

Military Order of the Purple Heart

AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776



CHAPTER PURPOSE

To preserve the proud legacy of the Purple Heart Medal.

VOL 15, ISSUE 2

www.citruspurpleheart.org

March-April 2018

2017-18 Officers

Cdr: Richard "Bud" Allen
Sr. Vice Cdr: Chuck Kanehl
Jr. Vice Cdr: Chris Boreland
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: Glenn Beaulieu
Trustee 2-yrs: Andy Viola
Trustee 1-yr: Zig Laska
Service Off: Joe McClister
Welfare Off: Gary Bain
Historian: Curt Ebitz
Chaplain: Mike Nemesh
Americanism Off: William Korber

Chapter Activities Completed

January 13. Chapter 776/Unit 776 members Bud Allen, Rick Allen, Fred & Linda Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Richard & Mickey Hunt, Joe McClister, and Mike & Linda Schlaudraff, plus honorary member Barbara Mills represented the chapter at the Sergeant Dennis J. Flanagan 12th Annual Sports/Celebrity Auction Dinner Dance. During the event, Chapter 776 was presented \$700 for its scholarship fund.

January 20. The Chapter 776/Unit 776 contingent at the City of Inverness unveiling of its Military Memorial was the largest with the following members attending: Cdr. Bud Allen; Rick Allen; Glenn Beaulieu; Sandy Cross; Fred & Linda Daniels; Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz; JB Haskins; Richard & Mickey Hunt; Ray & Pat Michael; Barbara Mills; Shirley Platt; and Mike & Linda Schlaudraff.

Bimonthly Meeting



March's bimonthly meeting is the year's most important meeting. Nomination and election of officers for 2018-19, delegates for the Department of Florida state convention and submission of MOPH annual reports 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. 20, 1:00 p.m.

Citrus County Builders Association, Lecanto.

Annual 50/50 Drawing

In addition to the Dept. of Florida's annual 50/50 drawing, there will be a cash drawing during this year's state convention in Jacksonville. 50/50 drawing will be June 1; cash drawing June 2. **One need not be present to win.** Chapter members are encouraged to make and/or solicit 50/50 and/or cash drawing ticket donations. If each chapter member makes or solicits a \$10 donation, the chapter would easily earn the Dept's cash award as the top fundraiser for the 11th straight year. **50/50 tickets and cash drawing tickets are \$1 for 1, \$5 for 6. Cash prizes are \$1,000, \$500 & \$250. Tickets can be obtained at the chapter's March 20 bimonthly meeting or by contacting Cdr. Allen at 352-270-8436 or emailing budsterfd@tampabay.rr.com.** Win a cash prize while helping our chapter, which receives a percentage of each donation. Turn in your donation tickets at the May 15 meeting or mail to Cdr. Bud Allen, 5019 N. Perry Dr., Beverly Hills, FL 34465 to arrive no later than May 21.

Member News



A warm welcome is extended to the chapter's two newest life members. **John Quinn** of Hernando is an Army veteran of Vietnam who served as an advisor with the Military Advisory Group Vietnam (MACV) in 1965 until he was seriously wounded. **Larry Stantmeyer**, a Sugarmill Woods resident, is An Army veteran of Vietnam who served with the 4th Infantry Division 1967-69.

The Patriots of Chapter 776 salute Patriot **Richard Hunt** for another outstanding job as the project officer and master of ceremonies of the Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. Thanks to his passionate dedication to honoring our fallen and wounded warriors, the ceremony continues to be our chapter's signature activity and Citrus County's premier veterans' event.

Member continued, page 2



Unit 776 MOPHA members hosted their 6th annual "Real" Military Card Party at the National Guard Armory in Crystal River for the first time. Unit volunteers from left; Annie Fair, Linda Schlaudraff, Pat Michael, Shirley Platt, Vikki Pietras, Sue Guard, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Sandy Cross, Nancy Laska and Mickey Hunt. It was a very successful event, raising money for local Citrus County veterans.

