

THE PATRIOT

Debut issue of the Huron County Veteran Service Office newsletter

Find HCVSO

The Huron County Veteran Service Office has been located at the county Department of Job and Family Services building in Norwalk for about the last 18 months. The HCVSO has been in existence since 1944.

We are in Suite C in the back of the JFS building at 185 Shady Lane Drive. The HCVSO is Covid compliant. When you arrive and before you enter the lobby, please call our office at 419-668-4150 and we will let you in. Make sure you have a mask with you. As soon as you enter the lobby, have your temperature checked at the video tablet on your left.

Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. We look forward to assisting you.



Welcome to The Patriot!

Welcome to the debut issue of *The Patriot*, the newsletter for the Huron County Veteran Service Office.

We offer resources, transportation, and benefits counseling to you — our local veterans. Our mission is to create an environment of respect, dignity, and an assurance of absolute privacy in all of our relationships.



In our ongoing emphasis of education, and connecting with veterans, we offer *The Patriot*, which we hope to release four times a year. Why a newsletter, you may ask? Education is an important element in what we do on your behalf. Knowing that many don't have Internet access or social media, our staff believes a newsletter is an important way to provide vital and



Transportation services

Our office provides transportation for Huron County residents to any medical appointment or other service, such as the post office or grocery store.

Call 419-668-4150 at least 48 hours before your appointment. Be ready to provide the following: Your full name, phone number, when and where your appointment is, and the last four numbers of your Social Security number.

The transportation department will call you the day before your appointment to confirm your ride and time. Masks are mandatory due to Covid compliance.

relevant information. In *The Patriot* we will share insight into obtaining the proper benefits, plus recent and upcoming activities sponsored by Huron County-area veteran organizations and the Huron County Area Veterans Council. Future issues will include columns by our staff members and information on the Huron County Veteran Service Commission.

Starting soon will be an ongoing veterans feature. If you would be willing to share your story of service, call the office at 419-668-4150 and ask for Cary Ashby.

The Huron County Veteran Service Office is here for you. If you have a question, ask us and we will get you the information you need. Let us know what you think about *The Patriot*. We are in this together and we want to serve you, just as you have served our country.



Vietnam veteran honored

Mary Carsey (above right), the widow of Walter Carsey, received a blue star pin and certificate of honor during the Aug. 19 meeting of the Huron County Veteran Service Commission. The late Walter Carsey served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam from June 1968 through August 1969. Also attending the meeting was his daughter, Lisa Schaffer. The blue star pin is for the surviving spouses of deceased Vietnam veterans. The federal pinning program is a hometown-based initiative to assist in thanking and honoring Vietnam veterans and their families.

Annual HCAVC golf outing

NEW LONDON — The Huron County Area Veterans Council held its fourth annual golf

outing Aug. 29 at the Millstone Hills Golf Club in New London.



Thirty teams participated. The golf outing raised money so veterans can attend the Huron County Veteran of the Year banquet free of charge and supports a scholarship to a high school of the veteran's choice.

This team of patriotic ladies takes time for a photo at Hole 3. From left are: Donna Pittenger, Sue Jump, Debbie Balduff and Annette Stroud.



Tips up! Matt Raymond (from left), Brandy Yates, Erica Ward and Robert Ward are all smiles after playing Hole 2.



Pam McCallum plays the Tomato Toss at Hole 17.

Ohio Flags of Honor visits Bellevue



BELLEVUE — The city of Bellevue hosted the Ohio Flags of Honor from Aug. 28 through 30. It was the the third time since 2015 that Bellevue has been a host.

Mayor Kevin Strecker shared his excitement about the traveling memorial, crediting local leaders and veterans such as Kenn Rospert, Don Rospert, Jerry Risner and Jim Alt for taking “the bulls by the horn.”

“Our veterans are very important to us here in Bellevue and it’s quite an honor to have them here. This is the third time — hopefully not the last, but if it is, it’s an even bigger honor for us. We are really, really excited and happy to have (it) here,” said Strecker, who presented a proclamation during the three-day event.

Kenn Rospert, of Bellevue, an Ohio Flags of Honor board member, worked with city officials over the span of about two weeks to bring the traveling memorial to Central Park. Due to Covid-19, Bellevue was the only host city for the three-day event this year. Willard and Norwalk have posted the display in the past.

Currently the Ohio Flags of Honor has the names of the 302 Ohio service members who were killed in action.

Gino and Lisa Zimmer, of Galion, started the Ohio Flags of Honor in May 2004 when they were notified on Memorial Day that their son, Specialist Nicholas E. Zimmer, of the U.S. Army, was killed in Kufa, Iraq. The traveling display is a way to help facilitate fellowship for families, friends, and communities who want to pay tribute to those military personnel who have been killed in action in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the War on Terrorism since Sept. 11, 2001.

Currently the Ohio Flags of Honor



Kaleb Groff drives a stake into the ground during the set-up for the Ohio Flags of Honor at Central Park in Bellevue.

has the names of the 302 Ohio service members who were killed in action.

Gino Zimmer discussed the future of the memorial. “We are talking to some people about taking over the flags to add to their display because I will be stepping down and I really don’t think there is anyone (who) wants to fill my shoes,” he said.



Gino Zimmer is the Ohio Flags of Honor founder and president.

For the Bellevue event, President Donald Trump and the First Lady sent their “warmest greetings to the Ohio Flags of Honor” in a White House letter dated Aug. 28 and signed by the president. Ron Kearney, Marine Corps League commandant for the Elton E. Mackin Detachment 837, presented a \$250 donation.

When asked what the Ohio Flags of Honor means to him, Zimmer said it’s not just a way to connect with his late son spiritually, but also allows him to see other people come together and help them remember military personnel and “the camaraderie, brotherhood and sistership.”

“It just does my soul good,” he said.

Huron County Veteran Service Commission

The Huron County Veteran Service Commission oversees the veteran service office. The commissioners are county residents who have been honorably discharged or are honorably separated. A common pleas court judge appoints members to five-year terms.



Jochen Hardwick



Jerry Huffman



Steve Oblender



Thom Price



Mindy Soisson-Calhoun

Ruck March pays tribute to 9-11

NORWALK — The Team Red White & Blue (RWB) Firelands chapter is brand new to the Huron County area.

Team RWB led a successful ruck march from Bellevue to Norwalk on Sept. 13. Nearly 15 people marched in the 11-mile tribute to the 2,977 victims killed during the 9-11 terrorist attacks and the 5,449 service members killed in action in the subsequent wars.



Most of the ruck march participants were civilians. They included: Laura Manning and Jeri Straub, both of Bellevue; U.S. Army veteran Daniel Clink, of Monroeville;

Matthew Hammersmith and Dillon Perry, also of Monroeville; and Norwalk residents Kaleb Groff, Karen Krupp, Leslie Meyer, Austin Miller, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Matt Raymond, Carla Trautman, Trisha Yourkvitch and Marine and Army veteran Cheryl Fout, who coordinated the event. She is the athletic director for the Firelands chapter of Team RWB.

Similar ruck marches were held across the nation. The participants could carry as much or as little as they wanted.

The group stepped off at 0800 Sept. 13 at VFW Post 1238 in Bellevue. The march followed the Firelands Rails to Trails and ended at American Legion Post 41 in Norwalk. Led by Fout and Clink with the American flag and inspired by Queen's "We Are the Champions," the group arrived at the American Legion at 1138.

At the pavilion, the marchers enjoyed some food. Greeting the participants with applause when they arrived were: Nate Whaley, Team RWB chapter captain and an Army veteran; Mindy Soisson-Calhoun, Team RWB social director and an Army veteran; and Cary Ashby, of the Huron County Veteran Service Office.

Team RWB has a mission of enriching the lives of American veterans "by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity." The group is open to veterans and veteran supporters.

Connected Care coming

The Huron County Veteran Service Office is in the beginning stages of hosting the first Connected Care program in Ohio.

