

THE PATRIOT

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Veterans of Year selected

BELLEVUE — The Huron County Area Veterans Council has named two Huron County Veterans of the Year.



Dick Palmer

Richard Palmer, of Monroeville, and Robert Wolcott, of Norwalk, each said they were surprised to receive the honor Dec. 4 during the Huron County Veteran of the Year banquet at VFW Post 1238 in Bellevue.

Palmer, a member of the American Legion for 49 years, said he feels the need to contribute. He served in the U.S. Army from 1963 through 1969.

Currently, Palmer is in his third year as the post commander of American Legion Post 547 in Monroeville, which nominated him. He is a member of the Huron County Area Veterans Council and Catholic War Veterans of the USA, Inc. Post 1968.

Wolcott served in Korea in 1968 and '69 with the U.S. Air Force.

He organizes honor guards for funerals with the help of veterans from American Legion Post 41 in Norwalk, VFW Post 2743 in Norwalk, American Legion Post 547 in Monroeville and the Marine Corps League. Wolcott also makes sure the rifles are loaded and ready to fire for ceremonies.

It's difficult to arrange honor guard duty, but Wolcott said he has many veterans on whom he can depend. During the banquet, the council honored several dozen veterans who have performed honor and color guard duties in 2021 and presented them with challenge coins.

"I've been doing funerals for the last five years. Like I said, when I call them, the guys say 'Yes,'" Wolcott said.

Also, Wolcott places flags at veterans' graves at the St. Paul and



Robert Wolcott

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St. Mary cemeteries. He delivers food baskets through AMVETS Post 1965 in Norwalk during Thanksgiving time and has participated in Wreaths Across America.



The Blue Star Mothers assisted with the Huron County Veteran of the Year banquet Dec. 4. From left are: Eileen Borchardt; Cheri Spurlock, state president; Elaine Brock, past president of the Lake Erie Shores chapter; Barb Cook, current chapter president; Kimberly Danes, first vice president; Freda Soisson, treasurer; and Lisa Fischer, historian. (PHOTO BY CARY ASHBY/HCVSO)

HCVSO offers transportation needs

The Huron County Veteran Service Office continues to offer transportation services to any medical appointment or other services, such as errands to the bank, post office or grocery store.

At least 48 hours before your appointment, call 419-668-4150. Be ready to provide the following: Your full name; phone number; date, time and location of your appointment; and the last four numbers of your Social Security number. If you request a ride for errands, you will need to list all the stops our driver will need to make.

Ryan Wolfe or Cary Ashby, of the transportation department, will call you the day before your appointment to confirm your ride. (Wolfe's column on 2021 transportation statistics appears on Page 7.)

The Huron County Area Veterans Council also recognized previous recipients of the Huron County Veteran of the Year award: Bob Good, Thom Price, Matt Raymond, Mindy Soisson-Calhoun and Nate Whaley.

In addition, the council honored John Lendrum and Dave Zika for their service during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Lendrum, who retired from the Army as a colonel in 2010, is a recipient of the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star and five Meritorious Service Medals. He also was the banquet guest speaker.

Zika served two tours in Iraq. After being deployed for 18 months starting in 2003, he returned in 2009 as a platoon sergeant during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

U.S. Marine Corps veteran John Cook, of North Fairfield, received a Quilt of Valor. He is the treasurer of the Huron County Area Veterans Council.

‘Donations were great’ for Toys for Tots drive



Jim Ruffing, of the Marine Corps League, stands with toys dropped off at the Huron County Veteran Service Office for the 2021 Toys for Tots donation collection. (PHOTO BY CARY ASHBY/HCVSO)

NORWALK — The 2021 Toys for Tots drive, sponsored by the Marine Corps League Elton Mackin Detachment #837, was a success.

There were drop-off sites throughout the area, including the Huron County Veteran Service Office.

“Donations were great,” Vietnam veteran Jim Ruffing, who coordinated the drive with Matt Strecker, told the *Norwalk Reflector*. “We really appreciate all of the help we get each year.”

In Norwalk, the student council at Main Street Intermediate School ran a donation station and raised \$435. Donell Cornell, who teaches sixth-grade science, spearheaded the project, with assistance from teachers Vicki Penrose and Stephanie Riggs. Teachers and students dropped off their donations between Nov. 29 and Dec. 10.

