

InService



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

MEMORIAL DAY AT THE WALL

Each year on Memorial Day thousands of veterans and their families congregate at The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., to remember and honor those who died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.



IOWA

Chapter 776 in Bettendorf donated \$723 to Jason's Box to help with the purchase of a track wheelchair that will be used to help injured veterans fish and hunt when they visit the Quad City area this summer.



L to R: John Lavelle, Col. Joe Tirone, Lyle Peterson, and the founder of Jason's Box, Teri Johnson.

Gold Star Mother Teri Johnson started Jason's Box after losing her son in combat. Corporal Jason G. Pautsch was killed in action in Mosul, Iraq, on April 10, 2009. Johnson made it her mission to honor Jason's memory by improving the health and well-being of military men and women. Initially the organization focused solely on providing care packages to deployed troops, but over the years it has grown into much more. In addition to education, training, outreach, and support programs, the organization is creating "Battle Buddy," a system that will pair up returning soldiers with older veterans in an effort to ease the new veterans' transition back into civilian life. ■

>>> More chapter news inside.



★★★★★ WE WILL BE HERE FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES ★★★★★

VVA CHAPTERS ACROSS AMERICA



Top: Terry Baker and John Burgess in Arlington at the Memorial Wall.

Middle: Luis Parker, Mel Falcon, Rona Adams, Jose Nater, and Bruce Wood with their wreath at the National Cemetery of the Pacific.

Bottom: Meteorologist/reporter Paul Drew with Luis Parker.

HAWAII

Chapter 858 in Oahu participates in many community events, including Memorial Day parades, the Fourth of July festival, and World War II Recognition Day. In September the chapter will host an event for POW/MIA Recognition Day. The chapter is also heavily involved with the Philippine Scouts program. ■

VIRGINIA

The **Stanley E. Taylor Memorial Chapter 196** in **Lynchburg** helped sponsor the Eyes of Freedom Memorial traveling exhibit, which was created in memory of one of the hardest-hit Marine Corps units of the Iraq War. The exhibit was dedicated to all who served, fought, and died for the United States in every branch of the armed forces.

The Eyes of Freedom Memorial arrived on a Friday, the day that chapter members regularly gather at Monument Terrace for their weekly "Support Our Troops" rally. Begun more than nine years ago, the rallies are an effort to bring patriots and veterans together to show their support for American troops. "I've never heard of a group meeting that long consecutively, and when they snapped to attention when the truck went by, it's something I won't ever forget," said Mike Strahle, an Iraq veteran.

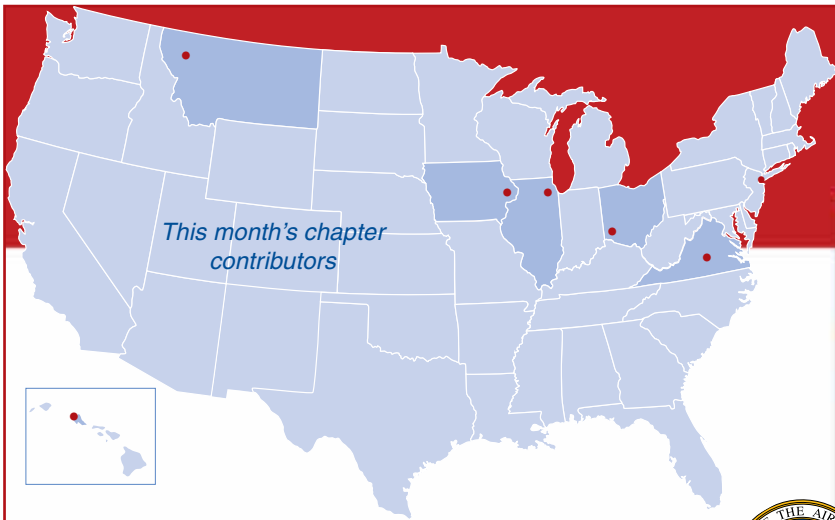
Throughout the year chapter members remain very active in their community, where recently they secured housing for eleven Marines who ran from Georgia to Arlington. Members recognized those Marines at the chapter's weekly rally and presented them with a Monument Terrace challenge coin.

Chapter 196 has also awarded medals to nine Junior ROTC programs over the past fifteen years and presented scholarships to local students. The chapter recently donated \$250 to Freedom Alliance, a charitable organization that sponsors many activities for service members and their families. ■

Right: David Stokes presents a scholarship to Kara Witt, a freshman at Liberty University.

Below: David Stokes, Adam Davis, and Scholarship Committee Chair Wayne Creasy. Davis is a second-year student at Central Virginia Community College, majoring in business.





MONTANA

John Burgess, president of the **North West Montana Chapter 1087**, made it possible for six veterans to participate in the annual "Run for the Wall" event. This ten-day motorcycle trip starts in Rancho Cucamonga, California, and arrives in Arlington, Virginia, on Memorial Day weekend. In order to fund the trip, Chapter 1087 raffled off a South African safari and hunting trip that was donated by Lakeside resident Frank Brisendine.

Two Vietnam veterans started Run for the Wall in 1989, when they rode across the heartland on motorcycles. During the trip they stopped and talked to local radio, TV, and newspaper journalists about the many men and women who never returned home from war. This tradition takes place every Memorial Day in an effort to increase awareness of all prisoners of war and those missing in action (POW/MIA).

"In May 2013 my wife and I had the privilege of riding in the 25th anniversary of the Run for the Wall," said Burgess. "It was a life-changing experience for us, as well as many others who made the trip." Wanting to share his experience with other veterans, Burgess organized a passenger van and driver and collected the funds necessary to include six deserving local veterans who otherwise would have been physically or financially unable to make the cross-country ride on a motorcycle. "Our goal is to show these local heroes that their time and sacrifice is still remembered and appreciated," said Burgess.

Along the way the veterans were greeted by people waving flags and holding signs



Memorial Vest at the Big Spring Memorial in Big Spring, Texas

Chapter member, Steve Funk

reading, "Welcome Home." One veteran wrote "It was nearly impossible not to shed a tear or two along the way. This was a healing journey. My only wish is that it had come forty-plus years ago." In addition to greeting the veterans as they passed through, many people also helped out by preparing food for them. "There are no words to thank all the folks who awoke before dawn to fix us breakfast or make and serve our lunches and dinners," wrote another veteran.

After returning from The Wall one chapter member donated a 1968 Keiser Deuce-and-1/2, which members restored in preparation for their local 4th of July parade. The parade provided many of the veterans with the very first "Welcome Home" they have received since returning home from Vietnam. ■

A Chapter 1087 member donated a 1968 Kaiser Deuce-and-1/2, which the chapter used in their local 4th of July parade.



Chapter members, Dick, Larry, and Terry in Odessa, Texas.



OHIO

Chapter 10 in **Cincinnati** recently held its 5th annual Crayons to Computers donation drive. Every year chapter members donate school supplies, which are later delivered to the Crayons to Computers headquarters.

Crayons to Computers strives to “provide every child in need with the quantity and quality of supplies required to succeed in school.” Local teachers are invited to the warehouse to choose items they believe their students desperately need. In its effort to provide the essential supplies, Crayons to Computers works in partnership with several other local organizations.

Another Chapter 10 effort to help young students in their community is the Adopt-A-Child program, in which chapter members “adopt” all of the children in a family and provide them with essential items, such as clothing and school supplies. In addition, for the past three years, the chapter has awarded scholarships to college-bound students who are either veterans or the dependents of veterans. So far the chapter has awarded scholarships to fourteen students. ■



Students dress up in hats and uniforms after being selected in the mock draft.



Chapter 311 members Jerry Van Bladel, Gary Sieroslowski, and Tom Newton.

ILLINOIS

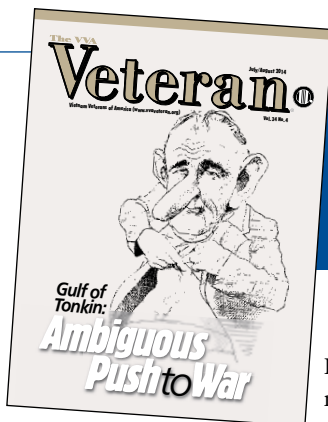
The 1960s came alive for students at Clarendon Hills Middle School when American history teacher Mario Castillo invited members of **Chapter 311** in **Des Plaines** to share their Vietnam War experiences with students. In addition to stories, chapter member Tom Newton shared war memorabilia that he has collected over the years, including a gas mask, padded helmet with goggles, web belt with canteen, flags, hats, a war-time uniform, and many other items.

The chapter has been visiting both high schools and middle schools for the past fifteen years, and Newton has been sharing his stories with students for at least nine of those years. Chapter members do such a great job that they are invited back year after year, and it's beneficial for both the students and the veterans. “We learn from them, and they learn from us,” said Newton.

Although at first the students are shy, Newton says that after he marches around in costume and directs his recruits, dramatizing a mock draft, they “seem to warm up as they realize we are not really that much different—aside from our age differences.” By the time the veterans are finished speaking, the students often huddle around, thanking the vets for their service and some even offering hugs. “I find it to be a rewarding and positive experience to pay back information to the students,” said Newton. ■



Board members of Chapter 10 with their Crayons to Computers drop box.



Reconnect and get the latest news in *The VVA Veteran*.

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 x145** or e-mail **InService@vva.org**.

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