

THE PATRIOT

Issue 13 of the Huron County Veteran Service Office newsletter • October 2023

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Mindy Soisson-Calhoun, president of the Huron County Area Veterans Council, prepares to cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the renovated Veterans' Pavilion of Huron County.

Veterans' Pavilion at fairgrounds is renovated

NORWALK — The renovated Veterans' Pavilion of Huron County made its grand debut during the 2023 Huron County Fair.

The Huron County Area Veterans Council held a short ribbon-cutting ceremony on Aug. 16.

Jeff Bertram, a U.S. Army combat veteran and council member, was the emcee. He expressed his "deepest gratitude to the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve our nation in the Armed Forces."

Jonatta & Herner was the contractor for the remodeling project. Many volunteers assisted by painting the pavilion. Local and area businesses and organizations provided resources: Adelman Rentals, American Legion Post 527 (Milan), Post 547 (Monroeville), Post 292 (New London), Post 41 (Norwalk), Post 260 (Attica), Carter Lumber, Exclusively BA, Firelands Post 2743 Auxiliary, Fresh

Electric, Friends of Veterans, Health Grade Networks LLG, Huron County Agriculture Board, KLM Benefits Solutions LLC, Marine Corps League Elton E. Mackin Detachment 837, Norwalk Local Auto Care Marketing Council, Norwalk Lions Club, OEX Trucking, Oglesby Construction, Ronald Sparks, and Sam's Club.



Veterans salute the American flag during the playing of "The Star Spangled Banner."

"Our pavilion stands as a space of solace and camaraderie, where those who have served can find comfort, unity, and strength in each other's company. It is a place where stories are shared, memories are cherished, and bonds are forged with men and women who made sacrifices to preserve the freedoms we all hold dear," Bertram said.

"We are truly blessed to live in a community with such strong support of our military veterans, and that support is appreciated more than words can say."

HCVSO contacts

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Help wanted: Part-time veteran service officer

NORWALK — The Huron County Veteran Service Commission is accepting applications for a part-time veteran service officer.

Applicants must be honorably discharged veterans. The position can be full-time after training is completed. Call the office with any questions — (419) 668-4150. Applications can be picked up at 185 Shady Lane Drive, Suite C, Norwalk. Open through Oct. 13.



U.S. Army veteran Kenny Tkach



Steve Oblender (seated), a U.S. Air Force veteran, chats with another veteran during the first Coffee Club in August. He represents the AMVETS on the Huron County Veteran Service Commission. *PHOTOS BY TOM RUSYNYK/HCVSO*

Transportation services offered by HCVSO

The Huron County Veteran Service Office offers transportation services to any medical appointment.

At least 48 hours before your appointment, call (419) 668-4150. You also may request transportation online at huroncountyvets.com. Under the "services" tab, click on "transportation."

Be ready to provide all of the following: Your full name; your phone number; the date, time and location of your appointment; and the last four numbers of your Social Security number.

Ryan Wolfe or Cary Ashby, of the transportation department, will call you the day before your appointment to confirm your ride.

Upcoming events in 2024

- 2024 Veterans Barbecue — Friday, May, 24, 2024, location TBA
- 2024 Bean Soup dinner — Wednesday, Aug. 14, 2024 at Veterans' Pavilion of Huron County, Huron County Fairgrounds

WWII troop sleeper car is displayed at Bellevue railroad museum



Steve LaConte, a volunteer with the Mad River & NKP Railroad Museum, stands beside the cots in a military troop sleeper car. *PHOTOS BY CARY ASHBY/HCVSO*

BELLEVUE — A railroad car used to transport troops in World War II and the Korean War is at the Mad River & NKP Railroad Museum in Bellevue.

Between 1943 and 1946, the Pullman-Standard Car Co. built several thousand of these cars. After WWII, most all of them were converted to regular box car service.

“This was a car that would be used to carry troops across the country from base to base, or from operation to operation,” said Steve LaConte, a museum volunteer since 1976. “They were used mostly during the second World War and during the Korean War. After the Korean War, they basically stopped transporting troops across the country by rail.”

Crossing the United States took about two-and-half weeks.

Each troop sleeper car contained 36 to almost 50 cots. There would be 14 to 20 such cars and a dining car in a train, which sometimes included passenger cars.

Dennison, Ohio was a 20-minute stop for more coal, water and fuel and to change locomotives. The troops often were allowed to get off the train during the process.

“A lot of the ladies in the town, many of the volunteers, would bring sandwiches, cookies, (and) soda down for the soldiers and they would feed the troops down there. ... A friend of mine told me his mom and dad met like that. His dad was on a troop train and she was working in the kitchen and made sandwiches,” LaConte said.

Thanks to an eagle-eyed officer, the Mad River & NKP Railroad Museum has a dynamometer car. Built in 1924 by the Standard Steel Car Co., it was used to test new steam and diesel locomotives.

This particular car eventually was sold to several railroad companies and ultimately, the Department of Defense. It was used at the transportation test track in Pueblo, Col. until about 1983.

