

Ashtabula County Veteran's Services Commission

Quarterly Newsletter | ISSUE 1 | MARCH 2023 | www.ashtabulaveterans.com | 

1212 Lake Avenue | Ashtabula, Ohio 44004 | (440) 964-8324



Richard Arndt



Mark Baker



Roger Lynch



Anna Allhouse



Edward Somppi



Benjamin Schwartzfigure



Libby Jenkins



Thomas Lucas Jr.



Aimee Borcicky



Guy Korvig



Carol Hoyt

VSC Board of Commissioners

Richard Arndt - American Legion
 Mark Baker - Veterans of Foreign Wars
 Roger Lynch - Disabled American Veterans
 Anna Allhouse - American Veterans
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VSC Staff

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REMEMBER, we are a free resource to the veteran community and we have all of the knowledge and resources at our disposal to provide you with the best possible outcomes!

The VSC continues to hold monthly raffles in an effort to entice our veteran community to stop by and allow a Service Officer to complete a benefits well-check.

If you, or your organization would be interested in donating gift cards or tangible gift items to this program, please reach out via phone or email. Thank you in advance for your considerations!

MONTHLY RAFFLES

December Winner: James Green of Jefferson is the winner of the December 2022 Raffle Giveaway. James served in the U.S. Navy from March of 1962 to December of 1975 and again from August of 1982 to June of 1984. During his service he was a member of both, the USS Constellation and the USS Decatur as a Boilerman. James enjoys woodworking and woodcarving as hobbies. He also enjoys spending time with his lovely bride of 44 years and his grandchild, whom will be graduating high school this year. James received a Gift Basket from North Coast Candy Co, a \$20 gift certificate from Martell Cleaners, and a coupon for \$50 off of a new tire purchase from Bob Sumerel Tire Company in Ashtabula!

January 2023 Winner: Bruce Hook of Geneva is the winner of the January 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Bruce served in the U.S. Air Force from August of 1976 to February of 1978 and then he switched over to the Air Force Reserves working as civil engineer technician. He retired as a Senior Master Sergeant in 1998. Bruce enjoys building replica models of light houses and other structures in his spare time. He also enjoys camping and traveling in a motor home with his wife. Bruce received two, \$25 gift cards for Becker's Restaurant, a \$20 gift certificate from Sports & Sports, a \$50 Shell Gas Card from Raisian Family Funeral Home, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

February Winner: Rich Mongell of Austinburg is the winner of the February 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Rich served in the Marine Corps from 1971-1972. Currently, he resides in Austinburg with his wife of 49 years. Rich has a rich history as a servant of his community, having served 47 years in law enforcement and as an investigator for the Coroner's office. From 1976-1978, he served as a police officer in Willoughby Hills and as a detective in Madison, ultimately transitioning to detective in 1984 until his retirement in 2000. It was at this time, that he would become an investigator for the Ashtabula County Coroner's Office, retiring again in 2021. During this time, he also worked as a consultant for North Kingsville Police Department. He now spends his time being a taxi driver for his 9 grandchildren. Rich received three, \$25 gift cards for Becker's Restaurant, a \$30 gift card from Biscotti's Restaurant, a \$50 Shell Gas Card from Raisian Family Funeral Home, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

March Winner - The March winner will be identified at our April 5, 2023 Board Meeting.

The VSC from January 2023 – June 2023

In 2022, our office processed 1,056 claims, which generated \$2,197,323.28 in retroactive dollars being awarded to local veterans. So far, in 2023, our Service Officers have submitted 285 claims and have already generated \$366,178.10 in retroactive awards. These Service Officers are top-notch and will work hard to help you obtain your earned benefits! The best thing you can do to support your local veteran population is to refer them to us so that we can perform a benefits well-check and see what we can do to assist them. You never know, the impacts could quite literally, be life changing! Remember that we are a free service and will never receive any part of your VA awards!

Volunteer Driver Program. WE NEED VOLUNTEER DRIVERS! The VSC continues to actively search for new Volunteer Drivers for our Transportation Program. There is no requirement to be a veteran to perform this task and there is a small monetary benefit associated with being a driver. For information and an application, please contact our office by phone or email.

PACT Act Update. The PACT Act was signed into law on August 8, 2022. The VA is working quickly to determine what claims will take priority in the adjudication process. Their guidance to us is to simply PROCESS THE CLAIMS! If you or a loved one has suffered from any of the issues described within the guidelines provided by the VA (<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>), please reach out to our office so that a Service Officer can assist you in the claims process.

2ND ANNUAL RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY The Rite of Passage Ceremony is an event dedicated to the graduating seniors in Ashtabula County that will be heading into the military following graduation. During the event, all veterans in attendance will stand and provide these young men and women with their first salute! The ceremony is open to the public and all are strongly encouraged to come and support our future war fighters!



RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY

Honoring the commitment to service the youth in our community has chosen to make.

Ashtabula County's 2nd Annual Rite of Passage Ceremony
 May 11, 2023 • 7-8 p.m.
 Pymatuning Valley Veterans Memorial Performing Arts Center
 5571 US-6 • Andover, OH 44003

Presented by the Ashtabula County Veterans Service Commission in Collaboration with the Blue Star Mothers of Ashtabula











VETERANS' TASK FORCE

On February 23, we held the first meeting of 2023. The Task Force has helped more than a dozen veterans in need in its first year. We continue to work together for the betterment of our veteran community. If you would like to attend one of these meetings on behalf of your organization or company, please feel free to reach out to our commission for details. The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for April 27 at 6 p.m. in the downstairs of the VFW Post #943, located at 4102 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004.

VETERAN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Veteran Mentorship Program still needs applicants. The VSC is the administrator of this program and will provide applications to any interested, honorably discharged veterans in Ashtabula County. This is a great program that is meant to help veterans in lieu of jail time.

PLANNED EVENTS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2023

There are no scheduled events for the month of April. In May, the VSC will host the second annual, Rite of Passage Ceremony, and there are no scheduled events for the month of June. We are also advertising and pushing ticket sales for the Heroes & Legends Concert that will take place in the third quarter. This is an event hosted by the Department of Defense and is tied to the 50 year commemoration of Vietnam. Information on this event can be found pinned to the top of our Facebook page! Please remember that the VSC has five available service officers to support your veteran centric event during any time of the year. We are available to speak, or simply provide ourselves as resources to your events. Submit your request to the VSC Director at ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us and we will do our best to support!

HEROES & LEGENDS CONCERT

SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2023
YANKIES OUTDOOR PAVILION



Starring
LEE GREENWOOD

With Special Guest
GARY LEWIS AND THE PLAYBOYS

Tickets at Ticketweb.com \$35 in advance, \$40 Day of Show

Sponsored by Yankies in Cooperation with **MONTROSE AUTO GROUP**
GoMontrose.com



THIS IS AN OFFICIAL EVENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR. THE OFFICIAL VIETNAM COMMEMORATION PIN WILL BE PRESENTED TO ALL VIETNAM ERA VETERANS (November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975) IN ATTENDANCE.



VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION ASHTABULA COUNTY



Doors open at 1pm Vietnam Veteran Pin Presentation at 4pm
Gary Lewis and the Playboys at 5pm Lee Greenwood at 6pm



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION



WELCOME HOME!

~ A Nation Honors our Vietnam veterans and their Families ~

The National Mall, Washington, D.C.
May 11-13, 2023

Featuring

May 11



Opening Ceremony
JFK Hockey Fields

A formal Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony opening Camp Legacy!

May 11-13



Camp Legacy
JFK Hockey Fields/West Potomac Park

Interactive experiences, static displays, exhibits, Veteran Services Hub and more!

May 13



Multimedia Celebration
West Potomac Park

A program with live music, video montages and multimedia elements!

A Legacy of Service and Sacrifice

During this 3-day event, Vietnam veterans and their families will be recognized through pinnings, daily entertainment on the grounds, nightly sundown concerts, Rally Points and much more!

All events are free and open to the public

Join the Nation ... thank a Vietnam veteran!

vietnamwar50th.com

Share on social media, tag us, and use #WelcomeHome2023

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) WILL HOST A THREE-DAY WELCOME HOME EVENT, MAY 11-13, near the National Mall to honor Vietnam Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices.

The event, hosted by DoD's Vietnam War Commemoration Office, will feature three days of interactive experiences, military flyovers, music, multimedia displays, and a wide range of exhibits to extend long overdue gratitude to the approximately 7 million living Americans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DAYS TO OBSERVE IN THE COMING MONTHS

March is Women's History Month.	May 29 is Memorial Day.
March 25 is Medal of Honor Day.	April 9 - National Former POW Recognition Day
March 29 is National Vietnam Veterans Day.	April 14 - Air Force Reserve Birthday
April 5 is Gold Star Spouses Day.	April 23 - Army Reserve Birthday
May is National Military Appreciation Month.	May 13-21 - Armed Forces Week

HOLIDAY VOUCHER PROGRAM

Between November and December, we provided 1,613 \$20 Holiday Vouchers to our veteran community to assist with the holidays and help us to identify new veterans to our office. In total, we were able to identify 80 new veterans, which will contribute to our ability to assist with future VA claims for benefits.

For Easter 2023, the VSC will once again provide vouchers to the veteran community. Due to the prices of groceries increasing, the vouchers will be \$30 and will be distributed from Monday, April 3 through Friday, April 7. Please bring some new veterans with you to get your voucher! The goal of this program is to capture veterans that have never used our office for assistance!

Veterans must provide DD214 showing a character of discharge that is Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions to receive this voucher. The program is open to widows of veterans as well. If your service has been previously verified, or you have an ID Card from the VSC, you are eligible for this program.

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If you, or your organization would be interested in donating gift cards or tangible gift items to this program, please reach out via phone or email. Thank you in advance for your considerations!

MONTHLY RAFFLES

March Winner: David Bailey of Austinburg is the winner of the March 2023 Raffle Giveaway. David served in the Army from 1970 through 1972. He was assigned as Weapons Mechanic loading, maintaining, and protecting our assets and upholding our military laws. He was honorably released of duty and joined our community of veterans both here and abroad. David received one, \$115 value Burial Flag Case with Shadowbox, donated by Seavey's Bargain Box, LLC., a \$25 gift card from Max's Pizza & Grill, two, \$25 gift cards for Becker's Restaurant, a \$20 gas card from Glotzbecker's Gulf Station, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

April Winner: Clifford Gregory Keefer (a.k.a. "Greg") of Ashtabula is the winner of the April 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Greg served in the U.S. Army from August of 1968 to August of 1971. He served overseas in Thailand as a Motor Sergeant. He then went on to be a Spec 5 before exiting the service. Greg is now retired and loves traveling on his motorcycle, having accumulated 100K+ miles on the open road. He also loves trap shooting, rim fire bench rest, and golf! Greg received a \$25 gift cards for Becker's Restaurant, a \$30 gift certificate from Biscotti's restaurant, a \$50 Shell Gas Card from Raisian Family Funeral Home, a \$25 Giant Eagle Gift card from the Geneva VFW Auxiliary, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

May Winner: Steven Meier of Ashtabula is the winner of the May 2023 Raffle. Steve served in the U.S. Army from February 2011 until July 2014 as an Infantry Mortar-man. He served in Vilseck, Germany where he was asked by the Regimental Commander to become a bomb dog handler (TEDD). Of the 200 interviewed for this position, 26 were chosen and only six completed the course. Following his training, Steve was deployed to Afghanistan where he had a two-gun mortar section for which he was the fire direction and control chief. He served six months in Afghanistan before returning to Germany and finishing his enlistment. Steve received two, \$25 gift cards from Becker's Restaurant, two \$25 Giant Eagle gift cards from the Geneva VFW Auxiliary, a \$30 gift certificate from Biscotti's Restaurant, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

The VSC from April 2023 - September 2023

The first half of 2022 has been extremely busy! Since January, our office has processed 631 claims, which generated \$1,024,075.21 in retroactive dollars being awarded to local veterans. These two numbers are double our numbers from this time last year. The Service Officers in this commission are second to none and continue to work incredibly hard to help you obtain your earned benefit! Please remember that the best thing you can do to support your local veteran population is to refer them to us so that we can perform a benefits well-check and see what we can do to assist them. You never know, the impacts could quite literally, be life changing! Keep in mind that we are a free service and will never receive any part of your VA awards!

Volunteer Driver Program. WE NEED VOLUNTEER DRIVERS! The VSC continues to actively search for new Volunteer Drivers for our Transportation Program. There is no requirement to be a veteran to perform this task and there is a small monetary benefit associated with being a driver. For information and an application, please contact our office by phone or email. Please be advised that we are actively revamping our Transportation Program to better suit our operational capabilities. These changes will impact our ability to carry veterans to their VA appointments, as we will no longer transport to appointments that cause us to operate beyond our standard hours of operation of 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. We will continue to offer our assistance by connecting you to other resources in the county that may be able to assist you. Please bear with us through this adjustment period.

PACT Act Update. The PACT Act was signed into law on August 10, 2022. The VA is working quickly to determine what claims will take priority in the adjudication process. Their guidance to us is to simply PROCESS THE CLAIMS! If you or a loved one has suffered from any of the issues described within the guidelines provided by the VA (<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>), please reach out to our office so that a Service Officer can assist you in the claims process. It is important to note that veterans suffering from these conditions have until August 9, 2023 to submit a claim in order for their award date to possibly be recognized as August 10, 2022. After August 9th, a new date of claim will have to be established and that year of potential compensation will be lost.