January 25. Representing Chapter 776 at the Citrus County Veterans Service Office mural ribbon cutting ceremony were Cdr. Bud Allen, JB Haskins, Will Korber and Joe McClister.

January 26. Unit 776 Ladies presented the "Breastplate of Courage," which is dedicated to women who have or had breast cancer and served in the military, to the Robert Boissoneault Oncology Institute (RBOI). Unit members participating in the presentation were Vikki Pietras, Unit President; *Completed continued, page 2.*

Completed

Carol Allen, designer of the "Breastplate of Courage;" Mari-Elain Ebitz, Unit Treasurer and former RBOI patient; Sandy Cross and Pat Michael.

February 6. Cdr. Allen, Patriots Curt Ebitz, Joe McClister, Mike Schlaudraff, Andy Viola and honorary member Barb Mills joined CCFV President Admiral Mac McLeod 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 CCFV.

February 12. Chapter members and guests attending the appreciation luncheon for Veterans in the Classroom participants hosted by Citrus County Superintendent of Schools Sandra "Sam" Himmel were Cdr. Bud Allen, Chris Boreland, John Carlson, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Frank & Carol Hayes, Richard Hunt, Chuck & Mickie Kanehl, Andy & Eileen Viola, Mark & Louise Riden and Mike & Linda Schlaudraff.

February 15. Chapter 776/Unit 776 once again had the largest contingent at the 23d Annual Veterans Dinner & Program hosted by Inverness Primary School. Attending were Cdr. Bud & JoAnn Allen, Rick & Carol Allen, Robert Bendle, Sandy Cross, Fred & Linda Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Richard & Mickey Hunt, Zig & Nancy Laska, Will & Bonnie Korber, Joe McClister & Ann Fair, Shirley Platt, Mike & Julie Ujwari, Phil & Marylou Young and honorary member Barb Mills who donated the cupcakes for the event.

February 16. Chapter 776/Unit 776 members lending a helping hand in setting up for the chapter's Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony were Cdr. Bud Allen, Rick Allen, Glenn Beaulieu, Sandy Cross, Curt Ebitz, Richard Hunt, Mike King, Will Korber, Joe McClister & Ann Fair, Mike & Linda Schlaudraff and Phil & Marylou Young.

February 16. Chapter 776 hosted its Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. The ceremony was attended by over 450 persons with 14 Fallen Hero family members, dozens of public officials and community leaders, plus a strong Lecanto High School Army JROTC and International Baccalaureate Program contingent (See page 4).

March 3. Unit 776 held its annual "Real" Military Card Party fundraiser at National Guard Armory in Crystal River. Unit 776 members assisting in the planning and execution of the event were Sandy Cross, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Sue Guard, Nancy Laska, Mickey Hunt, Pat Michael, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt and Linda Schlaudraff.

Member

Special thanks are especially in order for **Paul & Jackie Stevio** for generously donating their musical talents and sound system in support of the Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. Without their faithful support, there would be no annual ceremony. Also, thanks are extended to Cdr. **Bud Allen**, Adjutant **Curt Ebitz**, Sgt. of Arms **Rick Allen** and Associate Members **Troy Allen & Eve Allen** for their participation.

Mike Nemesh, was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer in early January. A tough, airborne soldier, Mike and his VA doctors have drawn up a battle plan to combat the cancer. Our thoughts and prayers are offered to Mike and his wife Gail as they navigate this difficult period.

World War II veteran and Chapter 776 charter member **Harold Layman** fell the first week of January and was hospitalized at Citrus Memorial Hospital. Experiencing balance and memory issues, Harold is now a resident of Diamond Ridge Health & Rehabilitation Center 2730 W. Marc Knighton Ct., Lecanto 34461. Unit 776 Lady **Anita Haskins**, wife of Past Chapter 776 Commander JB Haskins, is also at Diamond Ridge Health & Rehabilitation Center.

It was great to see Past Chapter 776 Commander **Ray Michael** up and about at the dedication of the City of Inverness Military Memorial in January and the Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony in February. Get well soon---you are missed!