The car was marked with a white stripe to be scrapped and was going to be used as target practice for tanks. Maj. Jeff Leaman notified government officials that it was unique and an “important piece of equipment,” LaConte said. The governors of Colorado and Ohio worked together to get the car in the possession of the museum.

“We had to pay an amount to the state of Colorado and it was agreed that \$100 was the right amount,” LaConte said.



In 1995, Troop Sleeper #7407 arrived at the Mad River & NKP Museum in Bellevue.

Photos of the 2023 Bean Soup dinner



About 200 veterans and their guests attended the 2023 Bean Soup dinner at the Veterans' Pavilion of Huron County in the fairgrounds.

New Marine Corps League representative on the Commission is called to 'pay it forward'

NORWALK — A Gulf War veteran is the newest Marine Corps League representative on the Huron County Veteran Service Commission.

Jim Hager takes the position held most recently by Jochen Hardwick. The other commissioners are: Jerry Huffman (Disabled American Veterans representative), Steve Oblender (AMVETS), Thomas Price (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and Mindy Soisson-Calhoun (American Legion).

"I'm just proud that my Marine Corps brothers saw to it that I was going to be able to support the Marines in the county," said Hager, who has been a Norwalk resident since 2018.

After graduating from St. Mary Central Catholic High School in 1986, Hager attended The University of Toledo for a short time. He originally wanted to be a history teacher.

"I was in Army ROTC at the time. For whatever reason, I was drawn to the Marine Corps recruiter and the next



Jim Hager represents the Marine Corps League on the Huron County Veteran Service Commission.

thing I know, I'm in Marine boot camp in March of 1987," he said. "I started out as a security guard because I wanted to be an M.P., but after I did all the paperwork, I found out I was too young to be an M.P."

During the Gulf War, Hager and his platoon landed in the middle of a sandstorm in Saudi Arabia. It was shortly before Thanksgiving.

"We were rushed up to the front in RTA buses. I definitely remember that because none of our heavy gear was off the ships yet," he said.

Hager spent nearly five years in the Marines. "My tour of duty got extended for the Gulf War."

Most recently, he has been involved in VFW Post 2743 in Norwalk and the Marine Corps League Elton E. Mackin Detachment 837.

"It's my time to pay it forward. I thought, if I could do anything to help pay it forward, to help another veteran out in any shape or form; I think that's God's calling for me now — to help vets out," Hager said.

Masonic Riders Assoc. donates to local DAV chapter



NORWALK — The Overseers chapter of the Masonic Riders Association donated \$3,000 to Disabled American Veterans Chapter 62 in mid-September. The Overseers, with members from Huron and Lorain counties, raised the money during a benefit run for the DAV.

Pictured (from left) are: Michael Haslage, Masonic Riders member and U.S. Navy veteran; Scott Plumb, trustee; Don DiDomenico, chapter president and Navy veteran; Eric Robson, chapter secretary; Ralph Cook, member and U.S. Marine Corps veteran and his wife Brenda Cook; James Cain, treasurer and husband of a Navy veteran; Jerry Huffman, DAV commander and U.S. Air Force veteran; and William Fey, DAV adjutant/treasurer and U.S. Army veteran.

Wreaths Across America ceremony to be at Woodlawn Cemetery



NORWALK — The local Sally De Forest chapter of the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution is holding its annual Wreaths Across America ceremony at Woodlawn Cemetery in Norwalk at noon on Dec. 16, 2023.

Wreaths (\$17 each) may be ordered at Schild’s IGA SuperCenter in Norwalk on Nov. 3, 4, 10, 17 and 18 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. All orders are due to Alice Schauss of the Sally De Forest chapter by Nov. 27. Wreaths that are ordered may be picked up at Woodlawn Cemetery on Dec. 16 from 10 a.m. until noon.

Donations also are gratefully accepted. All money collected through donations goes toward the purchase of additional wreaths so that every veteran’s grave may be honored.

Wreaths Across America is dedicated to remembering the fallen, honoring those who serve, and teaching our children the value of the freedom that these men and women so selflessly provided.

For more information, call Alice Schauss at (419) 681-1023 or Jerilynn Scheele at (419) 660-0908.

Willard schools host Military Appreciation Night



An American flag hangs from the top of the Willard Fire & Rescue ladder truck outside the football stadium.



The Willard Crimson Flashes football players greet local veterans before taking the field vs. Woodmore on Sept. 8. The honorary captains, flag representatives and the game-ball carriers were veterans, while the chain gang and the Willard and Woodmore cheerleaders, football teams and marching band members played in the memory of, or in honor of, military family members.

HCVSO adds new DAV van to fleet



Thumbs up for the newest member of the Huron County Veteran Service Office fleet! Part-time drivers Fred Walton and Tom Lovitt approve of the 2023 Ford Transit that they picked up Sept. 15 at the national Disabled American Veterans (DAV) headquarters in Erlanger, Ky. *PHOTO BY SHELBY BUCKLER/DAV*

Photos of the trip to U.S. Air Force national museum



Catherine and Robert Marksbury



Cary Ashby (left) and Ryan Wolfe, of the transportation department, deliver their best presidential waves from the entrance of Air Force One. Presidents Kennedy through Clinton used this Air Force One, now on display in Hangar 4 at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton.