



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

Chapter Activities

Completed

May 13. Attending the Associate ladies May lunch at Skyview Terrace were Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Mickey Hunt, Carol Hayes, Nancy Krebs, Barb Mills, Deborah St. Martin and Penny Tharp.

May 16. Approximately 60 Chapter 776 members and guests attended the Chapter's annual Armed Forces Day picnic.

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Next Meeting

Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 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.**

Member News

It is sad to report that Marine Corps League Detachment 819 Commandant **Morgan Patterson**, a longtime supporter and friend of Chapter 776, passed on June 14 just weeks short of his 81st birthday. A proud Marine and patriotic American, he will be missed in Citrus County's veterans' community.

Proud congratulations are extended to Sr. Vice Cdr. **Bill Merryman** for his distinctive honor of being one of five Florida veterans selected this year for induction into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame. Bill joins Chapter 776 Patriots Curt Ebitz and Richard Hunt as Florida Veterans Hall of Fame inductees.

Congratulations are also in order for Sr. Vice Cdr. **Bill Merryman** on earning recognition as the Chapter 776

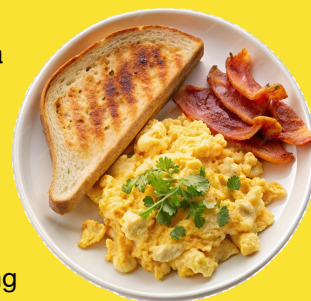
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During the Chapter's May business meeting, Cdr. Hunt presented the Chapter 776 Patriot of the Year Award and the Associate of the Year Award to Bill Merryman and Kim Frease, respectively.

2026 Annual Purple Heart Anniversary Breakfast

The Inverness Elks Lodge No. 2522, located at 3575 E. Lake Place, Hernando, will host a breakfast on Saturday, August 15 at 9:00 a.m. to commemorate the 244th anniversary of the Purple Heart. The free breakfast and short program honor our nation's Purple Heart recipients and fallen heroes. All Purple Heart recipients, Gold Star family members, Associate members, Purple Heart entities and Chapter 776 Proud Supporters and their guests are cordially invited to attend. Attendees are requested to **register for the free breakfast by contacting Curt Ebitz (Home: 352-382-3847; Email: curt247inf@gmail.com)**. Please indicate the number in your party and their names. Seating is limited, so don't delay registering.



Completed continued

May 22-24. Patriots Curt Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Mike Krebs, Joe McClister and Associates Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Nancy Krebs attended the Department of Florida's 82nd Annual State Convention in Daytona Beach.

May 23. Cdr. Richard Hunt, Sr., Vice Cdr. Bill Merryman, and Patriot Ken Decareaux attended the memorial ceremony at the historic Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Crystal River.

May 23. Cdr. Richard Hunt, Patriot Nate Love, and Associate Nancy Weaver represented the Chapter at a crawfish boil honoring the memory of Chapter 776 namesake CW2 Aaron A. Weaver.

May 24. Attending the Memorial Day evening tribute at the Fallen Heroes Monument in Bicentennial Park, Crystal River, were Chapter members Cdr. Richard & Mickey Hunt, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Fred Daniels and Honorary Member Barb Mills who organized the tribute.

May 25. Cdr. Richard Hunt officiated as the Master of Ceremonies at the Old Homosassa Veterans Memorial's Memorial Day ceremony. Other Chapter members in attendance were Fred Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Mickey Hunt, Chuck & Mickie Kanehl, Will Korber, Mike & Nancy Krebs, Joe McClister & Annie Fair.

May 28. Chapter members attending the Patriot fellowship breakfast at the Hen House in Inverness were Curt Ebitz, Jerry Frease, J.B. Haskins, Frank Hayes, Cdr. Richard Hunt, Will Korber, Mike Krebs, and Earl McMillan.