Korean War Marine Corps veteran and Chapter 776 Charter Member **Arvid "AW" Swanson** fell the second week of January and is back home living independently, following a lengthy rehabilitation period.

Patriot **Bob Gibson** is doing fine after being hospitalized and treated for an irregular heartbeat in January.

Kudos to **Unit 776 Auxiliary members** for another highly successful "Real" Military Card Party fundraiser on March 3.



Rear Admiral (Ret) Carlton "Mac" McLeod, Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF) President and members of Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 Military Order of the Purple Heart recognized the top fundraisers for the Citrus County Tax Collector Office's recent fundraising campaign that raised \$8,197.41 for the benefit of the CCFV.

March 3. Patriot Zig Laska was presented an autographed guitar by "Heartstrings for Heroes." Attending the presentation were Bud & JoAnn Allen, Glenn & Mary Beaulieu, Nancy Laska, Richard & Mickey Hunt.

Future

April 8, 9 a.m. Jeep Trail Ride & Cookout hosted by Citrus County Jeepers. Members are requested to email info@citruspurpleheart.org with number and names of attending family members or guests.

April 27, 6:00 p.m. CCBA's 23d Annual Family Fishing Tournament Captain's Dinner.

April 28-29. CCBA's 23d Annual Family Fishing Tournament for chapter members participating in the tournament as guests of fishing boat captains.

May 19, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Annual Armed Forces Day picnic, Bicentennial Park Pavilion, Crystal River.

May 22, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Builders Assn., Lecanto.

May 31 - June 3. Dept. of Florida 73d Annual State Convention, Jacksonville Marriott Hotel, Jacksonville.

June 14, 7:00 p.m. Purple Heart City of Inverness Flag Day ceremony, Inverness Government Center.

From the Commander

Patriots,

You are AWESOME! We have had four events recently where the Chapter and MOPHA were represented in force, so gratifying!!

At the dedication of the new veteran's monument in Inverness we were represented by a number of members and ladies. It reminds me of what Barb Mills once said to me "Love my Purple people" and it is a moniker we now proudly display at every event possible with our Purple Heart shirts and ball caps!

We followed that with a full table of members at the Superintendent of Schools luncheon for veterans who participated in the Veterans in the Classroom program last fall. Superintendent "Sam" Himmel likes to recognize all who participate in the endeavor and it's nice to see the school district's support.

Next, we had the Inverness Primary School Veterans Appreciation Dinner & Program where we had more than 20 Patriots and MOPHA members attending---a very strong showing! The elementary students did a terrific job of saying "Thank you" to the veterans with songs and letters. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the JROTC members who did an outstanding job of serving and cleaning up, best group ever. Honorary member Barb Mills provided her flag of cupcakes for dessert. They were so good!

Our most recent event was our annual Purple Heart Ceremony at the Citrus County Auditorium with nearly 500 attendees! We had some new Gold Star families in attendance and we were able to recognize their loved ones for their devoted service. Always a tough time, but an honor to show our respect to these families and recognize our Patriots that gave all! We had an opportunity to ambush a Marine vet with a Quilt of Valor, which brought tears to this Korean War veteran's eyes; it's such a privilege to surprise and honor a very deserving veteran!

The best ambush during the ceremony was to recognize and honor one of our own for his outstanding contributions to not only the Chapter, but also the Dept. of Florida and many other groups and organizations around the state. Adjutant Curt Ebitz was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for all he has done for veterans and organizations in Florida for years. The Founder and Charter member of Chapter 776, Curt recognized a need to educate the public on what the Purple Heart stands for and to promote the proud legacy of this medal! He has worked tirelessly in every aspect of the chapter and continues to keep us all in line and to follow procedure and protocol! He is truly a leader among leaders and even if we don't agree on everything, we find common ground for the good of all.

It is with great gratitude that we bestowed a bronze eagle statue celebrating his many achievements! He along with his stalwart companion Mari Elain, devote much time to the chapter's newsletter that keeps all members informed of activities, events and all chapter news w/photos!! If you didn't attend shame on you, as the program was outstanding! Make plans to definitely be there next year. I promise you won't regret it.

