

Commander's Corner

As we head into Spring we look forward to a new year and the hope of being able to get on with our lives in a more "normal" way as COVID numbers continue to decline. We've had our elections and all existing officers were re-elected. We also picked up one new officer Jeff Dillon who will be our new Sergeant At Arms. We have picked up many new members and hope that our Post becomes even more active. Hopefully we

will get back to performing annual ceremonies for National holidays like Flag Day, Veterans Day and Memorial Day. I look forward to hosting a Christmas dinner again this year too. Let's keep our fingers crossed.



Over the next few months we will be looking at expanding our reach into the community. Do we, as a Post, want to support a

Boy or Girl Scout pack or troop. There is some planning that needs to take place to accomplish it, but the commitment is small on our part. Do we want to form a "Welcome Home" committee to be there when our National Guard and Reserves come back from deployment? We're planning to put together a committee that will visit several of the senior centers where we will visit with the veterans there. Maybe we will have coffee, maybe cook up dogs and burgers. These and other ideas are being bandied about. We need additional volunteers to fulfill those goals.

In March I had the honor of presenting one of our long time members with a 60 year membership pin, certificate from National, and a Post ball cap. I'm also proud to say that one of our newest members, Warren Fisher accompanied me. We both had a great time reminiscing with Don.

If you are out near the corner of Jackson and Maple Roads, take a look at the latest improvements to Veterans Memorial Park. We've added a couple park benches and six new branch of service medallions. The latter makes the Park seem more dedicated to Veterans. More improvement to come.

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Remembering James Graham

A few days before Christmas 2020, Legionnaire James Graham passed. He was buried on Vietnam Veterans Day, 29 March 2021. The day before was cold and rainy, as was the morning of the 29th. At Noon the rain stopped; Sun broke through the clouds and beamed down on Jim's gravesite. Veterans of European and Korean heritage attended as did members of the Korean-American community. Clergy conducted the service in English and Korean. Son Kryn, US Army Afghan, spoke of his dad. Honor Guard presented Arms. 21 volley Rifle Salute. Taps bugled. Flag folded and presented to widow O Sun. In-country Jim was a front line soldier. Years ago he told me "Agent Orange" herbicide devastated the jungle. "Gray tree trunks and branches, it was a life saver. The Cong had no 'cover' to attack." [We all have "near death" experiences. Although not aware of many of them. We have only One Death Experience]. Second "near death" experience. Pre-deployment to Vietnam he trained at Fort Lewis, Washington. Then two weeks leave. Mess hall bulletin board notice: "Driving to Michigan need buddy to share gas money." Early AM Jim is off to Michigan. Across Washington and Idaho. Buddy started drinking whiskey; wouldn't let Jim drive. Rolling into Montana at night, a stop for gas. The station was also a Greyhound bus stop. Korean vet clerk let Jim rack in back room for the AM bus. Jim said goodbye to his new buddy. Two weeks later he reported to Fort Lewis. His Battalion Sgt was Totally Surprised! Jim's new buddy died in an Iowa car crash. "Graham, we thought you were dead," said the first shirt. Third "near death" experience. "Very Large" bear fishing downstream interfered with Jim's fishing. He threw small stones; bear reared up, sniffed around, then dropped on all 4's and started to gallop upstream. Jim dropped his fly rod and ran to the car. Bear growled, bared his teeth, then returned to fishing. Later Jim returned for his fly rod. Back in Ann Arbor he bought a 1911 A1A Colt .45 cal semi-auto pistol and a Tanker's holster (armor troopers -1- wear across the chest). I thought it an over-reaction. Jim said "Elmer, wait til ya see an angry bear comin' atcha!" Vietnam was Jim's first "near death" experience. At the time he didn't know it. Then Agent Orange disability at midlife. Hospitals, nursing home, hospice. James Graham's Vietnam first "near death" experience became his death experience. Rest in Peace Brave, Beloved Buddy Jimmy. — **Elmer White**

A memorial brick was placed in Jim's name at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Ypsilanti, Michigan during the VVA 310 Memorial Service on Memorial Day.

"Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country's cause. Honor, also, to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and serves, as he best can, the same cause."

— *Abraham Lincoln* —

IN FLANDER'S FIELD

A Poem

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset
glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we
lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies
grow
In Flanders fields.

Poppy Days

We hope we will again be able to sell Poppies this year. Bush's Grocery Store allows us to set up a table at both Ann Arbor stores where we solicit donations and give away a poppy in return. The funds are usually given to a veteran cause. In the recent past WACU (Warriors And Caregivers United) has been the recipient. Read below for a little history on the poppy and it's meaning.



