

VIRGINIA

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING. VVA Chapter 227, the Dean K. Phillips Memorial Chapter of Northern Virginia, recently donated more than 600 travel-size toiletries collected by chapter members to the Lamb Center, a nonprofit daytime service center for homeless people in Fairfax County, Va. In addition, the national office of VVA donated four boxes of toiletry travel pouches.

The chapter has supported the Lamb Center continuously over the years, and the center provides space and time for VA staff to assist veterans in applying for their benefits. Chapter 227 also recently held a fundraiser to supply needy veterans and their families with gift cards during the holidays, and offers emergency assistance grants throughout the year. ■

Left, Doris Paul, volunteer manager for the Lamb Center, accepts the donation from Leonard Ignatowski, Chapter 227 vice president. Photo: Chapter 227



KANSAS

MEAT & GREET. VVA Chapter 939 in Hays, Kan., recently raffled 170 lbs. of beef to fund scholarships for northwest Kansas high school seniors wishing to pursue higher education. The big winner was Nathan Stormet, a Vietnam veteran who no longer lives in Hays but bought \$200 worth of tickets. “He told us, ‘If I win, donate the prize,’” chapter President John Pyle told the *Hays Daily News*; the beef was donated to Hays’ Community Assistance Center.

Using proceeds from last year’s raffle, the chapter awarded four \$1,000 scholarships to students entering the 2018-2019 school year in September. Recipients Denton Schurr, Brendon Zweifel and Marlana Guzman are now attending branches of the North Central Kansas Technical College; Abria Fisher is enrolled at the University of Kansas.

Applicants must be high school seniors and live in one of the 18 counties Chapter 939 represents. When evaluating scholarship applications, it isn’t necessarily the students with the highest grades who stand out, Pyle noted. “We want to see kids who give of themselves,” he said. “Income is a factor, too. We’ll put a lot of weight on need.” ■



One winner donated his prize to the Community Assistance Center. Photo: Chapter 939.

CALIFORNIA

AFTER THE FIRE. VVA Chapter 582 in Butte County, Calif., recently spearheaded the construction of yurts to house area veterans displaced by November’s deadly Camp Fire. Local chapters of the VFW and Disabled American Veterans helped generate donations of materials and labor to build the circular semi-permanent tents.

“We’re not looking for clothes or food or toothbrushes — people pretty much have all that by now,” Corena “Cricket” Dixon, an auxiliary member of the chapter and donations coordinator for the project, told the *Enterprise-Record* in December. “Yurts are movable and they’re stronger than a tent. You can literally load one up in a truck and build it in your driveway.” ■



Let us know what your chapter has been doing to help our veterans, your community, and those serving in harm’s way. Call **301-585-4000** or e-mail **InService@vva.org**

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HELPING VETERANS, COMMUNITIES, AND THOSE SERVING IN HARM’S WAY



SPOTLIGHT: VETERANS HEALTH CARE

HAPPY & HEALTHY. Veterans with physical or mental problems related to their military service don’t always know that they’re entitled to compensation and health care services from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). That’s why the Veterans Health Care Committee works with the VA and other VVA committees to ensure that veterans who qualify for benefits can take full advantage of them.

The Veterans Health Care Committee’s goal is to improve health care by providing information to veterans about accessing VA benefits, educating patients and providers about health issues related to military service, preparing materials on veteran-specific health issues for medical schools and other educational institutions, and advocating for initiatives related to veterans’ health with legislative bodies.

The committee recently contributed to a new information resource to help veterans better access health benefits and discuss health issues with medical professionals. “Have You Ever Served” (www.haveyoueverserved.com) offers links, information cards

and other resources to assist medical professionals in determining whether patients exhibit common veteran health problems, as well as links and downloads for veterans seeking care.

“Not every veteran is using the VA,” says Dr. Linda

“WE GIVE VETERANS TOOLS THEY CAN TAKE WITH THEM WHEN THEY GO TO SEE A DOCTOR, EMPOWERING THEM TO BE THEIR OWN ADVOCATES.” — Dr. Linda Schwartz

Schwartz, former committee chair and special advisor to the president for health. “The Health Care Committee is working very hard to interface with health care, because a lot of the exposures Vietnam veterans have are not necessarily quantified. We give veterans tools they can take with them when they go to see a doctor, empowering them to be their own advocates.”

The Veterans Health Care Committee has also been influential in promoting legislation that guarantees care to veterans, and continues to monitor issues related to PTSD, suicide prevention, Agent Orange exposure and more. “The Health Care Committee responds to immediate needs and makes recommendations,” Dr. Schwartz says. “Our work has made a big difference in the way VA provides care and the way veterans receive it.” ■

Chapter news inside >>

VVA CHAPTERS ACROSS AMERICA

ALABAMA

SUPER SERVICE. VVA Chapter 1067 board member John Perry recently accepted the Capt. Gary Michael Rose Humanitarian Award for his service to veterans. Medal of Honor recipient Mike Rose presented the award at a ceremony in Huntsville in November.