Next meeting is March 20, at the CCBA building Lecanto at 1 p.m. Come give us an hour and a half of your time and we'll get you up to speed on what's going on! Besides, we rely on your input to give us direction and solidify our purpose! It takes more than a squadron to run the whole Army, come participate!

Always moving forward,
CMDR "Bud"



Chapter 776 recently learned of the death of **Patriot Dean Vanlandingham**, formerly of Eustis, FL, who died in Mount Dora, FL on August 4, 2017, at the age of 96. A U.S. Army veteran of World War II, he volunteered for the infantry after surviving a crash while in flight school. He was in the second wave that stormed Utah Beach at Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He then fought his way across France with Patton's Third Army and was on the German border when the Battle of the Bulge was launched, during which time he was badly wounded in an artillery attack. He was hospitalized for the remainder of the war and discharged in the summer of 1945 with two Purple Hearts, the Bronze and Silver Stars.

Following the war, Patriot Vanlandingham earned a Master's Degree in Engineering at Western Michigan University. After marrying his beloved wife, Mary, he took a teaching job and rose to the position of school principal, becoming a recognized educational leader for individualized student learning and measuring learning gains. He and Mary relocated from Michigan to Mt. Dora, FL in the early 1960s where he served on the Mt. Dora City Council, including two years as Council President. After retiring in the 1980s, he and Mary resided on Lake Joanna in Eustis, FL for many years. After Mary passed away in 2006, he downsized his home a couple of times with his last residence during the past six years being the VFW Veteran's Village in Ft. McCoy, FL. Patriot Vanlandingham is survived by his sons Gary and Dale, daughter Ann, two grandchildren and one great grand-daughter.



Unit 776 members at their annual fundraiser, working hard at the registration desk. This was the first year it was at the National Guard Armory. From left; Linda Schlaudraff, Mickey Hunt, Mari-Elain Ebitz and Annie Fair.

Chapter 776/ Unit 776 members enjoying the 23d Annual Veterans Dinner & Program at Inverness Primary School.



Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony

Chapter 776's Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony was an unparalleled success thanks to the dedicated efforts of project officer and master of ceremonies Patriot Richard Hunt. The ceremony, in addition to honoring our fallen and wounded, was dedicated to the memory of Chapter 776 Departed Patriot John Auble, a charter member who was wounded twice during the Battle of Iwo Jima. Among the close to 500 attendees was a strong contingent of Lecanto High School International Baccalaureate (IB) and JROTC students. As always, Paul & Jackie Stevio were in exceptional voice with their songs that touched all of our emotions.



Ninety-six years young Purple Heart recipient and WW II veteran, Mel Cunningham, of Chapter 705 traveled from Zephyrhills, FL to be a part of Chapter 776's Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony.

Chapter 776 Sr. Vice Commander Chuck Kanehl with wife Mickie.



Unit 776 President Vikki Pietras and Treasurer Mari-Elain Ebitz greeted ceremony attendees with beaming smiles.



Chapter 776 Patriots Mike Schlaudraff and Phil Young chat before the annual ceremony. Phil is a "snowbird" from Vermont.



Jackie Stevio and her three vocal students performed a very moving a capella performance of the National Anthem to kick off the chapter's Thirteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony. Cdr Bud Allen's granddaughter is to left.

Lecanto High School's International Baccalaureate and Army JROTC students had sizeable contingents at the chapter's annual Purple Heart Ceremony.



Chapter 776 presented the family of Fallen Hero SSG Michael W. Schafer with a memorial plaque honoring his supreme sacrifice.



Attending the ceremony were the loved ones of Fallen Hero Sergeant Christopher J. Taylor, U.S. Army.



A memorial plague honoring the supreme sacrifice of Fallen Hero SFC Charles L. Adkins, U.S. Army, was presented to his loved ones.



Marine Corps League SSG Ted Archambault Detachment member Walt Clevenger fights back the tears as he was presented a Quilt of Valor in recognition of his lifelong commitment to fellow veterans. (Sandy Cross, Unit 776, looks on.)

