



AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776



Chapter Purpose - To preserve the proud legacy of the Purple Heart

2025-26 Officers

Cdr: Richard Hunt
Sr. Vice Cdr: Gary Bain
Jr. Vice Cdr: Jerry Frease
Finance Off: Joe McClister
Judge Adv: Mike Krebs
Sgt-at-Arms: Robert Gibson
Trustee 2-yrs: Nate Love
Trustee 1-yr: Bill Merryman
Adjutant: Curt Ebitz
Service Off: Joe McClister
Welfare Off: Mickey Hunt
Historian: Curt Ebitz
Chaplain: Troy Allen
Americanism Off: Will Korber

Chapter Activities

Completed

July 23. A tremendous turnout of 12 ladies attended the Associate ladies' monthly lunch get together at Outback in Inverness. Enjoying the lunch and fellowship were Carol Allen & daughter Kay, JoAnn Allen, Sandy Cross, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Carol Hayes, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Pat Michaels, and Vikki Pietras. **All Associate ladies and Patriot spouses are welcome to join them for lunch. Call Kim at 352-419-4911.**

July 29. The Citrus County Board of County Commissioners presented a Proclamation to Chapter 776 designating August 7 as Purple Heart Recognition Day in Citrus County. Joining Cdr. Richard Hunt were Patriots Curt Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Chuck Kanehl, Will Korber, Joe McClister, Art & Penny Tharp and Honorary Member Darrick Buettner.

July 29. The Hernando County Board of County Commissioners issued a

Next Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 16, 2025, 1 p.m.

Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, Crystal River.

Bimonthly Meeting

The Chapter's bimonthly general membership meetings are held the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May and July. **The NEW meeting location is the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, 915 N. Suncoast Blvd. (U.S. 19), Crystal River, which is located on the east side of the highway approximately 1/4 mile north of the Crystal River Airport.** Any member desiring to place an item on the agenda should e-mail Adjutant Ebitz at info@citruspurpleheart.org or call 352-382-3847.

Completed

Proclamation recognizing August 7 as "Purple Heart Day" in Hernando County.

July 31. Attending the Chapter's fellowship breakfast at the Central Café in Inverness were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Curt Ebitz, Joe McClister and Colby Dawson, aide to Congressman Gus Bilirakis. **All Chapter Patriots are invited. If interested, email Patriot Jerry Frease at Frease@aol.com.**

August 9. Approximately 100 Chapter 776 Patriots, Associates, Gold Star family members and guests attended a delicious breakfast hosted by the Inverness Elks, Lodge No. 2522 commemorating the 243rd anniversary of the Purple Heart. Honored guest was Gold Star widow Nancy Weaver. Among the dignitaries attending were State Representative J.J. Grow, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army Peter Tan, Citrus County Commissioners Rebecca Bays, Holly Davis & Diana Finegan, Citrus County Supervisor of Elections Maureen Baird, Citrus County

Property Appraiser Cregg Dalton and

Chapter Activities Continued page 2

Member News

It is with great sadness to report the passing of Chapter 776 Patriot **John Carlson** on March 16, which was recently learned.

Heartfelt prayers and encouragement are extended to Patriot **Claude Gregoire** who announced at the Chapter's July bimonthly meeting that he is battling cancer that has metastasized. Encouragements may be sent to Claude at: *7084 Centerwood Ave., Spring Hill, FL 34606.*

Well-deserved congratulations to Associate **Vikki Pietras** on her selection as the Florida Association Senior Programs Volunteer of the Year for her volunteer work with Citrus County's The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The award was presented to her on August 5 during the Association's annual conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Orlando. Vikki was also this year's Chapter 776 Volunteer of the Year and the MOPH Department of Florida Jonas Jacobsen Volunteer of the Year.

A well-earned salute to Patriot **Bob Gibson** on receiving Chapter 776's Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his exemplary dedication and conspicuous service as the Chapter 776 Sergeant of Arms.

A Special Recognition Award was presented to Patriot **Claude Gregoire** by Cdr. Richard Hunt in appreciation of his dedicated and enthusiastic participation and exemplary spirit of cooperation in support of Chapter 776 activities.

Chapter 776 extends its sincere gratitude to the **Inverness Elks Lodge No. 2522** for hosting the annual Purple Heart anniversary breakfast for the second year in a row. Special thanks to Exalted Ruler Rick Barmes and the kitchen staff and servers who made it a very special event.

Chapter 776's deep appreciation is extended to **Susan Adams** and the **West Citrus Elks Lodge 2693** ladies

Member News Continued page 2



Completed continued

Superintendent of Schools Scott Hebert.

August 14. Cdr. Richard Hunt, joined by Colby Dawson, aide to Congressman Dawson, visited Patriot Claude Gregoire at his home and presented a Special Recognition Award in recognition of his dedicated support of the Chapter.

Future

September 16, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, Crystal River.

October 27 - November 11. Veterans Appreciation Week. See details page 2.

December 7, 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Chapter 776 Pearl Harbor Dinner & Christmas Social, Citrus National Country Club.

Member News continued

who crafted the Quilts of Valor that were presented to Chapter 776 Patriots **Jerry Frease, Lee Helscel, Mike Krebs, Bill Merryman, and Paul St. Martin.**

An extremely appreciative thank you to the **Citrus County Building Alliance** for its very generous \$5,000 donation to Chapter 776 as the tournament's charitable partner from a portion of its 30th Annual Family Fishing Tournament proceeds. Donations from the proceeds of the tournament since 2012 total \$58,644.

