Coordinating Council. president of the West Virginia Marine Corps chapter presidency, Wrobelewski is also
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In addition to health care, the Women Veterans Committee concentrates on issues such as homelessness, sexual harassment and sexual trauma, and transitioning from military to civilian jobs. Many women
serving in the military hold supervisory roles, and experience difficulty getting the same levels of respect and pay in the private sector.

The program works with other
service organizations to promote legislation favorable to women veterans. The committee
has established a relationship with the
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and
frequently offers testimony on women’s health care, education and employment to U.S. House and Senate committees. “We are a
clearinghouse of information from the national level down to local areas for women veterans service access,” O’Hare-Palmer says.

One of VVA’s most important outreach committees is the Women Veterans Committee. Women veterans have been involved
with the association since its launch in 1978, and the committee formed in 1983, when pressure from VVA resulted in a GAO
report on health care for women veterans. Lynda Van Dauventer, a vocal advocate for veterans suffering from exposure to Agent
Ohio, was the last needed to complete Florida’s contribution to the Wall of Faces project. Photo: VVMF

FLORIDA

THE FINAL FACE. VVA Chapter 1036 in The Villages, Fla., announced that it has
finally located photos for every one of Florida’s 778 fallen heroes. The photos can be
viewed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) website, www.vvmf.org/
wall-of-faces. The last photo found was of Thomas John “T.J.” Burton, who served in the U.S. Army and was killed in action in Binh Duong in 1968.

Chapter 1036’s photo search team included retired Army, Navy and Marine
officers, as well as a private investigator. The team spent hundreds of hours
investigating leads, poring over yearbooks and library files, contacting friends and
family members of the deceased, and requesting information from the St. Louis
Military Records Office. The search was supported by the Florida State Council,
state VVA chapters, local TV stations and newspapers, and county libraries,
genealogy databases and historic societies.

“I’m just thrilled that we’ve finally got it done,” chapter member John
Thomstatter, who spearheaded the effort, told the Pensacola News-Journal. “We did
an average of 10 hours of research per soldier, and some took hundreds of hours.”

Chapter 1036’s team will now help other states find photos to complete the
Wall of Faces Project, which needs only about 2,000 more photos to put a face
and story to every one of the 58,195 names on the black granite of the Vietnam
Memorial in Washington, D.C. An interactive Vietnam Education Center on the
National Mall will display the photos once built. To learn more, visit
www.vvmf.org/

The Women Veterans Committee has been
a truly proactive group in forging ahead on women veterans’ issues,” says current chair
Kate O’Hare-Palmer. “Angst alone wasn’t
getting anything done legislatively when we first came home.”

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health care, the Women Veterans Committee concentrates on issues
such as homelessness, sexual harassment and sexual trauma, and transitioning from
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**NEW YORK**

**REMEMBERING MCCAIN.** Members of Chapter 20 in Rochester remembered John McCain in the aftermath of his death on Aug. 25, 2018. McCain was held prisoner for five years in Vietnam after his plane was shot down, and served in Congress for more than 30 years. McCain visited Rochester during one of his presidential bids, holding a rally at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Highland Park before the New York primary in 2000. Chapter members said they appreciate his service and his work on behalf of veterans.

“He did something that was not demanded of [many],” chapter member Joe Peck told the Spectrum News. “He did it to serve his country. And for that, he is a true American hero who went above and beyond. And I’m sure he’ll never be forgotten.”

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**Pennsylvania**

**SOLEMN RIDE.** About 1,700 motorcyclists took part in the 25th Annual Ride for Freedom in Berks County in August. The event ensures that all veterans who were POWs and listed as MIA are not forgotten.

The ride concluded in Reading with a moving ceremony dedicated to all POW/MIA — a total of 82,334 missing and unaccounted nationally since World War II. The names of 91 Pennsylvania POW/MIA were read aloud, before Taps and time for reflection and prayer.

“If I do anything in my life, it will be not to forget these people, and especially what they have done for us,” Bernie Bingham, president of VVA Chapter 131, executive director of POW/MIA Forgotten-Mc-Nor, and vice president of the Reading Motorcycle Club, told the Reading Eagle. “And I will be back here next year as long as my lungs are working.”

The rally attracted hundreds of onlookers along its 14-mile route. “When we first started this ride, we had 70 riders from the Reading Motorcycle Club and another 80 or so Harley riders,” Bingham said. “Now we have about 1,700 bikes and roughly 2,500 people here, including passengers and others.”

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**Texas**

**CITIZEN VETERAN.** Frank Hajart, a member of VVA Chapter 987 in Longview, finally became a U.S. citizen in August. Hajart was 12 when his family moved from war-torn Yugoslavia to Denver in 1956, and he joined the Marines after a recruiter said it would help him achieve citizenship.

“He is a great man and has done so much for our country and our community, and he needed to have a country,” Thomas told the Longview News-Journal. “He will be an American citizen, and I am proud to know him and have even a little part in this.”

Fellow Vietnam veteran David Applewhite helped out by spreading the word about the 74-year-old Hajart’s plight. “I’ve known Frank for eight or 10 years, and we just kind of bonded,” he said. Hajart and Applewhite wore their service uniforms — which still fit — to the ceremony, which was attended more than a dozen of Hajart’s relatives and friends.

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**Oregon**

**STANDING DOWN FOR THE HOMELESS.** About 200 veterans visited the Veterans Stand Down for Douglas County at the Roseburg Veterans Medical Center in September. The annual event targets homeless and at-risk veterans for help in accessing VA benefits and housing.

This year, veterans also took advantage of free or reduced-price haircuts, flu shots, dental checkups and veterinary services. A range of supplies including granola bars and DOD surplus gear such as boots, parkas and backpacks was also offered.

Ken Steller, a Gulf War veteran who operates For the Love of Paws, a low-income veterinary clinic, told the Roseburg News-Review that the Stand Down offers the area’s many homeless veterans a great service. “It’s good they’re getting some help,” he said.

Frank and Diahn Escalante of VVA Chapter 805 in Umpqua brought the traveling Vietnam War Wall to the event. The Escalantes’ mission is to help veterans who don’t know they’re eligible for benefits figure out how to sign up for them. “That helps me with my PTSD,” Frank said, “because they’re all my brothers.”

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**Michigan**

**SPIT ‘N’ POLISH.** VVA Chapter 142 in Monroe recently presented seven-year-old Randy Long Jr. with a plaque and an American flag to show appreciation for his volunteer service. The boy has washed and polished the memorial stones of more than 90 veterans throughout Michigan since last year.

Long started with a stone bearing the name of his great uncle, Richard Carlton, last year. “I decided, out of respect, I wanted to clean the other names too, because they deserved it,” he told the Monroe News. “These men deserve respect.”

“You just don’t see enough good stuff by young men nowadays,” Dr. Dennis Warner, chapter president, said at a ceremony attended by several members of the Long family. “When we saw what this young man was doing, we knew we needed to show our appreciation.”

The veterans also made Long an honorary member of the chapter, and Michigan State Council president John Riling II gave him a State Challenge coin. “I think he deserves special recognition not only from the chapter, but also from the state,” Riling said.

“That flag’s ginormous,” said Long, who plans to serve in the military once he’s old enough. “I think I’m going to hang it up on my wall.”
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TEXAS
CITIZEN VETERAN. Frank Hajart, a member of VVA Chapter 987 in Longview, finally became a U.S. citizen in August. Hajart was 12 when his family moved from war-torn Yugoslavia to Denver in 1956, and he joined the Marines after a recruiter said it would help him achieve citizenship.

After an application to renew his driver’s license was denied due to his lack of citizenship, Hajart was shocked.

He told Lori Thomas, a friend and veteran peer network coordinator at an Overton healthcare facility, who helped launch the naturalization effort.

“He is a great man and has done so much for our country and our community, and he needed to have a country,” Thomas told the Longview News-Journal. “He will be an American citizen, and I am proud to know him and have even a little part in this.”

Fellow Vietnam veteran David Applewhite helped out by spreading the word about the 74-year-old Hajart’s plight. “I’ve known Frank for eight or 10 years, and we just kind of bonded,” he said. Hajart and Applewhite wore their service uniforms — which still fit — to the ceremony, which was attended more than a dozen of Hajart’s relatives and friends.

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WEST VIRGINIA

SPEAKING OUT. Ron Wrobelewski, president of VVA’s Tri-State Chapter 949 in Prichard, W.Va., spoke at a National POW and MIA Recognition Day ceremony in Gallipolis, Ohio, last month. National POW and MIA Recognition Day is observed annually on the third Friday of September to honor POW/MIA service members.

Wrobelewski is a Vietnam combat veteran who served as a field radio operator in the Marine Corps from 1963–1966. Among his most significant accomplishments on behalf of veterans is having a U.S. Navy ship named for WWII veteran Hershel “Woody” Williams, West Virginia’s only living Medal of Honor recipient.

Wrobelewski has also served as commander of VPW Post 1064, general chairman of the Huntington, W.Va., Veterans Committee for Civic Improvement, and commandant of the Marine Corps League’s Huntington Detachment. In addition to his presidency, Wrobelewski is also vice president of the West Virginia Marine Corps League, president of the West Virginia Marine Corps Chapter 949 in Huntington Detachment, and commandant of the Marine Corps League’s Huntington Detachment.

In September, Wrobelewski spoke at a National POW and MIA Recognition Day ceremony in Gallipolis, Ohio, and he spoke at the same ceremony in Prichard, W.Va., in October.

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