At the age of 41, John McCrae enrolled with the Canadian Expeditionary Force following the outbreak of the First World War. He had the option of joining the medical corps because of his training and age but he volunteered instead to join a fighting unit as a gunner and medical officer. It was his second tour of duty in the Canadian military; he had previously fought with a volunteer force in the Second Boer War. He considered himself a soldier first; his father was a military leader in Guelph and McCrae grew up believing in the duty of fighting for his country and empire.

McCrae fought in the Second Battle of Ypres in the Flanders region of Belgium, where the German army launched one of the first chemical attacks in the history of war. They attacked French positions north of the Canadians with chlorine gas on April 22, 1915 but were unable to break through the Canadian line, which held for over two weeks. In a letter written to his mother, McCrae described the battle as a "nightmare",

For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally. In all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds ... And behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way.

Alexis Helmer, a close friend, was killed during the battle on May 2. McCrae performed the burial service himself, at which time he noted how **poppies** quickly grew around the graves of those who died at Ypres. The next day, he composed the poem while sitting in the back of an ambulance at an Advanced Dressing Station outside Ypres.^[6] This location is today known as the **John McCrae Memorial Site**.

Member Spotlight

Air Force Captain David Barera



“I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant on May 2, 1970, (at age 20), the same day I graduated from the University of Michigan with a BBA degree. My initial assignment was to obtain an MBA degree (at my cost) from the University of Michigan Graduate School of Business Administration (now known as the Ross School of Business), which I received in December 1971. I then served as an auditor for the USAF Auditor General, headquartered at Norton AFB, San Bernardino, CA, where I spent the grand total of one day. Though assigned to Norton, I was actually attached, first, to Fairchild AFB, Spokane, WA, and then to Wurtsmith AFB, Oscoda, MI, both SAC bases.”

“When President Nixon ordered a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam in early 1972, the USAF found itself with too many young officers, causing it to give early-outs (at year-end) to many of us who were not flight-rated. I was then assigned to the Standby Reserve, Air Reserve Personnel Center, Lowry AFB, Denver, CO, from which I was discharged, as a Captain, in 1982. After my active duty was completed, I worked 23 years in corporate banking at what is now J.P.Morgan Chase before retiring and beginning a third career as the Parish Business Manager at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, where I was responsible for “everything but Sacraments”. I retired from that job as of September 2016.”

“My wife, Monika, and I have been married now for over 30 years, and have two sons, Michael, 28, an archivist in Texas, and Matthew, 25, a high school Spanish teacher in suburban Detroit.”

David has been an invaluable asset to our post as our Financial Officer. Since becoming the Finance Officer he has single handedly cleaned up and reorganized our finances. We now have monthly reports and we are current with all the appropriate filings with the Federal Government, State of Michigan, an American Legion.

SALUTING OUR MEMBERS

Member Birthdays

Name	BDay
Andrew Livingston	Apr 1
Doug Harvey	Apr 3
Bill Estep	Apr 15
Jeremy Shaffer	Apr 25
Terrence Reed	Apr 28
Richard Moore Jr.	Apr 29
Daniel Zaleski	Apr 30
Christopher Salata	May 5
Michael Samar	May 6
Douglas Sager	May 8
Richard Gabourie	May 16
Jeff Dillon	May 18
Steve Cox	May 24
Greta Krapohl	May 24
Marion Alberts	May 25
Angus Burch	Jun 2
Eric Fretz	Jun 6
David Barera	Jun 12
Kenneth Bupp	Jun 15
Peter Roopas	Jun 18
James Peters	Jun 27
Gilbert Smith	Jun 27

Member Milestones

Member	Years
Don Eschelbach	60
Bill Number	50
Mark Lindke	40
Ken Motley	40
Harold Brinkley	20
Richard Gabourie	20
Thomas Preston	10
David Dobritt	5
Ralph Easter	5
Don Miller	5

An Interview With April LaRock, LMSW Fisher House Manager/ VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System

April LaRock is the Fisher House Manager for VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System. Originally from Atlanta, GA, she is the daughter of an Army Veteran who served in Vietnam and who later received his care at the Atlanta VA in Decatur, GA prior to his passing in 2000. April has a strong connection to the mission of the VA and has always been passionate about serving Veterans and their families.

◇ **What is the process the potential guests have to go through to be allowed to stay at Fisher House Ann Arbor.**

Individuals requesting Fisher House accommodations must meet the eligibility requirements and be referred via electronic consult in the Veteran's computerized patient record system by a member of the Veteran's VA health care team. However, a referral is a request and does not guarantee a room reservation. Reservations are based on eligibility and room availability.

◇ **What are the eligibility requirements for a family to be able to stay at the Fisher House?**

We welcome families or caregivers who have a loved one receiving care at the VA Ann Arbor Medical Center or are receiving care at a local hospital that is authorized by VA Community Care and coordinated by VA; live 50 miles or more away or have a 2-hour commute from the Fisher House; are medically stable and able to stay in a non-medical, unsupervised setting; and are willing to abide by all house guidelines and regulations. We may also welcome Veterans undergoing periodic episodes of outpatient care at the medical outpatient care at the medical center if they meet the basic eligibility criteria and bring someone to stay with them.

◇ **What happens if you have more requests than you have accommodations for?**

For those who are eligible, Veterans with an accompanying family member or caregiver may be referred to the Hotel Lodging program coordinated by VA Social Work & Community Based Services. For family members, we also have a hotel lodging overflow process where we may help secure hotel lodging paid for by our friends at Fisher House Michigan who are committed to help supporting our families in this way, when possible. We can also help refer them to the Fisher House Foundation's Hotels for Heroes program when Fisher House is not available. Through that program, hotel rooms are made possible through the donation of rewards points by the hotel's rewards members.

◇ **How many staff and volunteers does it take to keep the facility running?**

For a Fisher House this size (with 16 guest suites), we have 4 office staff that includes the Manager, Assistant Manager, and two Housing Management Assistants and 3 housekeepers. We currently have 4 regularly scheduled volunteers and are in the process of recruiting 2 more who have a set schedule with us and a commitment of volunteering at least one day per week at the Fisher House. We look forward to when we will be able to host community volunteer groups who can come in periodically to sponsor meals for the families however due to COVID precautions, that has been put on hold until further notice.

◇ **How many guest rooms are at this facility and what is their makeup?**

We have 16 guest-suites, 10 of which have one queen-size bed and 6 have two full-size beds. We also have a few twin-size rollaway beds we use when needed. Each family is allowed one private guest suite to share, with a maximum occupancy of four people at any given time. Families then share a communal kitchen, dining room, laundry room, library, and family room with all other guests in the house.

◇ **How far away have the guests traveled to stay here?**

We have had guests who have travelled as far away as Colorado, Georgia, Florida, and Texas.

◇ **What is the record for the longest stay for a guest?**

As of now, 50 days is the longest stay for a family here at the Fisher House.

◇ **How many guests has this facility served over the past year?**

Since opening on June 1, 2020, we have served over 1,245 families that include over 2,400 guests. The average length of stay for our families is 3 days.



◇ **What have been some of the guest comments been during/after staying at your facility?**

We have guest journals in each guest suite and have pulled the following quotes from those journals. Hearing from the families is really what helps us to know the impact the Fisher House is making for them and we are so appreciative of the support we receive from our medical center leadership, our friends at Fisher House Michigan and the various community groups and Veterans Service Organizations that help support us.

** "Thank you, Fisher House for love and compassion to our Veterans and their family, helping us in our journey for our loved ones, help and comfort during their sickness. Your comfort and kindness have opened our hearts and lightened our load worrying about our hospitalized loved ones. Thanks for all that you do, we are beyond blessed." – Veteran's family

** "To the Fisher House family...It has indeed been a pleasure and comfort to be able to come from out of town and stay at a place that makes you feel like being at home. I know I have been here before, but each time it has been a comfort. I greatly appreciate you and I know we shall meet again. Thank you all for your service." – Veteran's mother

** "This third visit to the Fisher House began (in January 2021). It has been a day by day often challenging walk as things changed daily in his condition. He was moved in and out of ICU, sometimes moved during the night. Because of the Fisher House, I was not alone. Staff and other guests were a great source of comfort. Also, what a blessing of financial relief for me and my husband to afford us a more than 5 week stay allowing me to be near him and having him know that I am safe. Thank you all connected to and involved with the Fisher House making this a beautiful and safe community and sanctuary of hope and healing." -Veteran's spouse

** "Our experience at Fisher House has been an impactful one. The dedication and commitment to honor and serve our Veterans in such an outstanding manner has left us overwhelmed. Our few days here will not be forgotten. The gift of the Fisher House to the veterans as "home away from home" is truly a blessing. Thank you so much and God bless everyone here." – Veteran & spouse

** "My grandmother and I stayed a few days here at the Fisher House while my grandfather had a lung procedure. The house was beautiful and such a blessing in our time of need. The staff was so friendly. My grandfather is so thankful my grandmother and I had some where so nice to stay while he was in the hospital. As much as we worried about him, he was worried about us. Thanks to the Fisher House, he didn't have to worry about us. Thankfully, his procedure went by without any issues and the proximity of the house to the hospital allowed us to visit him. Staying in this gorgeous place took such a weight off everyone's shoulders. We can never thank the Fisher Foundation enough for making a stressful and difficult time a little easier. May all the families here be as blessed as we were." - Veteran's granddaughter

