

Military Order of the Purple Heart

AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776



CHAPTER PURPOSE

To preserve the proud legacy of the Purple Heart Medal.

VOL 14, ISSUE 2

www.citruspurpleheart.org

March-April 2017

2016-17 Officers

- Cdr: Richard "Bud" Allen**
- Sr. Vice Cdr: Richard Hunt**
- Jr. Vice Cdr: Chuck Kanehl**
- Adjutant: Curt Ebitz**
- Finance Off: Joe McClister**
- Judge Adv: Frank Hayes**
- Exec Cmte man: Ray Michael**
- Alt Cmte man: Mike Schlaudraff**
- Sgt-at-Arms: Rick Allen**
- Trustee 3-yrs: Andy Viola**
- Trustee 2-yrs: Zig Laska**
- Trustee 1-yr: Lee Helscel**
- Service Off: Joe McClister**
- Welfare Off: Gary Bain**
- Historian: Curt Ebitz**
- Chaplain: Mike Nemesh**
- Americanism Off: William Korber**



Bimonthly Meeting

March's bimonthly meeting is the year's most important meeting. Nomination and election of officers for 2017-18, selection of delegates for the Department of Florida state convention and submission of annual reports required by MOPH U.S.A. will be on the agenda. **All members, especially chapter officers, are urged to make every effort to attend.** Any member desiring to place an item on the agenda should e-mail Adjutant Ebitz at info@citruspurpleheart.org or call (352) 382-3847.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, Mar. 21, 1:00 p.m.

Citrus County Builders Association, Lecanto.

Member News

A warm welcome is extended to the chapter's six newest life members.



William Birdson of Crawfordville is an Army veteran of Vietnam.

Christopher Boreland of Spring Hill is a Marine Corps veteran who served in Iraq and was wounded in Ramadi two weeks before his 19th birthday.

Eduardo Cabral of Acushnet, MA is a Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam. **James Frank** is a Sugarmill Woods resident who served in Vietnam with the Army. **Christopher Gomes** of East Freetown, MA served with the Marine Corps in Vietnam. **Angel Otero**, who resides in Spring Hill, served with the Marine Corps in Vietnam.

The Patriots of Chapter 776 salute Patriot **Richard Hunt** for another outstanding effort
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Annual 50/50 Drawing

The Dept. of Florida's annual 50/50 drawing will be held June 10 during the state convention in Jacksonville. One need not be present to win. Chapter members are encouraged to make and/or solicit 50/50 ticket donations. If each chapter member makes a \$10 donation, the chapter would easily earn the Dept's cash award as the top fundraiser. **Tickets are \$1 for 1, \$5 for 6 and \$10 for 12 and are available at the chapter's March 21 bimonthly meeting or by contacting Cdr. Allen at 352-270-8436 or email at budsterfd@tampabay.rr.com.** You may win a substantial cash prize while helping our chapter, which receives 5% of each donation. Chapter 776 has been the Dept's top 50/50 fundraiser for nine consecutive years. Turn in your donations and tickets at the May 16 bimonthly meeting or mail to Cdr. Bud Allen, 5019 N. Perry Dr., Beverly Hills, FL 34465 to arrive no later than May 26.

Chapter Activities Completed

January 8. Sr. Vice Cdr. Hunt presented a "Heartstrings for Heroes" guitar to USMC veteran and Purple Heart recipient Tiffany Hudgem who was wounded in action in Afghanistan.

January 14. Chapter 776/Unit 776 members Bud & JoAnn Allen, Rick & Carol Allen, Fred & Linda Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Richard & Mickey Hunt, Joe McClister & Annie Fair, Mike & Gail Nemesh, and Mike & Linda Schlaudraff, plus honorary member Barbara Mills represented the chapter at the Sergeant Dennis J. Flanagan 11th Annual Sports/Celebrity Auction Dinner Dance. During the event, the Sgt. Dennis J. Flanagan Foundation presented Chapter 776 with \$700 for its scholarship fund. Annie Fair won the 50/50 drawing of \$415.

February 10. Chapter members and guests attending the



Unit 776 Ladies are all smiles at the conclusion of the very successful annual "Real" Military Card Party. Left: Sandy Cross, Nancy Laska, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Mickey Hunt, Carol Hayes, Vikki Pietras (Unit President), Pat Michael, Shirley Platt, Annie Fair and Linda Schlaudraff.

appreciation luncheon for Veterans in the Classroom participants hosted by Citrus County Superintendent of Schools Sandra "Sam" Himmel were Cdr. Bud Allen, John Carlson, Curt Ebitz, Sue Guard, Frank Hayes, Richard Hunt, Chuck & Mickie Kanehl, Andy & Eileen Viola and Mike Schlaudraff. Chapter 776 had the largest Veterans in the Classroom contingent with 11 members participating. Other chapter classroom participants were Lee Helscel, Bob Hummel, Mark Riden.