Easter Holiday Voucher Program

This year, we provided 700, \$30 vouchers to our veteran community between April 3 and April 7. This program is meant to help us identify new veterans in our community while providing a little bit of financial relief during the holidays. We hope that if you were one of the 700, we were able to make your Easter holiday just a little more special!

2ND ANNUAL RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY The Rite of Passage Ceremony is an event dedicated to the graduating seniors in Ashtabula County that will be heading into the military following graduation. This year, the ceremony took place on May 11, 2023 at the Pymatuning Valley Veterans Memorial Performing Arts Center. We had the distinct pleasure of honoring 10 students from across our county. The Young Marines did a phenomenal job of posting and retiring our nation's colors. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant (retired) Bob Hitchcock, gave a profound and inspirational speech to the graduates. The event was also visited by the Assistant Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Mr. Sean McCarthy, who provided the graduates with sound advice about their eventual return from duty. The event had 140 veterans and family members in the audience. The veterans within the audience all stood and gave the new recruits their first salute! What an amazing event and an incredible time for all that took part!



Joining the US Army - Shane Shingler from Lakeside HS, Jordan Cameron from A-Tech/Lakeside HS, and Aiden Perkins from Lakeside HS. Joining the US Marine Corps - Jacob Alley from Geneva HS, Brenden Hutton from Geneva HS, Jacob Bennett from A-Tech/Lakeside HS, and Cameron Mason from Pymatuning HS. Joining the US Air Force - Dominic Strazinsky from Grand Valley HS, Matthew Hill from A-Tech/Jefferson HS, and Joseph Garay Montelongo from Lakeside HS.

VETERANS' TASK FORCE

On April 27, we held the second meeting of 2023. At this meeting, the Task Force nominated five Board members to serve as the Task Force Leadership through 2023. All involved in this organization continue to work together for the betterment of our veteran community. If you would like to attend one of these

meetings on behalf of your organization or company, please feel free to reach out to our commission for details. The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for June 29 at 6 p.m. in the downstairs of the VFW Post #943, located at 4102 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004.

PLANNED EVENTS FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2023

The Veterans Promise is a ceremonial oath given to all veterans in attendance, meant to acknowledge that because we passed the torch, we did not give up our duty to protect our families and friends. The ceremony will kick-off on August 10, 2023 with a T-51 Flyover at 7 p.m. at the Grandstand! ALL VETERANS GET IN FREE ON THIS DAY! We hope to see you there!

Please remember that the VSC has five available service officers to support your veteran centric event during any time of the year. We are available to speak, or simply provide ourselves as resources to your events. Submit your request to the VSC Director at ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us and we will do our best to support!



Vietnam veterans represented nearly 10% of their generation. They fought under challenging conditions, and when their service ended, they were often blamed for a war they didn't start, when they should have been commended for serving their country. This is an opportunity to right a wrong by celebrating and honoring these veterans and families' sacrifice at the "Heroes & Legends" Concert. There were an estimated 58,318 U.S. soldier casualties. A total of 9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the Vietnam War era, with over 2,709,000 Americans serving in Vietnam, about 9.7% of the generation. Also being honored at the Concert will be an estimated 752,000 veterans living in Ohio, the biggest share being the 271,877 Vietnam era veterans. The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration was authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense and launched in 2012. By Presidential Proclamation, the Vietnam War Commemoration will continue through Veterans Day, November 11, 2025. The July 16, 2023 "Heroes & Legends" Concert stars Lee Greenwood, who has had countless #1 hits, Twenty Top 10 singles, won an ACM award, CMA award, and a Grammy award. His hit song "God Bless the U.S.A." (also known as "Proud to Be an American") is considered to be his signature song. The concert's Special Guest Artist, Gary Lewis and the Playboys is a 1960s era pop and rock group best known for the hit song "This Diamond Ring" which was the first of a string of hit singles. In all, Lewis had eight gold singles, 12 Top 40 hit singles and four Gold albums. Lewis was drafted into the U.S. Army in January 1967 at the height of his career and was honorably discharged in 1968.

Veteran Owned Businesses in Ashtabula County!

The VSC would like to make a list of all veteran owned businesses in our county. We would like to support your business by providing a listing on our future newsletters. If you would like to have your business advertised through us, please email us at ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us. We look forward to hearing from you!

VETERAN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Veteran Mentorship Program still needs applicants. The VSC is the administrator of this program and will provide applications to any interested, honorably discharged veterans in Ashtabula County. This is a great program that is meant to help veterans in lieu of jail time.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DAYS TO OBSERVE IN THE COMING MONTHS

Independence Day	July 4
National Hire A Veteran Day	July 25
National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day	July 27
National Buffalo Soldiers Day	July 28
Army Chaplain Corps Anniversary	July 29
Air Force Day	Aug. 1
Coast Guard Day	Aug. 4
Purple Heart Day	Aug. 7
Agent Orange Awareness Day	Aug. 10
Navajo Code Talkers Day	Aug. 14
National Airborne Day	Aug. 16
Marine Corps Reserve Birthday	Aug. 29



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The VSC from July 2023 - December 2023

2023 has proven to be eventful and productive for the VSC! Since January, our office has processed 993 claims, which generated \$1,634,154.29 in retroactive dollars being awarded to local veterans. The Service Officers in this commission never rest. They are continually learning and adapting to benefit updates from the VA in order to better serve you by helping you to obtain your earned benefits! Always remember that the best thing you can do to support our local veteran population is to refer them to us. We will perform a benefits well-check and see what can be done to assist them. You never know, the impacts of their visit could quite literally be life changing! Keep in mind that we are a free service and will never receive any part of your VA awards!

Veteran Transportation Program. This program has operated for more than 15 years with volunteers. Now, we are excited to inform you that we have a singular hire devoted to our county veterans, ready to drive them daily to their VA Medical appointments at the Erie and Cleveland VAMCs. We will continue to operate with volunteers and as always, we need applicants. We also will strive for continued improvements by standardizing transport to both locations daily, by no later than January 2024. So, grab your Ashtabula Veterans Service Commission ID card and hop on board our shuttle. Our office opens and trips run daily at 8 a.m. Additional assistance for local transport may be obtained in the form of ACTs bus tickets and through transport with Country Neighbor. So, come in to the office or call for further details.

There is no deadline to apply for PACT Act benefits. The deadline that everyone heard about was to receive retro active benefits backdated to Aug. 10, 2022, the day the legislation was signed into law. Even if you did not file before this deadline, you can STILL file a claim for benefits under the PACT Act. The PACT Act marks a major expansion of VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. Under the PACT Act, veterans are automatically eligible for VA health care and benefits if they have one or more of 20 conditions linked to toxic exposure. The PACT Act marks the largest expansion of VA health care and benefits in a generation. The VA estimates about 3.5 million additional veterans will receive VA health care or benefits under the legislation. The VA is ramping up its workforce under the PACT Act. The Veterans Health Administration hired more than 43,000 new employees so far in fiscal year 2023, and is on track to meet its year-end goal of making 52,000 new hires. Its not too late, get those benefits that you and your family have earned, contact your service officer and file that PACT Act Claim.

The Military Injury Relief Fund (MIRF) grants a tax-exempt monetary payment to military service members injured in active service as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States serving after October 7, 2001, and to individuals diagnosed with post-traumatic stress while serving after October 7, 2001. The amount of a MIRF grant is \$500. This benefit used to be a one time payment, but has recently been updated to allow veterans to apply for the benefit one time each fiscal year in Ohio, for up to 3 years total. If you are a surviving spouse or dependent, you can still apply; you will still need to provide all required information with the initial application, including an executor or administrators of the estate of such "eligible individuals," since you'll be applying on behalf of the service member. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for processing. During June and July, delays in processing and delivery can be expected due to the end of the fiscal year. You can get the application and have a service officer assist you in filling it out - come to our office. The MIRF grant is not taxable income, nor is it based on income you currently receive.

Heroes & Legends Concert. The concert was a great success! There were approximately 900 people in attendance to see Jerry Lewis and the Playboys and Lee Greenwood! The VSC was a Silver Sponsor of the event and as such, provided a check to Feed Our Vets Ashtabula for \$5,000.00! Many veterans were recognized, the weather was fantastic and there was a PERFECTLY timed flyover that took place to round it all out!

The 3rd Annual Veterans Promise at the County Fair. Our ceremony had 90 veterans in attendance with 132 total audience members. The Young Marines did a wonderful job of raising our nation's colors while Mr. Tom Lucas sang the National Anthem! Father Marcelli gave a profound invocation, followed by a captivating speech from Army Command Sergeant Major Retired, Michael Palm of Geneva. We had local veterans standing proud in front of their branch service flags while wearing branch specific jerseys provided by the VSC! If you would like to represent your branch of service next year, please contact our office! It's never too soon to make that commitment! Once again, the VSC Director, Mr. Ben Schwartzfigure administered the Veterans Promise before we, once again closed out the event with the beautiful voice of Mrs. Janna Hitchcock singing God Bless the U.S.A.!

MONTHLY RAFFLES

JUNE WINNER: Rick Oberstar of Ashtabula is the winner of the June 2023 Raffle. Rick served in the U.S. Marine Corps from September 2015 to September 2019 as a motor transport operator. While in the Marines he participated in a joint training exercise in Norway. A graduate of Lakeside HS, Rick returned to the Ashtabula area after he was discharged. He currently resides in Ashtabula and was married to his wife, Hannah on May 20 of this year. We hope you both enjoy this wedding gift from our Commission! Rick has worked at MFG in the research department for the last couple years. His hobbies include running, basketball and gaming, as well as spending quality time with his new wife. Rick received two, \$25 gift cards from Becker's Restaurant, two \$25 Giant Eagle gift cards from the Geneva VFW Auxiliary, a \$30 gift certificate from Biscotti's Restaurant, a \$20 gift certificate from Martell Cleaners, and a certificate for one yard of mulch or topsoil, provided by Geneva Materials!

JULY WINNER: Terrance James McConnell (a.k.a. "Terry") of North Kingsville is the winner of the July 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Terry served in the U.S. Air Force from June of 1966 to September of 1987 before retiring as a Master Sergeant. He had the pleasure of serving overseas in both Germany and Italy with his family. Nowadays, he spends much of his time with his beloved wife, three sons and grandchildren, and faithful companion, his dog, Chance. Terry loves golfing and traveling the country whenever the opportunity presents. Terry took home the highly coveted cooler stand, provided by Greg's Custom Coveted Creations!

AUGUST WINNER: Dayna Hopkins of Jefferson is the winner of the August 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Dayna served in the U.S. Air Force from March of 2011 to March of 2018 as an Instrument Flight Control Systems Technician. She served her entire tour of duty at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Today, she spends most of her time caring for her three children and is currently expecting her fourth in December 2023. She enjoys hunting and spending time with her husband of 8 and half years, as well as her children. Dayna took home four \$25 gift cards provided by Becker's Restaurant, two \$25 Giant Eagle gift cards donated by the Geneva VFW Auxiliary Post 6846, and one \$25 gas card to Circle K, donated by Miquelina Cox!



VETERANS' TASK FORCE

The Task Force continues to work towards becoming a registered non-profit. Doing so will allow the organization to accomplish a lot for the veterans of Ashtabula County. To date, all those involved in this organization continue to work together for the betterment of our veteran community. If you would like

to attend one of these meetings on behalf of your organization or company, please feel free to reach out to our commission for details. The Task Force meetings are generally held once every other month in the downstairs of the VFW Post #943, located at 4102 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004.

PLANNED EVENTS FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2023

Veterans Services & VA Death Benefits Seminar

The VSC will be hosting a seminar meant to address the common questions and common misconceptions surrounding death benefits. Every second that we draw breath is a gift. The next second is never guaranteed. The VSC strongly encourages veterans and their spouses or significant others attend this seminar. Your age is irrelevant, as death is the one thing that impacts us all without question.

Military Veterans are invited to join us on the Kent State Ashtabula Campus at the Main Hall building, Blue-Gold room on Wednesday, October 11 at 6 p.m. Veterans will learn more about their VA death benefits but most importantly their FAMILY will find out what they need to do upon the Veteran's passing. Veterans are strongly encouraged to bring their spouse and a family member who might be involved in handling the Veteran's affairs after his or her passing.

The seminar is hosted by Dewey Howlett Post 103, in cooperation with Perry Memorial Post 697. The seminar will include a speaker from the American Legion, John Merk from Behm's Funeral Home and Ben Schwartz from the Ashtabula County Veterans Service Commission. Each Veteran will receive a packet stocked with brochures, contact information and the forms the FAMILY will need upon the Veteran's passing.

Attendance is limited. RSVP by emailing gregory6373@gmail.com. The seminar is FREE, and refreshments will be served.

Remember that the VSC has five available service officers to support your veteran centric event during any time of the year. We are available to speak, or simply provide ourselves as resources to your events. Submit your request to the VSC Director at ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us and we will do our best to support!

THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY VOUCHERS

This year, the VSC is changing things up! We will provide a \$40 voucher to be redeemed at the Saybrook and Geneva Giant Eagles to assist with your holiday meal. Veterans, or widows of veterans may stop by the VSC during our regular business hours beginning at 8 a.m. on Monday, November 13 and ending at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, November 17 to secure their voucher. Each family is eligible to receive one voucher. The vouchers will expire on December 31, 2023 so you can choose which holiday you would like to purchase food for. This year, you may use your voucher to purchase any items that will assist with your holiday, with the exception of alcohol, tobacco and pet food products. You just have that week to get your voucher, so block out some time and come by the office! See you then!