** "We appreciate the availability of the Fisher House greatly, especially with the increased rate of COVID through the state. We always feel safe and comfortable here. My husband has treatments every 6 weeks and not having to do a day run for a 4-6-hour treatment is nice. Especially with our drive – 3 hours each way. Thank you again for all the kindness & comfort of home." -Veteran's spouse

** "My husband is a Vietnam Vet and is down for an appointment to help with his illness. We travelled from 5 hours north of here. We were so grateful this beautiful safe and clean place is available to spend the night. The staff was very welcoming and helpful! There are not enough words to express how much we appreciate the people who made the Fisher House possible, and available to our vets!" Warmly, Veteran & spouse

** "My stay here is finally complete. I'm so grateful for the Fisher House. I stayed a total of 11 nights for my husband's heart surgery. This place is so wonderful. I cannot express my thankfulness enough. The stress it took just knowing I could come here and be so close to him. The house is beautiful, the staff is the best. So friendly. We sincerely give thanks for this place." -Veteran's spouse

** "The week leading up to our stay at Fisher House was one of the scariest times for our family. Our veteran/husband/father could possibly have cancer again. At a time when everything is so uncertain it was a blessing to have one thing we didn't have to worry about. We were helped in the one way we could be helped in this most difficult time. Thank you so much!" – Veteran's spouse & daughter

For more information about the VA Ann Arbor Fisher House, please visit:

<https://www.annarbor.va.gov/services/>

Ann Arbor VA Renamed



VA Ann Arbor Medical Center
Renaming Ceremony in Honor Of

United States Army
LTC Charles S. Kettles
Friday, June 18th, 2021
1:00 p.m.

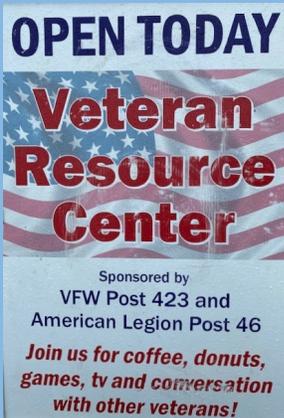


On Friday, June 18 the Ann Arbor VA Medical Center held a ceremony to rename their facility in memory of Medal of Honor Recipient LTC Charles S. Kettles. The day started early with a good bit of rain, but prayers were answered and the ceremony took place in beautiful weather. The Public Affairs Officer, Brian Hayes, emceed the event. Many dignitaries were present including Congresswoman Debbie Dingell, Senator Debbie Stabenow, and a representative from Senator Gary Peters office. Representatives from the VA were also in attendance including Ann Arbor VA Director Dr. Ginny Creasman, VA VISN 10 Network Director Ms. RimaAnn Nelson, and VA Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations Ms. Renee Oshinski. Ann Arbor Mayor Christopher Taylor contributed to the speeches along with VVA Chapter 310 member and personal friend of the Kettles family John Kinzinger, the Kettles son Michael and daughter Margaret. None of the speeches were very long, one was very impassioned, and several were very heart felt. mLive had a reporter and photographer present. For those of you who receive this Newsletter through email you can see their story and pictures by going [here](#). Members of VVA Michigan, VVA Chapter 310, AVVA 310, and American Legion Post 46 could be found attending the event. View pictures taken by Legion Post 46 Commander Dave Draper by selecting this [link](#).



Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center

Our own Chaplain, Bob Bull, started the process over a year ago to get the facility renamed. While driving by another VA facility he noticed that it was named after someone of note. Then a lightbulb went off in his head and he began to wonder why ours was not. Well that set off a chain of events. After conferring with John Kinzinger to get permission to start the process from the Kettles family he started contacting senators, congressmen, and VA representatives. And now, here we are. His mission is not quite complete though. He would like to see a sign on the hospital that shows the new name: LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center. Stay tuned.



Have you ever been to the **VRC**?

The VRC or Veterans Resource Center (veteransresourcecenter.weebly.com) was initially started as a way of getting the post building open to the members. As we began to open the post in the Spring of 2020, the pandemic closed down our efforts. We tried to open again in November, and we were closed down again. But the VFW leadership came to Commander Draper and me (Chaplain Bull) in December to open again. Since December 20th we have been operating as a place of safety and security, of solitude, for our visiting veterans, and their family members. We have a Food Bank and funds for immediate needs, an Open House 3 times a year to help with long-term needs (with VSOs and lawyers) and visiting help from a Navigator and a Veteran Advocate, to help with those needs that change.