Known as Project Atlas, it will be the 12th program in the nation. Project Atlas will be set up in the HCVSO, Suite C in the county Department of Job and Family Services building, 185 Shady Lane Drive in Norwalk.



Once operational, VA digital technology will allow veterans to schedule mental health and some primary care appointments at the HCVSO instead of traveling to VA medical centers and clinics.

The Office of Connected Care is under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Look for more information in *The Patriot* as it is available.

Vet Center at HCVSO

Vet Center services are available at the Huron County Veteran Service Office.

One counselor focuses on PTSD and mental health while the other addresses couples and marriage counseling. As part of the initial intake process, veterans will need to call 419-668-4150 or stop by the HCVSO, located at Suite C in the Huron County Department of Job and Family Services, 185 Shady Lane Drive in Norwalk. You don't need to share the reason for seeking an appointment.



Vet Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, active-duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components, and their families. Counselors and outreach staff members, many of whom are veterans, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief, and transition after trauma. For more information, go to www.vetcenter.va.gov.

9-11 CEREMONY IN NORWALK

NORWALK — Maple City and the surrounding communities paid tribute to the victims and the brave first responders of the 9-11 terrorist attacks during a ceremony at the Huron County Memorial Park in Norwalk.

Robert Ward, a Huron County veteran service officer, emceed the ceremony, which was both moving and powerful. The audience heard heartfelt stories and insights from: Norwalk Mayor Dave Light, police Chief Mike Conney, police chaplain Joe Binkley, fire Chief Ronald Luttrell II, U.S. Army veteran John Lendrum, the Ohio Army Reserve ambassador; Amie Swope, director of instruction and technology for Norwalk City Schools; and Pastor Jeff Watson, of The Foundation Church.



Veterans, local law enforcement personnel and firefighters lowered the American flags and those in the law enforcement, firefighters and veterans memorials. Invited guests also laid wreaths, which were designed by Cheryl Fout, of the Huron County Veteran Service Office and her mother, Christine Reigel.

Members of the Fraternal Order of Leatherheads

Society (F.O.O.L.S.) were present: Erik Hansberger (Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department), Joe Kelbley (Bloomville), Tom Phillips (Fairfield), and Jamie Starcher (Milan Township Volunteer Fire Department).

To honor the victims of 9-11, Starcher tolled the F.O.O.L.S. memorial bell and a rifle detail fired a three-volley salute. All of the rifle detail members were veterans; five represented law enforcement, firefighters and EMS while two represented the Marine Corps League. Also, Hannah Westphal, of Norwalk, who was active duty in the U.S. Coast Guard, played "Taps." Bagpipers representing the Lucas County Sheriff's Office and Toledo Fire & Rescue performed "Amazing Grace" to conclude the poignant ceremony.

Hardwick sworn in

NORWALK — The Huron County Veteran Service Commission welcomes Jochen Hardwick, of Norwalk, as the representative of the Marine Corps League, Elton E. Mackin Detachment #837.

Hardwick served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1992 through 1996 as a heavy equipment operator. He was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in El Toro, Calif. and at Camp Foster in Okinawa, Japan.

"It's my desire to help veterans. I started out at the American Legion as the sergeant at arms and now I'm the commander. This position (as a commissioner) will help me further help veterans," Hardwick said.



Judge Timothy Cardwell swears in Jochen Hardwick on Sept. 18 in the Huron County Courthouse.



Norwalk residents Gary Felter (right) and Terry Trumpower stand watch Sept. 18 in front of VFW Post 2743 in Norwalk.

Silent Watch raises suicide awareness

NORWALK — Nearly 45 veterans and civilians stood watch Sept. 18 during the 12-hour Silent Watch in front of VFW Post 2743 in Norwalk.

Participants maintained a silent watch for 20 to 30 minutes at a casket draped with an American flag. Veterans wore their uniforms or service caps.

Silent Watch started in Ashland County by Tim Chandler, a retired master sergeant with the U.S. Air Force and Ohio Air National Guard.

The event was done in conjunction with Suicide Awareness Month. The purpose is to bring awareness to veteran suicides.