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February 10. Chapter 776/Unit 776 once again had the largest contingent at the 22d Annual Veterans Dinner & Program hosted by Inverness Primary School. Attending were Cdr. Bud Allen, Rick & Carol Allen, Philip & Shirley Bailie, Glenn & Mary Beaulieu, Sandy Cross, Fred & Linda Daniels, Curt Ebitz, Richard & Mickey Hunt, Zig & Nancy Laska, Ray & Pat Michael, Mike Schlaudraff, and honorary member Barb Mills who donated the cupcakes for the event.

February 11. Unit 776 held its annual "Real" Military Card Party fundraiser at VFW Post 10087, Beverly Hills. Unit 776 members assisting in the planning and execution of the event were Sandy Cross, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Sue Guard, Carol Hayes, Nancy Laska, Mickey Hunt, Pat Michael, Charlotte Mixon, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt and Linda Schlaudraff. Carol Allen made the directional signs and Rick the registration stands for the party.

February 14. Cdr. Allen, Sr. Vice Cdr. Hunt and Adj. Ebitz joined with CCVF board members to present Proud Supporter Awards to Citrus County Tax Collector staff members in recognition of their superb support of the Chapter 776/Citrus County Tax Collector annual fundraising partnership for the benefit of the CCVF.

February 18. Chapter 776 hosted its Twelfth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. The ceremony was attended by approximately 450 persons with 14 Fallen Hero family members in attendance. Also attending were Digna Alvarez, Regional Director for U.S. Senator Bill Nelson; Victoria White, Community Affairs Associate for U.S. Representative Daniel Webster; past State Senator Charlie Dean; and dozens of public officials and community/veteran leaders. Special guests were Dept. of Florida LAMOPH President Gail Nemesh, Dept. of Florida Sgt of Arms Mike Nemesh and Chapter 705 Patriots Earl McMillan & Mel Cunningham. (See page 4).

February 21. Unit 776 Ladies presented the Homosassa Walmart with a plaque in appreciation of its donation to the unit's "Real" Military Card Party. Participating in the presentation were Sandy Cross, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Laska, Pat Michael, Charlotte Mixon, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt and Linda Schlaudraff.

February 22. During a ceremony at VFW Post 4864, Citrus Springs, Cdr. Allen and Sr. Vice Cdr. Hunt presented a Purple Heart to the family members of a WW II sailor who lost his life when his ship was torpedoed.

Member

as the project officer and master of ceremonies for the chapter's Twelfth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. Thanks to his passionate dedication to honoring our fallen and wounded warriors, the chapter's annual Purple Heart ceremony continues to be our chapter's signature activity and Citrus County's premier veterans' event.

Special thanks are especially in order for **Paul & Jackie Stevio** for generously donating their musical talents and sound system in support of the Twelfth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. Without their faithful support, there would be no annual ceremony. Also, thanks are extended to Cdr. **Bud Allen** and Patriots **Curt Ebitz**, **Lee Helscel** and **Ernie Tucker** for their active participation in this year's ceremony and to Sgt of Arms **Rick Allen** for his logistics support.

Congratulations to Associate Member **Savannah Weaver** on being selected as the West Citrus Elks, Lodge 2693 December 2016 "Student of the Month." An outstanding student in the classroom and on the athletic field, we are proud of you Savannah!

Mike Nemesh, who had triple bypass surgery 10 years ago, had a stent successfully placed on January 12. Charter Member "**Bill**" **Clutter** has been in and out of the hospital with lung infections the past few months and also underwent carotid artery surgery. In January, **Rick Allen** had successful surgery for an abdominal aneurysm and also suffered a minor stroke with no permanent after effects. **Curt Ebitz** underwent micro-decompression lumbar-spine surgery on March 6.

Barbara Bradshaw has been battling shingles since the last week of January and is slowly on the mend. **Bonnie Korber** had a heart catheterization in February with a follow up evaluation for a possible leaking heart valve. **Annie Fair** suffered a bout of food poisoning after dining at a popular Inverness restaurant. **Patty Stevens** no longer has to be on oxygen 24/7 after removal of a sinus nodule, repair of a septal defect and pulmonary rehabilitation.

Jeane Weddle advised that the remains of her husband, **Deported Patriot Rudy Weddle**, will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA, at 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 6. Attendees are to enter the cemetery's main gate, provide the gate guard the case number (# 241513) and meet at the administration building no later than 12 noon.

Kudos to the **Ladies of Unit 776** for another highly successful "Real" Military Card Party fundraiser on February 11. The event had 112 players. Also, given the huge success of its Gold Star Tea for survivors of service members killed in action, the Ladies will host another Gold Star Tea on October 7.



Chapter 776 and the Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF) jointly recognized the Citrus County Tax Collectors Office's top fundraisers for the 2016 fall campaign that raised \$10,890.86 for the benefit of the CCVF.

Future

April 21, 6:00 p.m. CCBA's 22d Annual Family Fishing Tournament Captain's Dinner.

April 22-23. CCBA's 22d Annual Family Fishing Tournament for chapter members participating in the tournament as guests of fishing boat captains.

May 16, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Builders Assn., Lecanto.

May 20, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Annual Armed Forces Day picnic and installation of officers, Bicentennial Park pavilion, Crystal River.