And, we are going to be doing so much more with the property to accommodate more of our comrades and friends, with a walking path and many benches for resting, basketball and cornhole, and various classes provided. And beginning soon we'll be starting a group session.

It was Started to open up lines of communication with fellow veterans.
It was Started to relieve our veteran's troubles.
It was Started to END Veteran Suicide.

We see less than 3% of just our own combined memberships at the VRC. Imagine how much MORE we can do if more of us were involved. If more of us were in the fight.

Preaching To The Choir

Words from Chaplain Bob Bull

As I was sitting in this corner and working on his very special note, I realized how hard it is to be everything to everyone.

In the struggle to be relevant in the lives of our members and our friends, we are many times forgetful of making Almighty God relevant in our lives. Working, eating, singing Karaoke, washing clothes, and watching Harry Potter for the fifth time can get in the way of our conversation times with Him. Our children and grandchildren become most important, our health concerns push aside the Lords Day, and we obsess over not having enough time in our day. But when life's struggles become relevant we reach out to the Father and expect Him to make us relevant, and right away.

What kind of a relationship do we have?

God doesn't ask much of us as we go throughout our lives here on earth. He just wants us to walk with Him, be with Him, and talk to Him like Adam, and David, and Paul did.

What kind of a relationship do we want?

In your prayer life daily, tell Him of your day. Ask Him about how you can help Him with His day. And, then listen. And make Him relevant in your life.

We are blessed to be a blessing to others.



A group of veterans decided to put out a cover of an Aretha Franklin song

They Call it RESPTSD

This Quarter's Accomplishments

March 25: At our monthly meeting we voted to approve our proposed new By-Laws and Constitution. They will now go to Department for their approval.

April 10: Commander Draper and member Greta Krapohl delivered the ROTC Tri Service awards to Ensign Clarkston. Each year our Post awards three eligible cadets and midshipmen with a certificate, challenge coin, and \$500.

May 6: The Ann Arbor VA started a food distribution each first and third Thursday of the month. Post 46 was honored to serve, and will continue to serve, the first Thursday. The VA handed out boxes of food to approximately forty veterans.

May 13: May 13 was Police Appreciation Day. As we've done in the past years, our post celebrated it by providing lunch to the police officers of the Ann Arbor VA Medical Center. Many officers consumed their favorite lunch meal of Arby's sandwiches and were very appreciative of our efforts. We would like to thank the Arby's Restaurant on Baker Road in Ann Arbor who for the past few years have provided the meals and have granted us a substantial discount. If you frequent Arby's, please think about supporting the Arby's on Baker Road in Ann Arbor.

May 27: Mark Lindke presented the widow of one of our deceased members, Jim Graham, with a burial flag that he inserted and presented in a display case. Her memory of Jim is now eternal. She was very grateful for our efforts.

June 2: Fisher House Ann Arbor held a private celebration for their one year anniversary of its opening. Fisher House Michigan directors, Fisher House Ann Arbor staff and volunteers were in attendance.

June 14: A few of our members assembled at the flagpole at Veterans Memorial Park in Ann Arbor. Commander Draper performed the ceremony. The week before members placed flags along the sidewalk in front of the flagpole. The weather was absolutely beautiful.

June 18: Ann Arbor VA Medical Center ceremony to rename the facility in memory of Medal Of Honor Recipient LTC Charles S Kettles. Congressmen and Senators, dignitaries from the VA, and representatives from several veterans' organizations were in attendance.

* * *

New Plaques Arriving Soon

Erwin Prieskorn

American Legion Post 46

A staple in Ann Arbor since 1919, Post 46 is rich in history of serving veterans and the local community. If you know of a veteran that does not have an American Legion home give them a copy of this newsletter. Invite them to come out to one of our meetings and see what we are about. Let them know that we meet on the first Thursday of each month at 1830 hrs at our post, located at 3230 S. Wagner Rd.



As many of you know our post has a long rich history in Ann Arbor. Formed in 1919 and chartered in 1923, we've grown, shrunk, and are growing again. After WWII we were met at home with pride and participated in downtown Ann Arbor parades. Our current commander is the seventieth commander of our post. It is the opinion of Commander Draper that we should take pride in our history and immortalize the names of all our past commanders who answered the call and stepped forward to lead our post into the future through the good times as well as the bad. That being said, we recently ordered two plaques to with all the names of the past. At this writing they have not been delivered but should arrive soon.

Erwin Prieskorn

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE