



Serving Those Who Served

Lancaster County veteran News

Issue 50

February 2016

New Charlotte VA Health Care Center

Opening in April 2016

Charlotte Health Care Clinic will open its doors in April of 2016. The HCC is located at 3506 W. Tyvola Rd, Charlotte, NC 28208.

A Health Care Center is a facility that offers a wide range of outpatient services (Primary Care, Mental Health, Specialty Care), medical procedures (like Endoscopy and Day Surgery), and support services (Lab, Imaging, etc.). The Health Care Center will not have an emergency room, urgent care, or inpatient services. Veterans requiring emergency care should call 911 or go the nearest emergency room. The VA Medical Center in Salisbury will continue to offer inpatient and emergency services.

When it opens, the Charlotte VA Health Care Center will offer: Audiology, Endoscopy, Imaging, Laboratory, Mental Health, Minor Procedures, Optometry, Pharmacy, Primary Care, Rotating Medical And Surgical Clinics. In the future, the Charlotte VA Health Care Center will expand services to include: Day Surgery, Dental Clinic, Dialysis, Infusion Clinic, Rehab Medicine, Other Specialty Clinics.



If you currently receive care within the Salisbury VA System, no action is needed. If you do NOT currently receive care in Charlotte, Salisbury or Winston-Salem, please visit explore.va.gov/health-care to apply for enrollment. You will be able to transfer from South Carolina VA System if you choose to do so.

The Outpatient Clinic on University East Drive will remain open with a smaller number of staff. The clinic will continue to offer: Audiology, Blood Draw, Imaging, Optometry and Primary Care. Some primary care teams will stay of the current clinic in order to increase the number of Veterans we can serve closer to their homes.

If you have any questions about the Charlotte VA Health Care Center, please e-mail CharlotteHCC@va.gov or speak to your Primary Care Provider.



Calendar of Events:

- Feb 1 — American Legion meeting @ 7:00
- Feb 2 — Fort Lawn Veteran Service Group
- Feb 8 — DAV meeting @ 7:00pm
- Feb 23 — IL VFW meeting @9:30am
- Feb 27 — MCL meeting

We have on site every Wednesday a VetCenter Counselor and every Thursday a SCWorks representative.

Contact Us:

Lancaster County VA
 1033 West Meeting St
 PO Box 1809
 Lancaster SC 29721
 803-283-2469
 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



Individual Income Tax Preparation

Veterans may be eligible for Free service

The Internal Revenue Service has announced that the nation's 2016 individual income tax filing season opens Jan. 19, 2016, with more than 150 million tax returns expected to be filed this year.

People will have several extra days to file their tax returns this year. Taxpayers have until Monday, Apr. 18 to file their 2015 tax returns and pay any tax due because of the Emancipation Day holiday in Washington, D.C., falling on Friday, April 15. The IRS expects more than 70 percent of taxpayers to again receive tax refunds this year. Last year, the IRS issued 109 million refunds, with an average refund of \$2,797.

Shown below are several ways Veterans and their families have access to free tax preparation and electronic filing services to keep more of their hard earned money.

- IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs are available to taxpayers that earned less than \$54,000 in 2015. More than 3.7 million tax returns were prepared using these services in 2014. All tax returns completed through VITA are prepared by IRS certified volunteers, so you can feel confident your tax return is accurate. Even better, there are over 12,000 convenient locations across the country. To find the VITA location nearest you, enter your zip code into the easy-to-use VITA/TCE Locator.
- MyFreeTaxes, operating the only free online tax preparation and filing assistance platform available in all 50 states and Washington D.C., who earned \$62,000 or less in 2015, allows qualified Veterans, active-duty military, their families and all other qualifying taxpayers to file both a federal and state tax return absolutely free. In addition to e-filing, MyFreeTaxes also provides in-person help to individuals and families earning \$20,000 or less in 2015. For more information, please visit: www.myfreetaxes.com. The MyFreeTaxes initiative is managed by United Way, with the assistance from legacy partners, National Disability Institute and Goodwill Industries International, and is sponsored by the Wal-Mart Foundation.

In addition to free tax preparation and assistance services like VITA, TCE and MyFreeTaxes, there are several other free options qualifying Veterans and military families can use. However, please make note of additional eligibility requirements, and be advised not all are available in your particular location. Read more about each for information on eligibility and availability of services.

- IRS.gov/FreeFile serves as a central hub where taxpayers can choose from a variety of industry-leading tax software options in order to prepare and e-file their federal tax returns at no cost. If you earned \$62,000 or less last year, you are eligible to choose from among 13 software products. If you earned more, you are still eligible for Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic version of IRS paper forms. In fact, more than 70 percent of all taxpayers – 100 million people – are eligible for the software products. Each of the 13 providers has its own special offers, generally based on age, income or state residency. Taxpayers can review each offer or can use the "Help Me" tool to find the tax-filing software they are eligible to use. Free File offers easy-to-use products that ask questions and you supply the answers. The software will find the right forms, tax credits and deductions, and even do the math for you!



New 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.).

How to use this benefit?

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.



Lancaster DAV Van Schedule for February 2016:

Columbia:	Rock Hill:
Wednesday, Feb 3	
Thursday, Feb 4	Friday, Feb 5
Wednesday, Feb 10	
Thursday, Feb 11	Friday, Feb 12
Wednesday, Feb 17	
Thursday, Feb 18	Friday, Feb 19
Wednesday, Feb 24	
Thursday, Feb 25	Friday, Feb 26

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

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.

Dog Tags

There are 3 easy ways to order your dog tags:

1. TREA Store—www.trea.org
2. Phone in—1-800-338-9337
3. Pick Up—TREA HQ

They are \$5.00 plus tax and shipping per set. The set includes a chain and silencer. You can add a Red Med Alert Tag for \$1.00.



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.

Free Tax Preparation

Continuation

- TurboTax Freedom Edition – is available to taxpayers with an income of \$31,000 or less, or those eligible to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Second Story TaxAct – to qualify for free tax preparation, a taxpayer's income must be \$50,000 or less, and the filer must be 58 years old or younger.
- H&R Block's Free File – offers free online assistance for taxpayers who earned \$62,000 or less, between 18 and 50 years old as of December 31, 2015.
- Online Taxes (OLT) – offers free tax preparation services to tax-

payers with an income between \$13,000 and \$62,000 in 2015.

Now, if you have already filed your taxes and want to know when you will receive your refund, be sure to download the IRS app, IRS2Go! This app is available in



both English and Spanish and gives taxpayers the ability to check on the status of their tax refund, obtain tax records, find free tax preparation providers, and stay connected with the IRS through social

media channels such as YouTube and Twitter.

Please note that VA does not endorse any of these sites, but brings your attention to them as they have free tax services available specifically for Veterans and their families.

MyVA: Modernizing VA

Through Veteran-centered transformation

On Thursday, Jan. 21, VA Secretary Bob McDonald appeared before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to discuss VA's transformation strategy, specifically examining the plan to modernize VA. McDonald took the opportunity to discuss VA's transformation plan, MyVA.

According to the Secretary, "MyVA is about fulfilling the nation's obligation to those who have served and that they share our vision for VA to become the #1 customer-service agency in the government."

McDonald explained to members of the committee the framework to transform all of VA "by combining functions, simplifying operations, and providing Veterans care and services so that they see VA as MyVA—a world-class, customer-focused, Veteran-centered service organization." There are five critical MyVA objectives.

1. Improving the Veteran Experience
2. Improving the Employee Experience
3. Improving the Internal Support Services
4. Establishing a Culture of Continuous Improvement
5. Enhancing Strategic Partnerships

"We know that VA has significant issues that need to be addressed—so we're listening to others' perspectives and investing in our people," McDonald said. That includes working collaboratively with world-class institutions to capture ideas and best practices, as well as listening to key stakeholders, even those who are critical of VA.

To Read more please visit http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/25409/modernizing_va_through_veteran-centered_transformation/

The American Legion

The American Legion meets the first Monday of each month at 7:00pm .

The Mission of the American Legion is to provide service to our Veterans and their families and the communities they serve in.

If you are interested in becoming a member of The American Legion please call 803-283.2394.

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. Hopefully we can be more productive in 2016! Next Meeting Feb. 8 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.

Marine Corps League

The Lancaster County Leather-necks—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.

Billy Helms, Commandant

Veterans of Foreign War

We meet the first Thursday of every month at The American Legion. This meeting is held at 7:00pm. We would love to see all members attend these meeting. If you are interested in 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](http://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
- 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

Tiffany King

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

*Hello
February.*