Holiday check-in calls for veterans

NORWALK — Jenna Rathburn, of Monroeville, chats with a local veteran before Christmas in this photo.

The 17-year-old girl is a member of the 2021 Huron County Junior Fair Court and the Richmond Mothers Helpers 4-H club.

Rathburn and several drivers from the Huron County Veteran Service Office called nearly 300 local veterans to let them know they were being thought of during the holidays.



Veterans in the community

Photos by Cary Ashby, HCVSO community coordinator and part-time driver



Gov. Mike DeWine shakes hands with World War II veteran Garth Flittner as he leaves the the Veterans Day assembly Nov. 11 at Edison High School. Flittner, 98, of Sandusky, served in the U.S. Air Force. DeWine was the featured speaker at the assembly.



These Norwalk High School students in the Teen Leadership Corps class assisted with the Huron County Veteran of the Year banquet Dec. 4 at VFW Post 1238 in Bellevue. From left are: Senior Riley Dickerson, junior Corbin Koelsch and junior Alaina Balduff.



U.S. Air Force veterans Jim Pennybaker (left) and Larry Mull, both of Willard, listen to the Willard City Schools drive-in Veterans Day program Nov. 10 in the Willard High School parking lot.



New London-area veterans and their spouses enjoy a meal prepared by the Auxiliary of American Legion Post 292 in New London. The annual dinner, held Nov. 13, included swiss steak and all the trimmings. Three speakers rounded out the evening. More than 40 people attended. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

South Central honors veterans during program

GREENWICH — Lt. Caleb Barnett, of the Air National Guard, was the guest speaker during the Veterans Day assembly Nov. 11 at South Central High School.



Lt. Caleb Barnett, of the Air National Guard, speaks during the Veterans Day assembly Nov. 11 at South Central High School. (PHOTO BY SHAWN DALEY/HCVSO)

The school honored a dozen veterans from the South Central staff during the program: Jill Carter (U.S. Air Force, retired teacher); the late John Clevenger (U.S. Navy, former custodian); John Dendinger (Air Force, custodial building substitute); Larry Frisce (Navy, retired teacher); Lowell Etzler (U.S. Army, retired superintendent); Herschel Honeycutt (U.S. Marine Corps, retired custodian); Jeff Little (Air Force, teacher); Mike Lloyd (Army, substitute bus driver); Tom Lucha (Army, school board member); Gary Sprague (Marines, bus driver); Steve Ray, (Air Force, bus driver); and Mike Strayer (National Guard, teacher).

South Central also recognized additional veterans: Ben Chaffee (Marines), Shawn Daley (Marines), the late Evert Ebinger (Air Force), Gilbert Hensley (Army), Clark Hunter (Army), Naomi Lee (Navy), the late Edward McGuire (Navy), Mo Moore (Army), the late John Pope (Navy), Fred Ramsey (Air Force), Bill Rhine (Navy), John Rhine (Army), Richard Starcher (Army), Jacquelyn Taylor (Marines), Robert Thompson (Army), and Alan White (Army).

Junior Maya Cervantes performed the National Anthem and the fourth-graders sang an armed forces medley.

Marines celebrate birthday

BELLEVUE — Celebrating the U.S. Marine Corps birthday is a longstanding tradition.

This year, the festivities by the Marine Corps League Elton Mackin Detachment #837 for the Marines' 246th birthday took place Nov. 13 at the Vue Banquet and Event Center (formerly Bierkeller) in Bellevue.

Milan resident Alyssa Godfrey, a 2007 Norwalk High School graduate, was the featured speaker. As Miss Midwest in the American Royal Beauties scholarship pageant for 2020-2021, her platform was military and veterans family support.

Cheryl Fout, of Norwalk, was selected as the 2021 Marine of the Year. She has organized the local Marine Corps birthday ball for the last two years. Also, Fout has served on many honor guards and is active in American Legion Post 41 in Norwalk.



Cheryl Fout (left), of Norwalk, is the 2021 Marine of the Year. Also pictured are fellow U.S. Marine Corps veteran Matt Raymond and Alyssa Godfrey, Miss Midwest in the American Royal Beauties scholarship pageant for 2020-2021. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Schools hold Veterans Day programs

NORWALK — Norwalk High School senior Aria Beard accepts a challenge coin from Mindy Soisson-Calhoun, of the Huron County Veteran Service Commission, in this photo.

Beard and junior Zoe Gale, students in Nick Lee's Teen Leadership Corps class, were honored for their contributions to the NHS Veterans Day assembly.

At Plymouth High School, middle and high school students interacted with veterans and had breakfast together before the Plymouth and Shiloh Community Veterans Day assembly Nov. 11.

Monroeville and South Central schools also held programs. (A story about the South Central assembly appears on Page 5.)



PHOTO COURTESY OF NORWALK HIGH SCHOOL

Transportation dept. going strong

By Ryan Wolfe, HCVSO part-time transportation coordinator and driver



I would like to start off by thanking everyone for a great year. After all we have gone through — mask mandates, production layoffs, social distancing — we have come so far in the last year-and-a-half. Health and safety are still big concerns; that’s why we continue to sanitize and clean every vehicle after each use. Masks are recommended, but not mandatory, on some rides.

Ryan Wolfe (left), who coordinates transportation for the Huron County Veteran Service Office, chats with Vietnam War veteran Jim Alt, of Bellevue, before the Willard City Schools drive-in Veterans Day program Nov. 10. Alt served in the U.S. Army from 1969 through 1971. The HCVSO participated in the Veterans Day parade in Willard. (PHOTO BY CARY ASHBY/HCVSO)

Veterans Affairs (VA) is still utilizing telehealth and remote healthcare, which has dropped our numbers. However, we are going strong.

In 2021, the Huron County Veteran Service Office made a total of 1,613 trips.



This crew representing the Huron County Veteran Service Office is bundled up for the annual Christmas parade in Willard. From left are: Part-time driver Ryan Wolfe; his son Liam, 12, of Willard; Lukas Wurm, 12, also of Willard; and part-time driver Cary Ashby. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Also in 2021, drivers transported veterans to the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center (aka Wade Park) the most — 420 trips or 35 per month. Next up was the Sandusky VA Clinic, with 169 trips (or 14 each month). Veterans took 59 total trips last year to the Parma VA clinic, followed by Mansfield with 58.

There were 179 other medical appointments and 127 outsourced VA appointments also in 2021.

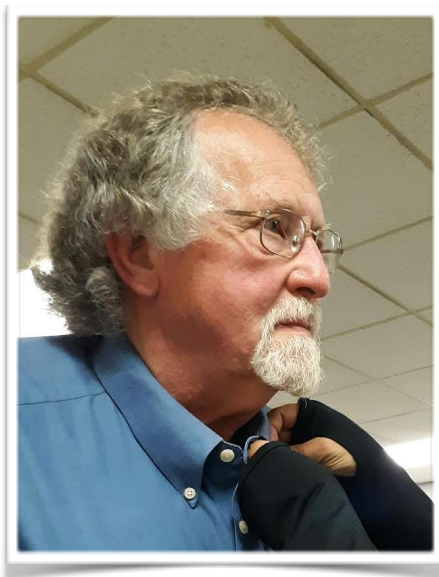
In 2019, we provided 2,042 rides for the year. That's an average of 170 rides per month. In 2020, we had 1,047 total rides for an average of 87 rides each month. There were 327 rides to Wade Park.

All in all, 2021 was a great year for what we all have been going through. Once again, I would like to thank each and everyone.

Vietnam veterans pinned in Willard

WILLARD — The Huron County Veteran Service Office welcomed home and honored nearly a dozen Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans during a pinning ceremony for Nov. 10 at the Willard Elks.

In the photo below, U.S. Army veteran Darrell Shirley receives a Vietnam War commemoration lapel pin from Cheryl Fout, community coordinator and part-time driver. Shirley served in the U.S. Army from 1967 through 1970. His daughter, Deb, enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserve during the Gulf War. His son, Nathan, became an Army Ranger and died in a training exercise at Fort Campbell on June 18, 1996.



U.S. Army veteran Darrell Shirley (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHIRLEY FAMILY)



U.S. Navy veteran Ralph C. Braker Jr. receives a Vietnam War commemoration lapel pin from Cheryl Fout, of the Huron County Veteran Service Office. Braker served from September 1962 through February 1966. HCVSO staff members pinned nearly a dozen Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans during the Nov. 10 ceremony. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BRAKER FAMILY)