

THE PATRIOT

Issue 2 of the Huron County Veteran Service Office newsletter • January 2021



Robert Ward (from left), Cheryl Fout, Fred Walton, Steve Oblender, Cary Ashby and Mike Greene stand in front of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus.

National Veterans Museum trip

COLUMBUS — The Huron County Veteran Service Office will make monthly van trips to the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus.

HVCSO employees, drivers and commissioner Steve Oblender took a preliminary trip Oct. 9 in order to preview the museum for future visitors. The group had a guided tour, which included exhibits that cover the journey from enlisting in the armed forces to transforming back into civilian life and

Transportation services

The Huron County Veteran Service Office provides transportation to any medical appointment or other services, 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. Masks are mandatory due to Covid compliance.

**** Go to Page 7 for a column by transportation manager Zac Breitbach. ****

a timeline display of milestones in the history of the United States military.

Also featured in the Great Hall was a temporary exhibit of watercolor portraits by Mary Whyte. The 50 expressive paintings were of veterans in their everyday post-military jobs, everything from police officers to zoo workers. Whyte's research and portraits lasted seven years. Hanging above the paintings were two-sided banners with black-and-white photographs of veterans as they looked while they served in the military and afterward.



Fred Walton (from left), Matt Raymond, Mike Greene, Robert Ward, Cheryl Fout and Steve Oblender start their guided tour of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus.

In the basement there was another temporary exhibit about comedian Bob Hope's USO shows that supported troops during World War II. On the mezzanine level is the ongoing Remembrance Gallery, which has a colorful floor-to-ceiling stained glass installation that reflects military campaign ribbons and a POW/MIA table.

Located along the Scioto River near downtown Columbus, the National Veterans Memorial and Museum seeks to preserve, share, and celebrate the personal experiences of America's veterans.



This is the waterfall behind the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

The Huron County Veteran Service Commission has made a generous donation to the museum for two years' worth of monthly trips in HCVSO vans. Local veterans and a guest must sign up for these outings, which will include a lunch from a Columbus restaurant. Lunches need to be paid for beforehand or participants can bring their own. The group will stop briefly in Mansfield on the way to Columbus and during the return trip.

If you are interested and want to sign up for the next trip, call outreach coordinator Cheryl Fout at 419-668-4150 or email her at outreach@huroncountyvets.com.

Find HCVSO



The Huron County Veteran Service Office has been in existence since 1944.

We are located in Suite C in the back of the building at 185 Shady Lane Drive.

The HCVSO is being 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 wear a mask. 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.

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.

For more information, go to <https://www.vetcenter.va.gov>.

BA Marketing giveaway



Jon Charville, of New London, shows off his goodies from the BA Marketing Solutions giveaway in the fall. He served in the U.S. Navy as a machinist mate from 1963 through 1969. The other giveaway winners were Fred Ramsey and Andy Yoder.

Vet Center in Huron County

Vet Center services are available at the Huron County Veteran Service Office on the first and third Wednesday of each month.

A counselor can address PTSD, mental health, couples, and marriage counseling. Experienced counselors and outreach staff members, many of whom are veterans, are prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief, and transition after trauma.

As part of the initial intake process, veterans will need to call 419-668-4150 or stop by the HCVSO, located in Suite C at the

Marines celebrate 245th birthday



Jochen Hardwick (right), of Norwalk, shakes hands with Ron Kearney, Marine Corps League commandant for the Elton E. Mackin Detachment #837, after being named Marine of the Year.

The Marine Corps League, Elton E. Mackin Detachment #837, celebrated the U.S. Marine Corps' 245th birthday Nov. 7 at American Legion Post 41 in Norwalk.

Jochen Hardwick, of Norwalk, was named Marine of the Year. In September, he was sworn in as a commissioner for the Huron County Veteran Service Commission and recently was re-elected the commander of the American Legion. Hardwick served in the Marines from 1992 through 1996 as a heavy equipment operator.

The oldest Marine in attendance was Ross Baird, 85, of Wakeman, and the youngest was Marvin Wright Jr., 26, of Norwalk. There is a 59-year age difference between the two men.



Top: A color guard stands at attention near the beginning of the ceremony at the Marine Corps Birthday Ball in Norwalk. From left are: Matt Lunsford, Jochen Hardwick, Shawn Daley, Marvin Wright Jr. and Matt Raymond.

Left: Ross Baird was the oldest Marine in attendance at the Marine Corps Birthday Ball in Norwalk. The youngest was Marvin Wright Jr.

HCVSO honors 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony participants

Local veterans and residents who participated in the 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony have been honored for their important contributions.

The Huron County Veteran Service Commission and HCVSO employees recognized local residents over the course of meetings for Norwalk city council, Norwalk City Schools, the Fraternal Order of Leatherheads Society (F.O.O.L.S.), and the commission. Honorees received certificates of appreciation and HCVSO challenge coins.



Christine Reigel (from left), Hannah Westphal, Pastor Jeff Watson and John Lendrum show off the certificates of appreciation they received during the Oct. 7 meeting of the Huron County Veteran Service Commission.



Amie Swope (third from right), Norwalk City Schools director of instruction and technology, is honored for being the 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony keynote speaker during the Oct. 20 school board meeting. Also pictured (from left) are: Cary Ashby, Jerry Huffman, Mindy Soisson-Calhoun, Robert Ward and Matt Raymond.

Message from the Director

By Matt Raymond, director of the Huron County Veteran Service Office

Goodbye 2020! I hope this finds all of you well. I would like to take a few minutes of your time and let you all know what my direction for the Huron County Veteran Service Office looks like for this year.



Matt Raymond

We are making it a priority to put information into the hands of the community and those we are here to help. This newsletter is a compilation of information addressing events and information that is happening around the county. Our goal is to highlight the services we provide and the programs that we are working on.

The addition of a Facebook page and website also have helped us to raise awareness of events in the community that would be of interest to veterans and their families. We post about the new programs and ideas we have to open up the lines of communication across the county. We have learned that it is very difficult to try to guess what the community as a whole wants to know about, even more so

with our veterans. We have added these new tools to embellish our person-to-person availability, and supplement our phone system.

Our newly redesigned website — www.huroncountyvets.com — is the tool that brings our communication, services, programs, and community partners all together in one place.

Input from the community will help us to shape our programs and resources. I continue to hear there is nothing going on for veterans! Please let us know what you would like to do with, do for, or participate in as a veteran, family member, or patriot in this county. We all need to come together for a common goal and not live in fear. We are a very professional resource that is highly trained and well connected with all things veteran. Please let us have the opportunity to work for you.

HCVSO Transportation is frontline of veteran welfare

By Zac Breitbach, transportation manager

The global pandemic has affected so much in today's world, but our transportation department is still dedicated to providing safe and reliable rides for our veterans.

Veterans Affairs has placed a new emphasis on telehealth and remote healthcare that has brought our total rides down, but not to a halt. Let's look at the positives: we've been able to provide more personalized and socially distant rides to our veterans who need transportation. We've modernized our commitment to our riders' health and safety. We've installed seat covers which are easily sterilized and cleaned, as well as dividers in



our larger vans, which keep you safe if there is more than one rider, as well as mandating masks for riders. Our drivers are masked up too and ready to take you where you need to go.



Zac Breitbach

Even with the move to a more telehealth-focused approach from the VA, we still are averaging about 88 rides a month — and that's including the months of April and May, when we had close to no rides at all. Our "other services" runs, which include grocery shopping and other errands, have seen an uptick in the last couple of months compared to 2019; more veterans are taking advantage of our transportation capabilities outside of the realm of healthcare.

Here's some hard data for the more numerically inclined: in 2019, we totaled 2,042 total rides given – 821 to the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland, 330 rides to the Sandusky VA Outpatient Clinic, 103 rides to the Mansfield VA Outpatient Clinic, 61 to the Parma VA Outpatient Clinic, 31 to the Lorain VA Outpatient Clinic, and 87 to other VA outsourced appointments. We took riders to 346 other medical appointments and 246 other services rides, which

include grocery shopping, errands, etc.

As of Dec. 1 2020, we totaled 968 rides — which means our ride totals are about cut in half by the Covid-19 pandemic, and that figure is true for almost every VA Clinic, although we have seen an increase in rides to other VA outsourced facilities. In February and March 2020, we were averaging 125 riders a month; in April and May 2020, we averaged 20 riders a month. That is a drastic decrease, but it's to be expected when every major VA outpatient clinic has effectively closed except for essential procedures. Every month since May 2020 has seen an upward trend however, with our busiest month being October with 115 rides.

Our transportation department always has been a very important feature of our service office. It's our front line — we can communicate with our riders on what issues they are facing and what is important to them, and most importantly, how we can help them. If you need a ride anywhere, give us a call at 419-668-4150. We'd love to take you where you need to go.

Get to know our commissioners

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 was sworn in Sept. 18 as the commissioner for the Marine Corps League. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1992 through 1996 as a heavy equipment operator. He is the commission secretary for 2021.



Jerry Huffman has been a commissioner since 2014 and represents Disabled American Veterans. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1969 through 1975 as a jet engine mechanic. Huffman was the commission president in 2020.



Steve Oblender has represented AmVets on the commission since 2003. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1960 through 1964 as an aircraft mechanic.

Thom Price is in his fifth year as the commissioner representing Veterans of Foreign Wars. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1980 through 1989 as a gunner's mate. Price is the commission president for 2021.



Mindy Soisson-Calhoun recently completed her first full year representing the American Legion. She served in the U.S. Army from 1990 through 1995 as a military police officer and part of her duties were investigations. Soisson-Calhoun is the commission vice-president for 2021.