A congratulatory salute to Honorary Life Member **Janice Warren** and her **Tax Collector Office Staff** on another highly successful fundraising campaign that raised **\$13,916.02** during its spring fundraising campaign for the benefit of the Citrus County Veterans Foundation, Chapter 776's principal charity.

Get well wishes for a full recovery are sent to Chapter 776 Honorary Member **Barbara Mills** who underwent back surgery in late July at Shands Hospital in Gainesville.

Patriot **Robert Hummel**, who was hospitalized in early August at HCA Florida Citrus Hospital, Inverness, is now recovering at home.

See Member News part 2

Member News part 2

Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz are slowly recovering from their first bout of Covid that was contracted during their August river cruise in Europe.

From the Commander

Hello to all!

The Chapter's meeting location move from the Citrus County Building Alliance in Lecanto to the Citrus Chamber of Commerce in Crystal River is working out smoothly and well. Our first Chapter meeting at the Chamber in July was well attended. The new meeting location is conducive to meetings with better acoustics that make it easier for our "artillery ears" to hear.

All is on track for the next CCBA Fishing Tournament, which will be held April 24 and 25 of next year. This is our largest fundraiser done in partnership with the Citrus County Building Alliance/Citrus County Chamber of Commerce. We will be looking for Purple Heart recipients to go out fishing with professional Captains for free, again. If interested, contact me at 407-579-6190 or obakesan@att.net.

Veterans Appreciation Week is coming up. Please consider volunteering for Veterans in the Classroom. It can be extremely rewarding to both you and the students you meet and share your military experiences with. Never done it before? You can pair up with one of us who has...it can be fun!

Please continue checking in on each other. A kind word or two can be priceless. Need help? Please reach out to one of us. Until next time, wishing all health and happiness.

Yours in Patriotism,

Richard Hunt
Commander

Veterans Appreciation Week, October 27 – November 11

Recommended Activities

- Veterans in the Classroom, Oct. 27 – Nov. 7, Citrus Schools
Register at www.citrusschools.org. *Registration ends September 20*
- Homosassa Veterans Memorial Veterans Tribute, Nov. 1, 10 a.m.
- Veterans Military Ball, Nov. 1, 3 p.m., Citrus Hills Golf & Country Club, Hernando
- Veterans Appreciation Concert & Massing of the Colors Ceremony, Nov. 2, 3 p.m., Seven Rivers Church, Lecanto
- Veterans Program, Nov. 6, 2 p.m., Inverness Primary School
- Veterans Appreciation Free Breakfast, Nov. 9, 8 a.m.-11 a.m., Inverness Elks
- Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11, 10 a.m., Inverness
- Memorial Service, Nov. 11, after parade, Old County Courthouse Heritage Museum, Inverness
- Operation Welcome Home Free Veterans Lunch, Nov. 11, after memorial service, The Depot Pavilion, Inverness

QUESTIONS? Call Adjutant Ebitz, 352-382-3847



Departed Patriot John Victor Carlson

Patriot John Carlson of Lecanto passed away March 16 at the age of 87 after a valiant battle with cancer. John, who was Special Forces qualified, served with distinction in Vietnam and throughout his military career, retiring from the U.S. Army as a Sergeant Major. Among his many military awards were the Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman Badge. A faithful supporter of Chapter 776, John served as a Chapter 776 trustee and judge advocate. John's quiet and steady leadership will be missed in our ranks.



On July 29, the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners presented a Proclamation designating August 7 as Purple Heart Day in commemoration of the 243rd anniversary of the creation of the Purple Heart. *Left, front row:* Will Korber, Cdr. Richard Hunt, Chuck Kanehl, Art Tharp, Commissioner Rebecca Bays. *Left, back row:* Darrick Buettner, Citrus County Veterans Service Office Mgr. Philip Watson, Jerry Frease, Commissioner Holly Davis (not shown), Commissioner Diana Finegan, Ann Fair (partially shown), Penny Tharp, Commissioner Janet Barek, Joe McClister, Commissioner Jeff Kinnard, Curt Ebitz.



The Citrus County Building Alliance presented a \$5,000 donation from its 30th Annual Family Fishing Tournament proceeds to Chapter 776 as the tournament's charitable partner. *Left:* Cdr. Richard Hunt, Bill Merryman, Joe McClister, Eric Swart, Donna Bidlack, Kayla Carroll, Marie Brotnisky, John Porter, Dusty Porter, Jerry Frease.

Chapter 776 Cdr. Richard Hunt presented Patriot Bob Gibson a Distinguished Service Award for his exemplary dedication and conspicuous service as the Chapter 776 Sergeant of Arms.



2025 PURPLE HEART BREAKFAST



Citrus County Board of County Commissioners Chairperson Rebecca Bay gave remarks following her reading of the board's proclamation designating August 7 as Purple Heart Day in Citrus County.

Among the dignitaries attending the annual Purple Heart breakfast from left: Citrus County Sheriff David Vincent, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army Peter Tan, Cdr. Hunt, District 23 State Representative J.J. Grow, Citrus County Property Appraiser Cregg Dalton.



Jerry Frease



Lee Helcel



Mike Krebs.



Paul St. Martin

Bill Merryman



Under the initiative of Susan Adams, the ladies of the West Citrus Elks Lodge No. 2693 made Quilts of Valor that were presented the Patriots seen above during the annual Purple Heart breakfast.