm in the Del Webb Library. For December will meet on 13th for a dinner meeting 4:30pm to 6:30pm. You will need to have tickets in advance. Charter membership chose in December. Dues must be paid for 2017. For more information please call the adjutant at 803-422-9486.

Marine Corps League

The Lancaster County Leathernecks—Detachment 1169 — Marine Corps League meets the last Tuesday of each month in our building at 347 Brooklyn Ave at 7:00pm. We welcome all Marines and FMF Corpsmen to join with us.

Jerry Holt, Commandant

Veterans of Foreign War

If you are interested in speaking to someone about becoming a member please contact Tim Catoe, Quartermaster for VFW Post 5936, at 803-285-7199 or 803-320-4675. You can also email him at tim.catoe@comporium.com

Veterans of Foreign War

Indian Land Post 12136

Next meeting is 4th Saturday of the month at 9:30am.
Location: 8083 Charlotte Hwy, Indian Land, SC 29707
Additional Information can be found on our following websites:
Www.indianlandvfw.org or www.facebook.com/indianlandvfw.com
Feel free to contact John Marker—Ph: 704.843.6930



The U.S. Department of Treasury, in partnership with the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority and SC Housing Corp., has made over \$295 million available to help eligible South Carolina homeowners avoid serious first mortgage delinquency and foreclosures.

Qualifications

SC Help is intended to assist borrowers who are facing first mortgage delinquency or possible foreclosure. There is no household income limit, the property must be an owner-occupied primary residence, applicants must have a minimum 24 months homeownership history and applicants do NOT have to be delinquent.

How to Apply

Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically at: www.schelp.com. Applicants without the internet may call 1-855-435-7472, toll free number for assistance. There is NO FEE required at any point during the SC HELP process. Once you have made an appointment with a representative you can meet at the SC Works office on White St, Lancaster.

Check Your Rep

How can you check if your representative is accredited with the Office of General Counsel? Just follow these simple steps to check to make sure you are working with an accredited representative:

1. Go to <http://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>
2. You choose between attorney, claims agent or VSO representative
3. Enter in Last Name and State
4. Click Search
5. Click on your representatives name
6. A list will display showing all accreditations that person has.

If your representative is not listed then they are not accredited with a veterans service organization

About Our Office

This Office is employed by Lancaster County not the VA. The Lancaster County Veterans Affairs Office is an advocate for veterans and/or their surviving dependents to provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and VA Hospitals. The Veterans Affairs Office assists former and present members of the United States 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.

DAV Van

Due to low volunteer drivers we will only go 3 days a week.

If you need to schedule a ride on our DAV van please call 803-283-2469. Currently we are scheduled to go to Columbia on Wednesdays & Thursdays and Rock Hill on Fridays. Please note that we will need a 48 hour notice for you to be scheduled to ride this van. We only pick up veterans if you live on the way to Columbia or Rock Hill. We can only pick up riders that do not have any other way to meet here in the parking lot. We have to coordinate with volunteer drivers.

Want to receive this newsletter by email? Contact
VAOffice@lancastercountysc.net to be put on the mailing list.



Office Staff

Robin Ghent

- Veteran Affairs Director, Lancaster County
- Immediate Past President, SCACVAO (South Carolina Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers)
- Board member for South Carolina Veteran Advocacy Council
- Board member for South Carolina Veterans Trust Fund
- Legislative Committee member for National Association County Veterans Service Officers

Accredited with:

1. National Association of County Veteran Service Officers
2. South Carolina Division of Veteran Affairs
3. The American Legion
4. Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
5. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
6. Vietnam Veterans of America
7. Retired Enlisted Association

**Received the appropriate training to be accredited and to have access to the Federal VA Claims system

Beth Raffaldt

- Deputy Director Veterans Affairs, Lancaster County
- Public Relations Chairperson, SCACVAO (South Carolina Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers)

Accredited with:

1. National Association of County Veteran Service Officers
2. South Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs
3. The American Legion
4. Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
5. Vietnam Veterans of America
6. Retired Enlisted Association
7. Military Order of the Purple Heart

**Received the appropriate training to be accredited and to have access to the Federal VA Claims system

We would like to announce that we have a new member of our staff. Please be welcoming and patient during this transition!

Amy Harper

- Secretary/DAV Van Coordinator for Veterans Affairs, Lancaster County