June 7-10. Dept. of Florida 72d Annual State Convention, Jacksonville Marriott Hotel, Jacksonville.

From the Commander

Patriots,

First off, let me thank all our Patriots who took the time and made the effort to help us set up and also attend our annual Purple Heart Ceremony! It was one of the best ever, if not the best, and was extremely well attended by not only Gold Star families, but also by veterans, county and state dignitaries, local JROTC students, Lecanto High School International Baccalaureate students, general public and many combat wounded vets. Amazing compliments flowed from so many folks that it should make us proud for all we do!

Our guest speaker Chaplain (Lt Col.) Pugsley, USAF, was outstanding and hit it out of the park with her on point statements. Her remarks and personal experiences as a flight evacuation nurse during the Vietnam War echoed the thoughts and feelings of all veterans - especially Vietnam combat wounded vets. She walked the walk and is certainly qualified to talk the talk. I think that's what resonates with all of us. We thank her so much for taking the time to be with us!

We ambushed Rear Admiral Carlton "Mac" McLeod, USN, Retired, with a lifetime achievement award of a bronze eagle statue. He was blown away and never expected anything like that! Mac is 86 years old and has been and continues to be a driving force as the president of the Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF), our chapter's principal charity, and as a strong supporter of all things veteran related in the community. This award couldn't have been given to a nicer or more deserving guy. Congrats Admiral Mac!

We also ambushed the King of ambushers, Richard Hunt, by presenting him with a special Quilt of Valor. We got him good. He never saw it coming. It's good to be the King!!

We have the Citrus County Builders' Association (CCBA) Annual Family Fishing Tournament coming up the weekend of April 22-23. Keep an eye on your email for details and let either Richard Hunt or Lee Helscel know if you want to fish courtesy of a participating boat captain.

Also, don't forget the chapter's annual Armed Forces Day picnic on May 20 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Bicentennial Park, Crystal River. Chapter provides burgers and dogs and cold drinks. Chapter ladies provide a delicious potpourri of sides and desserts. During the picnic we present the chapter's scholarship grant to a deserving student and install chapter officers for 2017-18. Bring the family; it's a good time with great food and fellowship. What better reasons to attend!

Our next meeting is March 21 at 1 p.m. at the CCBA building in Lecanto on C.R. 491. Come to find out the happenings, help formalize our plans and direction, and socialize with your fellow Patriots! And, don't forget your 50/50 raffle tickets for the drawing at the Department of Florida State Convention, June 7-10.

Moving forward in MOPH!

"Bud"



Chapter 776 presented Troy Allen, owner and operator of USA Credit Bureau in Homosassa, with a Proud Supporter Banner in appreciation of the generous use of his conference room for the chapter's executive meetings. Left: Mike Schlau-draff, Ray Michael, Richard Hunt, Stacey Allen, Troy Allen, Joe McClister, Rick Allen and Curt Ebitz. Not shown: Cdr. Bud Allen.



Chapter 776 Patriots and Unit 776 Ladies attending the Inverness Primary School 22d Annual Veterans Dinner & Program.



Inverness Primary School students sing a patriotic tribute to the veterans and their guests attending the school's 22d Annual Veterans Dinner and Program.



Guest Speaker Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Linda Pugsley's inspirational message and personal experiences as an Air Force flight evacuation nurse during the Vietnam War elicited tears, laughter and reflection from the hundreds of persons in attendance.

Twelfth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony

Chapter 776's Twelfth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony was an unparalleled success thanks to the dedicated efforts of project officer and master of ceremonies Patriot Richard Hunt, inspirational guest speaker Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Linda Pugsley and vocalists Paul & Jackie Stevio and Eve Allen. The patriotic tribute was dedicated to the memory of Chapter 776 Departed Patriot Rudy Weddle and honored those who fell or were wounded in combat. Of refreshing note was the attendance of JROTC cadets and Lecanto High School International Baccalaureate (IB) students.



Approximately 450 people filled the Citrus County Fairgrounds Auditorium to pay tribute to our county's Fallen Heroes and combat wounded veterans.



Rear Admiral Carlton "Mac" McLeod, USN, Retired was "ambushed" by Chapter 776 Patriots with a Lifetime Achievement Award during the chapter's Twelfth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony in recognition of his 35 years of selfless and faithful service to Citrus County's veterans community and the community at-large.



Family members of Citrus County Fallen Hero PFC Michael C. Mahr, U.S. Army. Left: James Albury, father; Kim Albury, mother; Vicki Chaffee, grandmother; Davis Chaffee, grandfather.

Family members of Citrus County Fallen Heroes CWO Aaron A Weaver, U.S. Army & SGT Dennis J. Flanagan, U.S. Army. Left: Kirsten Weaver, sister; Mike Weaver, father; Dennis Flanagan, father; Pat Flanagan, mother.



Master of Ceremonies Hunt was also "ambushed" during the Purple Heart Ceremony with the presentation of a Quilt of Valor crafted by U.S. Air Force veteran Allison Frentress.