June 13. Participating in the Citrus County Speedway Veterans Night were Chuck Kanehl, who races in Car # 44, Mickie Kanehl, Joe McClister & Annie Fair.

June 17. Enjoying the Associate ladies June lunch at Cody's Original Roadhouse in Crystal River were Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Carol Hayes, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Pat Michael, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt, and Penny Tharp.

June 25. Fostering camaraderie at the Chapter's Patriot breakfast at SOCOS House of Eats in Homosassa were Cdr.

Completed continued

Richard Hunt, Curt Ebitz, Jerry Frease, J.B. Haskins, Mike Krebs, Joe McClister, Earl McMillan, Bill Merryman.

June 26. Attending the viewing and military honors for Marine Corps League Detachment 819 Commandant Morgan Patterson at Brown Funeral Home, Lecanto, were Cdr. Richard & Mickey Hunt, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz and Honorary Member Barb Mills.

June 27. Paying their last respects at the Beverly Hills Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church funeral mass for Morgan Patterson were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Adj. Curt Ebitz and Honorary Member Barb Mills.

June 28. Cdr. Richard Hunt, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Joe McClister & Annie Fair and Proud Supporters Robin & Steve Mecler attended the America 250 Celebratory Concert performed by the Purple Heart Entity and award-winning Nature Coast Community Band.

Future

July 21, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, Crystal River.

July 28, 9:00 a.m. Purple Heart Proclamation, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners, County Courthouse, Brooksville.

July 28, 1:00 p.m. Purple Heart Proclamation, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners, County Courthouse, Inverness.

August 15, 9:00 a.m. Purple Heart Anniversary Breakfast, hosted by Inverness Elks Lodge 2522, 3575 E. Lake Place, Hernando.

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Patriot of the Year honors for 2025-26 and being the Department of Florida Patriot of the Year runner up.

Congratulations to the dynamic duo of Patriot **Jerry Frease** and Associate **Kim Frease** on their selection as the Chapter 776 and Department of Florida Jonas Jacobson Volunteer of the Year and Department of Florida Associate of the Year, respectively. Their selection as the Chapter 776 and Department of Florida Jonas Jacobson Volunteer of the Year and

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and Department of Florida Associate of the Year is a husband & wife first.

A warm welcome to associate member, **Debra Stanley**. Debra's father, Thomas Hood, was a WWII recipient of the Purple Heart, participating in the Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns as a machine gunner with the 310th Infantry Regiment, 79th Infantry Division.

Kudos to Jerry Frease and Mari-Elain Ebitz on their Department of Florida appointments as finance committee member and public information officer, respectively.

Heartfelt thanks to Chapter 776's Grillmaster-in-Chief **Bob Gibson** for donating and preparing the delicious ribs served to Chapter members and guests at the annual Armed Forces Day picnic, as well as the **Chapter 776 Ladies** for their delicious salads and desserts.

An appreciative thank you to Proud Supporters **Beth & Benje Thomas**, owners and operators of ServiceMaster Professional Services in Crystal River for their kind donation of water and soda beverages for the Chapter's Armed Forces Day picnic for the fifth consecutive year. Beth was a Citrus High School classmate of Aaron Weaver.

The Chapter's deep appreciation is extended to **David Kleiman** of Floral City for hosting a crawfish boil honoring the memory of Chapter 776's namesake, CW2 Aaron A. Weaver. The event raised \$6,000 for Chapter 776.

Hats off to Honorary Member **Barb Mills** for organizing the solemn Memorial Day Eve ceremony at the Fallen Heroes Monument in Crystal River and to Honorary Member **Darrick Buettner** for organizing and coordinating the Memorial Day ceremony at the Old Homosassa Veterans Memorial.

A crisp salute to Patriot **Chuck Kanehl** who arranged for the free entry of all veterans at the Citrus County Speedway in Inverness for an exciting evening of racing on June 13. Chuck is a regular competitor at the speedway racing in his Car #44.