Perry is a retired sergeant major who has championed Alabama veterans' causes for nearly 20 years. He served on the board responsible for building a Veterans Memorial in downtown Huntsville; helped create "Operation Christmas Bear," which helps comfort children of deployed soldiers with stuffed animals during the holidays; and chaired the committee that brought The Wall That Heals to Huntsville.

"It's in giving that we receive," Perry told AL.com. "The more we give to these veterans, the more we receive back." ■



Mike Rose (left) presents the award to John Perry. Photo: Chapter 1067

GEORGIA

SUPPLY RUN. VVA Chapter 1030 in Cumming recently delivered two vanloads of supplies to the Northeast Georgia Homeless Shelter to support Georgia's homeless veterans. Member donations included backpacks filled with personal care items, clothing and food service items such as paper plates, napkins, plastic cups and utensils.

Located in Winder, Ga., the 49-bed facility offers transitional housing and vocational and career development services to veteran residents. The facility also works with the VA to ensure that veterans receive health care and benefits earned through military service.



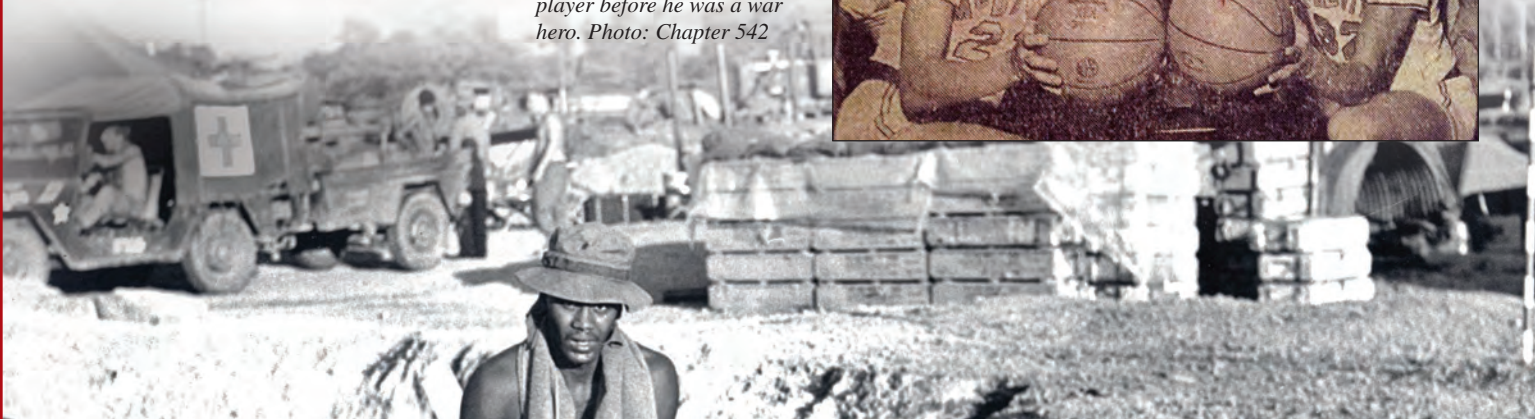
Chapter members drop a vanload of backpacks off at the shelter. Photo: Chapter 1030



PENNSYLVANIA

FROM HOOPS TO TROOPS. Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 542 and the Central Pennsylvania Roundtable recently hosted a viewing of the Vietnam documentary *All Were Lost ... Then Along Came John*. The 90-minute documentary tells the story of Harrisburg legend John Travers from his youth as an all-state basketball player to Vietnam, where he rescued more than 2,000 wounded soldiers as a pilot and was decorated for bravery.

John Travers, upper right, was an all-state basketball player before he was a war hero. Photo: Chapter 542



This month's chapter contributors



Above, Vietnam-era photos from the Shadows of an Era Collection.



MINNESOTA

BLANKET STATEMENT. Minnesota's Grateful Hearts Quilters recently presented members of VVA Chapter 684 in Mora with 26 quilts. The group presented the quilts — each handmade by volunteer quilters — to the veterans in conjunction with the Quilts of Valor Foundation.

"I've been quilting since 2000, and in the last three years, the majority of my quilts have been for the Quilts of Valor," quilter Linda Novotny told the *Isanti County News*. "Being able to do this for the veterans and active military lets me show my gratitude and appreciation for everything they've done for our country."

Most quilts are assembled by multiple volunteers, and all are labeled with the names of the creators. Each measures 60 by 80 inches, and the group made and presented more than 150 quilts in 2018.

Chapter 684 President Rod Leick helped ensure that every member of the group was presented with a quilt. "I really appreciate all the time and effort that the volunteers put into sharing their love for the veterans and making these blankets for all of us," he said. "It really means a lot to all of us to be recognized and appreciated all these years later."

"I got my quilt about two months ago," said Army veteran Gene Okerlund. "I thought it was a really nice gesture, because back in the 1960s, very few people thanked you when you came back from Vietnam. Now being presented with the quilt feels almost like being presented with a medal — it really makes you feel good and lifts your spirits." ■



Grateful Hearts made more than 150 Quilts of Valor last year. Photo: Isanti County News.