Veterans must provide DD214 showing a character of discharge that is Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions to receive this voucher. The program is open to widows of veterans as well. If your service has been previously verified, or you have an ID Card from the VSC, you are eligible for this program.

Veteran Owned Businesses in Ashtabula County!

The VSC would like to make a list of all veteran owned businesses in our county. We would like to support your business by providing a listing on our future newsletters. If you would like to have your business advertised through us, please email us at ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us. We look forward to hearing from you!

Veterans Day Celebration. This year, the VSC has collaborated with ACMC, Foundations Health Solutions, Carington Park, and Bella Hospice to bring an amazing event to our veteran community! We will be honoring all veterans this day, but the focus will be with our community veterans that reside in our local nursing homes. If you would like to attend, we are planning on hosting up to 500 of our local residents and veterans on Thursday, Nov. 9 at the Andrus Banquet Center, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. You can reserve your seat by calling Cassie Webster at 440-964-8446 ext. 3020. This is an inaugural event, so come on out and help us make history in Ashtabula County!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Days to observe in the coming months

Oct. 13 – U.S. Navy Birthday

Oct. 26 – Day of the Deployed

Oct. 27 – Navy Day

Oct. 30-Nov. 3 – National Veterans Small Business Week

Nov. 10 – USMC Birthday

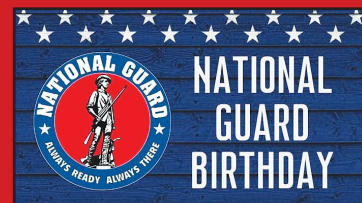
Nov. 11 – Veterans Day

Dec. 1 – Civil Air Patrol (USAF Auxiliary) Birthday

Dec. 7 – National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 13 – U.S. National Guard Birthday

Dec. 16 – National Wreaths Across America



Ashtabula County Veteran's Services Commission

Quarterly Newsletter | ISSUE 4 | DECEMBER 2023 | www.ashtabulaveterans.com | 

1212 Lake Avenue | Ashtabula, Ohio 44004 | ((440)) 964-8324

VSC Board of Commissioners



Richard Arndt - American Legion



Mark Baker - Veterans of Foreign Wars



Roger Lynch - Disabled American Veterans



Anna Allshouse - American Veterans



Edward Somppi - Vietnam Veterans of America

VSC Staff

Benjamin Schwartzfigure - Director

Libby Jenkins - Senior County Veterans Service Officer

Thomas Lucas Jr. - Senior County Veterans Service Officer

Aimee Borcicky - County Veterans Service Officer

Guy Korvig - Transportation Supervisor/County Veterans Service Officer

Carol Hoyt - Senior Office Manager

Shane Graham - Driver & Administrative Assistant

The VSC from October 2023 - March 2024

The staff of this commission have done an exceptional amount of work throughout 2023! Since January, we have processed in excess of 1,342 claims, which generated more than \$2,000,000.00 in retroactive dollars being awarded to our local veterans. The commission is continuously refining existing systems to make our office more efficient and better capable of assisting our veteran population. We are now well on our way to relocating our office in 2024. Currently, we hope to be moved in sometime between August and November 2024, following extensive renovations to the new space. For those that are interested, the new space is located at 1709 East Prospect Road in the Ashtabula Township. In the meantime, please continue to stop by our office in our current location and see your Service Officer for your benefits well-check. We encourage all veterans to be seen a minimum of once per year so that we can bring you up-to-speed on the current happenings within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Never assume that you don't have any benefits earned. Allow us the ability to provide a thorough review of your service and help you understand your benefits. You never know, the impacts of your visit could quite literally be life changing! Keep in mind that we are a free service and will never receive any part of your VA awards!

There is no deadline to apply for PACT Act benefits. The deadline that everyone heard about was to receive retroactive benefits backdated to Aug. 10, 2022, the day the legislation was signed into law. Even if you did not file before this deadline, you can STILL file a claim for benefits under the PACT Act. The PACT Act marks a major expansion of VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.

Under the PACT Act, veterans are automatically eligible for VA health care and benefits if they have one or more of 20 conditions linked to toxic exposure.

The PACT Act marks the largest expansion of VA health care

and benefits in a generation. The VA estimates about 3.5 million additional veterans will receive VA health care or benefits under the legislation. The VA is ramping up its workforce under the PACT Act. The Veterans Health Administration hired more than 43,000 new employees so far in fiscal year 2023, and is on track to meet its year-end goal of making 52,000 new hires.

In 2022 the Pact Act changed the world of claims for compensation tremendously. The impact to veterans with disabilities has noticeably increased. Our office alone has filed over 1,200 claims and continues to service our region. Matters of Presumption for Rare Respiratory Cancers have been amended with a final rule. As we know this rule was April 26, 2022. These presumptions of cancer inherently impact veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War (hereinafter Gulf War), from August 2, 1990, onward, as well as in Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti, or Uzbekistan, on or after September 19, 2001, during the Gulf War. Want to know more? Give us a call and schedule an appointment with a CVSO.

The Military Injury Relief Fund (MIRF) grants a tax-exempt payment to military service members injured in combat as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States serving after October 7, 2001, and to individuals diagnosed with post-traumatic stress while serving after October 7, 2001. The amount of a MIRF grant is \$500. This benefit used to be a one time payment, but has recently been updated to allow veterans to apply for the benefit



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The VSC from October 2023 - March 2024 continued

one time each fiscal year in Ohio, for up to 3 years total. If you are a surviving spouse or dependent, you can still apply; you will still need to provide all required information with the initial application, including an executor or administrators of the estate of such "eligible individuals," since you'll be applying on behalf of the service member. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for processing. During June and July, delays in processing and delivery can be expected due to the end of the fiscal year. You can get the application and have a service officer assist you in filling it out – come to our office. The MRF grant is not taxable income, nor is it based on income you currently receive.

A VA Pension Debt Notification has been issued identifying discrepancies in data matching resulting in overpayment's for VA Pension in some cases. These low-income waived debts are typically identified as significant hardship. The VA has recognized the hardship and distress that these pension debts may cause and has paused the collection of all established pension debts and the establishment of new pension debts while they determine the path forward. The VA has stated "reaching out directly to affected Veterans and survivors to let them know that pension debt collection has been paused while we pursue options for relief – and we will keep them updated throughout every step of this process." If there are any immediate concerns or questions the VA encourages those with debt questions to call 1-800-827-0648.



Update on VA Home Loans has been submitted and as such exists, we would like to share some of the identifying features or changes. To ensure Veterans and their families stay on top of their prospective VA home loans. The VA has called on mortgage servicers to pause foreclosures of VA- guaranteed loans through May 31 2024. Intentions are to assist veteran with retention solutions. In addition to The VA has extended the COVID 19 refund modification program and is continuing to assist veterans with their loans in some form or fashion. All intentions point to preventing foreclosures and maintaining assistance through programs that assist during times of financial hardship. The VA encourages veterans and family members to call 1-877-827-3702.

1st Quarter VSC Outreach. All outreach will be halted until February of 2024 due to preventative weather conditions in our area. Also, due to costs associated with the new building renovations, we will **NOT** have the Holiday Voucher Program for Easter 2024. As much as we look forward to putting a little bit back out into the community over the holidays, we must be vigilant regarding our spending decisions for the 2024 calendar year. Keep a lookout for an opportunity to attend another Heroes & Legends Concert in July 2024. The event is set to honor all veterans that have ever served our great nation.

Death Benefits Seminar. On October 11, the VSC facilitated this seminar in collaboration with the American Legion (Perry Memorial Post #697), American Legion (Dewey Howlett Post #103), and Behm Funeral Home. The event provided veterans and their families with critical information regarding the wishes of the veterans upon their death. This seminar afforded those in attendance the ability to think ahead and understand their benefits more clearly. The VSC has helped many veterans since the seminar to place their wishes on file at our office. We will continue to provide this information presentation in the coming months and years ahead. We encourage all veterans of all ages to come in and ask about death benefits!

Veterans Day, Veterans Appreciation Ceremony. On November 9, the VSC worked in collaboration with APMC, Carington Park, Foundations Health Solutions, and Bella Care Hospice to bring an inaugural event to Ashtabula County that celebrated the service and sacrifice of all veterans, but more importantly, those veterans that currently reside in our county's nursing homes. The picture depicts the oldest and youngest veterans in attendance. The oldest veteran was Mr. Charles Corley, age 99 and the youngest was Mr. Chad Gimmi, age 31 at the time of the event. The ceremony was a resounding success and we look forward to conducting this event again in the future.

Holiday Voucher Program. Between November 13 and November 17, the VSC distributed \$40 vouchers to 1,469 veterans or their widows, which were able to be redeemed at Giant Eagle in either Saybrook or Geneva. This is just one more way that the VSC is supporting our veteran community. We hope that everyone was able to reduce their budget a little for the holidays and enjoy their families and friends.



MONTHLY RAFFLES

REMEMBER, we are a free resource to the veteran community and we have all of the knowledge and resources at our disposal to provide you with the best possible outcomes!

The VSC continues to hold monthly raffles in an effort to entice our veteran community to stop by and allow a Service Officer to complete a benefits well-check.

If you, or your organization would be interested in donating gift cards or tangible gift items to this program, please reach out via phone or email. Thank you in advance for your considerations!



SEPTEMBER WINNER: Barbara (Barb) Glass of Andover is the winner of the September 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Barb served in the National Guard from March of 1987 to March of 1993. She was activated to federal service during the Gulf War in January of 1991 and served in Persian Gulf Theater until June of 1991. During this time, she served in the 324th Military Police Company. Barb is married to her husband of 30 years and has one child. Barb taught at the STEAM Academy of Warren until she felt it was time she retired. She enjoys crafting, reading,

and working in her yard. Barb took home four \$25 gift cards provided by Becker's Restaurant, two \$25 Giant Eagle gift cards donated by the Geneva VFW Auxiliary Post 6846, and one \$25 gas card to Circle K, donated by Miquelina Cox! Remember that all you need to do is come into our office and allow one of our Service Officers to conduct a Benefits Well-Check and you are automatically entered into our raffle!



OCTOBER WINNER: Mildred Tomblin of Ashtabula is the winner of the October 2023 Giveaway. Mildred served active duty and reserve time in the Marine Corps from December 1979 through May 1989. She was a Marine who enforced and protected our assets and personnel while upholding our military laws while servicing all our administrative needs. She was honorably released of duty as a Sergeant and joined our community of veterans both here and abroad. We, the VSC would like to thank her for her service and offer our congratulations on her winnings. She took home a \$50 Visa card donated by Vietnam Veterans of America, a \$25 Giant Eagle gift card donated by VFW Auxiliary of Geneva Post #6846, a

\$25 Gift certificate donated by Beckers Restaurant, and a wooden coin stand made and donated by local veteran, Mr. Tim Baum. We salute your future endeavors and look forward to seeing you at our events & wellness checks.

NOVEMBER WINNER: Kyle Woodard of Ashtabula is the winner of the November 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Kyle served in the U.S. Air Force from July of 2007 to July of 2013. He was a computer programmer at Tinker AFB, OK. He deployed overseas serving as a radio transmission airman on a combat patrol in Afghanistan. Kyle recently graduated from Kent State with a Bachelors in Information Technology. Computers and his dog "Bella" are his passion. He loves to travel whenever can and he plays a lot of disc golf.

Kyle took home a wooden coin rack, donated by Mr. Tim Baum, a \$50 VISA gift card, donated by the Vietnam Veterans of America, one \$25 Giant Eagle gift card, donated by the Geneva VFW Auxiliary Post 6846, and a \$25 gift card provided by Becker's Restaurant.



PLANNED EVENTS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2024

The VSC is planning to host another Death Benefits Seminar sometime in March 2024. Keep your eyes peeled on our Facebook page for updates on this event. Currently, we have no other events planned for the first quarter. This is

the time that our service officers spend getting caught up from the holiday season. It is a great time to get on their calendar and see what can be done regarding YOUR VA benefits!

Veteran Owned Businesses in Ashtabula County!

The VSC would like to make a list of all veteran owned businesses in our county. We would like to support your business by providing a listing on our future newsletters. If you would

like to have your business advertised through us, please email us at ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us. We look forward to hearing from you!

2024 VA Compensation Rates Table

The Ohio War Orphan Scholarship (What You Need to Know). The Ohio War Orphan & Severely Disabled Veterans' Children Scholarship (WOS) program provides financial assistance to the children of veterans killed in combat or severely disabled Ohio veterans who served in the armed forces during a period of declared war or conflict. WOS covers a percentage of tuition and general fees at public colleges and universities and a portion of these charges at eligible, private colleges and universities. The award amount for WOS varies from year to year based on the number of eligible applications (for the 2023-2024, school year, WOS covered 83% of tuition and general fees at public colleges and universities and awarded \$6,490 to applicants attending private colleges or universities). WOS is renewable for up to 10 semesters (15 quarters). For more information, visit <https://higher.ed.ohio.gov/students/pay-for-college/ohio-grants-scholarships/wos/wos>, or come by our office for assistance. There is an annual deadline for applications of May 15. So, if you would like to apply, contact us TODAY!

VA Compensation Rates - Effective December 01, 2023									
Percentage	Rate								
10%	\$	171.23							
20%	\$	338.49							
		30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Veteran Alone	\$	524.31	\$ 755.28	\$ 1,075.16	\$ 1,361.88	\$ 1,716.28	\$ 1,995.01	\$ 2,241.91	\$ 3,737.85
Veteran & Spouse	\$	586.31	\$ 838.20	\$ 1,179.82	\$ 1,486.88	\$ 1,861.28	\$ 2,161.01	\$ 2,428.91	\$ 3,946.25
Veteran, Spouse & 1 Child	\$	632.31	\$ 899.28	\$ 1,255.16	\$ 1,577.88	\$ 1,968.28	\$ 2,283.01	\$ 2,565.91	\$ 4,098.87
Veteran, NO Spouse & 1 Child	\$	565.31	\$ 810.28	\$ 1,144.16	\$ 1,444.88	\$ 1,813.28	\$ 2,106.01	\$ 2,366.91	\$ 3,877.22
Additional Child Under 18	\$	31.00	\$ 41.00	\$ 51.00	\$ 62.00	\$ 72.00	\$ 82.00	\$ 93.00	\$ 103.55
Additional School Child Over 18	\$	100.00	\$ 133.00	\$ 167.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 234.00	\$ 267.00	\$ 301.00	\$ 334.49
		Non-Service Pension		Aid & Attendance		A&A Housebound			
		Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married		
		\$ 1,379.25	\$ 1,806.17	\$ 2,300.75	\$ 2,727.42	\$ 1,685.50	\$ 2,112.34		
SMC-K				Widow's Pension	\$ 925.17			DIC	\$ 1,612.75
\$	132.74			Housebound A&A	\$ 1,806.17			w/A&A add	\$ 399.54
				Aid & Attendance	\$ 1,478.58			w/HB A&A add	\$ 187.17
								8 Year Rule	\$ 342.46

For more information, visit <https://higher.ed.ohio.gov/students/pay-for-college/ohio-grants-scholarships/wos/wos>, or come by our office for assistance. There is an annual deadline for applications of May 15. So, if you would like to apply, contact us TODAY!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Days to observe in the coming months



Feb. 3 - Four Chaplains Day



Feb. 4 - USO Birthday



March 4 - Hug a GI Day



March 5 - Seabee Birthday



Week of Feb. 14 - National Salute to Veteran Patients



Feb. 19 - Coast Guard Reserve Birthday



March 13 - K-9 Veterans Day



March 15 - American Legion Birthday



Month of March - Women's History Month



March 3 - Navy Reserve Birthday



March 25 - Medal of Honor Day



March 29 - National Vietnam War Veterans Day



VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS IN ASHTABULA COUNTY

There are many organizations throughout our county that support both, our local veterans and our community at large. Many of these organizations are looking to increase their numbers. If you are a veteran or the dependent of a veteran, you could potentially become a member and join their missions. Here are a few. This list will grow over time.

ASHTABULA, OH

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

POC – Ken Draper

(440) 228-3528 • Email – roadkingcop@gmail.com

The purpose of the American Legion Riders is to participate in community services and other ceremonies that is in keeping with the Aims and Purposes of the American Legion. To promote motorcycle safety programs and to provide a social atmosphere for American Legion members who share the same interest. To use our Association to promote and support programs of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, community services and Veteran's Organizations. The Legion Riders also provide assistance to Veterans in the local area who are in need of financial, services or any other type of assistance that the membership can provide.

ARMY NAVY UNION 411

POC - Paul Anderson

(440) 650-2562 • Email - pwjander@roadrunner.com

The Army Navy Union 411 is home to 103 regular members and nearly 75 Auxiliary members located within Ashtabula. Join us today!

DAV BOB SWANSON CHAPTER #39 OF ASHTABULA COUNTY

Email - davch39@gmail.com

Mailing Address - PO Box 574, Andover, OH 44003

DAV Meetings are held the SECOND WEDNESDAY of each month at 6:30 p.m. at American Legion Post 103, 1804 W 19th St., Ashtabula, Ohio 44004 and VA claims assistance is available. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a Veterans Service Organization for those who served our country's armed forces and were wounded or injured during that service and were Honorably Discharged or Under Honorable Conditions. The motto of Disabled American Veterans is: "Fulfilling Our Promises to the Men and Women Who Served." We are closed for Winter from December – February.

FEED OUR VETS

POC - Tracy Bidwell • (440) 813-5131

Feed Our Vets is a once-a-month food pantry for Veterans, spouses and family. We are open every third Saturday from 8 to 11 a.m.

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Email - lukejr68@gmail.com

Mailing Address - c/o Tom Lucas, Jr.

Adjutant; 3105 Jefferson Rd., Ashtabula, OH 44004

Veteran's Service Organization for Honorably Discharged Marine's and FMF Corpsman and Chaplains. Other Armed Forces Veterans are welcome as Associate Members. Meetings for Pvt. Henry Kalinowski Marine Corps League Detachment #782 of Ashtabula County, Ohio are usually held the FIRST SATURDAY of each month at 10:30 a.m. at the American Legion Post #103 located at 1804 W. 19th St., Ashtabula, OH 44004.

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE AUXILIARY

POC - Lisa Dibble

(440) 344-1822 • Email - pvthenrykalinowskimcla@gmail.com

The purpose of the Marine Corps League Auxiliary is to band together in comradeship the members of the Auxiliary, and to create a bond of comradeship between this Auxiliary and the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps League. We are seeking the Mothers, Wives, Sisters, Daughters, Nieces, Granddaughters and Cousins of Active Duty, Reserve and Honorably Discharged U.S. Marines to serve and aid those Marines who are or have served us. We usually meet the SECOND Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Ashtabula Township Hall, located at the southeast corner of Route 20 and Route 11, 2718 NRE. Ashtabula, OH 44004.

U.S. VETERANS MC ASHTABULA

POC - Josh Honaker

(216) 408-2837

Email - usvmc.ashtabula@gmail.com

U.S. Veterans MC Ashtabula is a motorcycle club comprised of 100% all veterans from all branches of service. We are a registered non-profit 501C (19). Our mission is to aid and assist veterans and active duty military. Truly "veterans helping veterans"

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #943

POC - Ernie Anderson (Quartermaster)

Email - vfwpost943@gmail.com

Facebook - @VFWPost#943

Website - vfwpost943.com

The VFW Regulars meet the first Monday of the month, unless it's a holiday at 7 p.m. at our post. The VFW Auxiliary meets the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. We currently have bingo every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. and Karaoke every Friday at 7 p.m. Both events are open to the public.

YOUNG MARINES

POC - Amy Piotrowski

(440) 812-0126 • Email: amymariepio@gmail.com

Facebook: Ashtabula County Young Marines

Website: youngmarines.org/unit/ashtabulacounty/page

The Young Marines is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) youth education and service program for boys and girls, age eight through the completion of high school. The Young Marines promotes the mental, moral, and physical development of its members. The program focuses on teaching the values of leadership, teamwork and self-discipline, so its members can live and promote a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. The Young Marines organization began in 1959 with one unit, and has grown to over 270 units with over 9,000 youth and almost 3,000 adult volunteers in 41 states, and affiliates in other countries. The Young Marines focus on Leadership, Honoring Veterans, and Drug Demand Reduction. They participate in many events throughout the county annually including parades, Toys 4 Tots, volunteering with Blue Star Mothers and Feed the Vets, camp-outs and historic trips.

ORGANIZATIONS continued on other side



OhioMeansJobs - ASHTABULA COUNTY

A group of public, private and non-profit agencies and partner organizations that have joined forces to create a coordinated system to provide workforce services to job seekers.

A resource room is located in the center which offers free use of computers, phones, and printers for use by job seekers. Career counseling and employment assistance are offered. All veterans are given Priority of Service. Veterans' employment representative, Michele Stowe-Caya (US Navy veteran) is available by appointment. Please register in OhioMeansJobs.com by creating a job seeker profile, or call (440) 350-2490.

CONNEAUT, OH

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #2836

POC - Catherine Glosser • cagcatherine@aol.com

The VFW meets at 6 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Optimist Club, located at 514 Harbor Street in Conneaut. Join our team and help the veterans of Conneaut!

GENEVA, OH

THE AMERICAN LEGION POST #124

Physical Address - 115 Park St., Geneva, OH

Mailing Address - P.O. Box 150, Geneva, OH

Legion Phone Number - (440) 361-8076

POC - Don Branford - (440) 223-2247

Email - legionpost124@outlook.com

THE BLUE STAR MOTHERS

POC - Jennifer Reshetar

(440) 339-8280 • Email - president.oh57@bluestarmothers.us

Address: PO Box 482, Geneva, OH 44041

The Blue Star Mothers of America are a non-profit, nationwide organization consisting of local chapters of mothers, and other family members of military men and women. The oath sworn to protect our nation taken by our sons and daughters has led us to serve as well. Our organization works to provide support for veterans at home and active military and families in any way we can. We also welcome mothers who have never had a child serve but are committed to supporting our Military and Veterans. We meet the 3rd Monday of the month in the Geneva VFW at 6:30 p.m.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #6846

POC - Ron Stettler (Commander)

(440) 466-3127 • Email - vfw6846@outlook.com

The VFW meets at 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at 76 Depot St. Geneva, OH.

KINGSVILLE, OH

AMERICAN LEGION NEAL POST #743

Address: 2606 East Center Street (Rt 20), North Kingsville, OH

POC - John Pildner Jr. (Commander) • (440) 813-4981

Dale Hayes (Vice Commander) • (440) 994-9641

Will Runyan (Adjutant) • (440) 228-6023

Email: nealpost743@gmail.com

Facebook: American Legion Neal Post 743 • Website: nealpost743.com

Neal Post is a small dynamic Legion Post of approximately 50 members with service from WW II (3 members) through the current War on Terror. Our reason for being is to serve our fellow Veterans and our community. We meet at 7 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month with all sessions being open to all

Veterans and Community members. Events on our yearly calendar include Three Chaplains Recognition, Armed Forces Day/Echo Taps Ceremony*, Flag placement on Veteran Graves at 8 cemetery and community locations, 3 Memorial Day Ceremonies, Flag Day Retirement Ceremony*, August Post Picnic, Veterans Day Ceremony*, Veterans Day Dinner, Pearl Harbor Day Breakfast, and Wreaths Across America placement and Ceremony*. (Events marked with * occur at and with the generous cooperation of Greenlawn Memory Gardens in North Kingsville.) Our Honor Guard has the privilege to lead Final Military Honors for all Veterans when asked.

ORWELL, OH

AMERICAN LEGION POST #719

Address: 215 N. Maple St., Orwell, OH

POC - Roger Anderson

(440) 473-6280 • (440) 862-7866 • (330) 367-7628

Serving the Grand Valley and surrounding areas of Ashtabula, Trumbull and Geauga. Legion meetings 2nd Tuesday of the month; Auxiliary meeting 1st Tuesday of month. **Upcoming Post Events:** Reverse Raffle/Chinese Auction Saturday, February 11, 2023, 5 p.m. Tickets \$35 each, \$1,000 Main board, only 100 tickets sold. Spaghetti Dinners Thursday, January 19, 2023 and every third Thursday following, from 4-7 p.m. All you can eat for \$10, Kids under 5 eat for Free. We are currently looking for Veterans, Auxiliary and Sons of the Legion wanting to give back to the Grand Valley area. It is time for the next generation to take over and operate our Post. No experience necessary. Rewarding opportunity. Learn at your own speed. Mentors are available.

THE MUSTANG STABLE

POC - Deliarose Marroquin (Ms. M) • (440) 805-4545

The Mustang Stable is Grand Valley Local Schools' community learning center. The Mustang Stable's mission is to provide resources, opportunities, and hope to the Grand Valley Community. Resources at The Mustang Stable include clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and school supplies. The Mustang Stable is open to anyone living in the Grand Valley School District.

ROCK CREEK, OH

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #4953

Address: 3276 N. Main St., Rock Creek, OH

POC - John Dyrzc-(440) 563-9699

The VFW meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Every Wednesday, there will be a Queen of Hearts Drawing, and on Sundays, we congregate to watch NASCAR or the sport of the season and enjoy one another's company.

OUT OF COUNTY SUPPORT

AKRON, OH

THE ROLLING THUNDER® CHAPTER 2 OHIO

MAILING ADDRESS - PO BOX 485, LAKEMORE, OH 44250

EMAIL - EKMAURIC69@GMAIL.COM

Meetings are held the first Sunday of each month at 1 p.m. at VFW Post 3383, located at 690 W. Waterloo Rd, Akron, OH 44314. Rolling Thunder® Ohio Chapter 2 is an all-volunteer, POW/MIA awareness organization made up of citizens who are dedicated to helping disabled, hospitalized, and homeless veterans from all wars. Our members are professional, blue-collar workers, students, veterans, non-veterans, and motorcyclist, non-motorcyclist all coming together to work on common veteran issues.

VSC WEBSITE! Find our website at ashtabulaveterans.com for a lot of great information about the services we provide. From there, you can request a service officer, request Emergency Financial Assistance, read a little about our team, review our outreach events, and leave feedback about the Commission to the Director. There is a calendar on the homepage where you can see different events that the VSC is involved in over the next several months. You can also view our Tribute Page, dedicated to the veterans of our county. You can have yours or a loved one's picture added to as well. All you have to do is provide a picture of yourself or your loved one in service uniform with the conflict you served during and the city in the Ashtabula County that you are affiliated with and we will update our site with it.

Follow us on Facebook @AshtabulaVSC. From here, you will see all of our current events as well as any valuable information that we have to share that could benefit you as a veteran.