Associate **Carol Allen**, widow of Departed Patriot Rick Allen, has adjusted *See Member News continued on page 3.*

From the Commander

Patriots, Associates, Supporters

How time flies.

Our Chapter has continued to be very active. Our success is a credit to our namesake, Aaron A. Weaver., as exemplified by 2025-26 being another banner year culminating in the Chapter's perennial selection as the Department of Florida Chapter of the Year.

My thanks to the 60 Chapter members and guests who attended our Armed Forces picnic. Special thanks to Bob Gibson for donating and preparing his tasty ribs and to the Chapter's ladies for their delicious salads and desserts. Also, thanks to the following distinguished guests who attended: County Commission Chair Diana Finegan, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott Hebert, and Crystal River City Manager Audra Curts.

At our next meeting, we will be discussing technology that is new to me. QR codes. Hummm. Biographical information and fundraising? On a single holographic card? Wonders never cease to exist.

We continue to provide durable medical equipment to those in need at no charge. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to see if we have what you might want or need.

Our Country is celebrating its 250th year birthday. The Nature Coast Community Band performed an amazing concert in honor of this. We are so proud to have them as a Purple Heart Entity. If you missed it, consider attending their next concert. They are always free.

Our breakfast informal gatherings once a month continue with great success. Our Ladies meet for lunch. Please consider joining us.

I am so very fortunate and proud to be among such a wonderful group of Patriots. Thank you all for this honor.

Please mark your calendars to attend the Chapter's annual Purple Heart Breakfast on August 15 hosted by the Inverness Elks that is served with a million- dollar view of Lake Hernando.

Until the next time, be healthy, happy and look out for each other.

Yours in Patriotism,
Richard Hunt, Commander

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to her new home away from home, New Horizons Assisted Living Residence, Inverness. Associate **JoAnn Allen**, widow of past Chapter 776 Cdr. Bud Allen, is making a steady recovery from her stroke as a patient at Life Care Center, Lecanto.

Patriot **Rob Pietras** had a nasty fall while cutting tree branches but fortunately only incurred aches and pains.

Department of Florida 82nd Annual Convention May 22-24, 2026

Department of Florida Cdr. presented Chapter 776 Jr. Vice Cdr. Jerry Frease with the Department's Jonas Jacobson Volunteer of the Year Award.



Chapter 776 delegates to the Department of Florida 82nd Annual Convention, accept the Department of Florida Chapter of the Year Award for 2025-26.



June Associate ladies' lunch at Cody's. Left: Annie Fair, Nancy Krebs, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Vikki Pietras, Mickey Hunt, Penny Sharp, Carol Hayes, Shirley Platt, Pat Michael and Kim Frease.



Chapter 776 Patriot Chuck Kanehl, who regularly races at the Citrus County Speedway with his Car # 44.

2026 ARMED FORCES DAY PICNIC

Cdr. Hunt presented Jr. Vice Cdr. Jerry Frease the Chapter 776 Patriot of the Year Award for 2025-26.



Cdr. Hunt presented the inaugural \$1,000 Harold & Pat Layman Memorial Scholarship to Crystal River High School senior Nathan Jackson. Left: Cdr. Hunt, Superintendent Hebert, Nathan Jackson, and Honorary Member Darrick Buettner.



Cdr. Hunt, joined by the parents of Fallen Hero SGT Dennis J. Flanagan, presented Chapter 776's \$2,000 SGT Dennis J. Flanagan Memorial Scholarship to Crystal River High School senior Addison Raiford. Left: Cdr. Hunt, Superintendent Hebert, Dennis & Pat Flanagan, Addison, and Darrick Buettner.



Cdr. Hunt presented the \$2,000 Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776/College of Central Florida Endowed Scholarship to Crystal River High School senior Lane Komara. Left: Cdr. Hunt, Superintendent of Schools Scott Hebert, Lane Komara, and Darrick Buettner.