

Commander's Corner



As we think about planning for our annual Christmas Party (is it really that close already?) we contemplate where the heck the year went! Each day I get older, it seems the weeks fly by faster and faster.

I continue my passion to increase our youth and community outreach while trying to keep our main focus on veterans and active military personnel. While my effort to sponsor a youth baseball team failed, I will not let that deter me. Thanks to one of our new members we will be attempting to start recognizing our law enforcement, firefighter, teacher, and hero of the year. Not only will this recognize our heroes but it will also get our organization's name out there to let our community know that we appreciate what these heroes do.

I've tried to include articles in this newsletter from organizations that we support and for those who support us. Please read about each to better understand why we support them. Many of the leaders of these organizations have given of their time to try to explain their purpose and their accomplishments by contributing articles to this newsletter. Please think about supporting them with your time and your money.

I am happy to say that our post contributed supplies to the Hurricane Ida Relief in Louisiana. Through financial donations from our post and a couple private donations we were able to send four pallets of supplies to a staging point in Baton Rouge manned by an American Legion Post. Part of the supplies have already been distributed to needy families..

All-in-all, we've had a good year so far. Thank you all for your support.

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Washtenaw County Vietnam Veterans Memorial

A Short History



In 1986, VVA Chapter 310 received its national charter. One of our initial goals was to erect a Memorial to honor the 76 men of Washtenaw County who died in Vietnam.

In 1989, a committee of six Chapter members was formed and a two-year business plan was put in place. We knew nothing about designing, fundraising or all that was involved. But we had the desire and passion to do it for our 76 brothers who died over there. We met every week for two years. We attended every local event we could to promote awareness and fundraise.

We sacrificed much over those two years, but we got it done. Only donations

were accepted. No tax based money or grants were used.

One week after the dedication on December 10, 1991, the \$85,000 cost was paid. That did not include the approximate \$15,000 of in-kind labor by local skilled tradesmen and donated cement and lumber.

At the Dedication, General William Westmoreland was the keynote speaker. The ceremony went wonderfully with Veterans from across Michigan attending with their color guards, the Lincoln High School band and 'Fat Bob' Taylor performed. The attendance was estimated at between 2,500 and 3,000 people.

To this day, this Memorial and setting has just gotten more beautiful due to the care and love of VVA Chapter 310 members, Friends, and AVVA 310. Make use of the curb parking and visit this beautiful tribute to those who died in Vietnam and all those who served during that war. In the evening, with the lights on, the Memorial has a splendid different appearance. It is located at the Ypsilanti Township Civic Center on South Huron River Drive about ¼ mile east of Whittaker Road.

[John Kinzinger, Memorial Chairman](#)

John is one of the founding fathers of the Memorial and a Charter Member of the Charles S. Kettles Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 310 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Mementos and displays are also presented inside the Ypsilanti Township office lobby.



What do you call a soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray?

A seasoned veteran.

Hurricane Ida Relief



Hurricane Ida was a deadly and destructive Category 4 Atlantic hurricane that became the second-most damaging and intense hurricane to strike Louisiana on record, behind hurricane Katrina, and is tied for the strongest landfall in the state by maximum winds with hurricane Laura a year before and the 1856 Last Island hurricane. The storm also caused catastrophic flooding across the northeastern United States. Ida is the sixth-costliest tropical cyclone on record, having caused at least \$50 billion in damages.¹¹

Wanting to provide help to the displaced residents, Commander Draper made calls to the Department Commander of Louisiana, Tony Betts, to see what steps would be required to send that help, and to see what items were most needed. It was Cmdr Draper's opinion that there were many veterans that were displaced within the affected communities along with the non-military citizens. Cmdr Betts sent Cmdr Draper a list along with the contact information for the local Legion post that was coordinating the donation efforts. Cmdr Draper then contacted his financial officer to solicit funds. Post 46 member Bob Kurtz and two anonymous donors also contributed funds to bring the total financial donations to a little over \$1,500. Cmdr Draper, his wife Meni, and another Post 46 member then hit the stores to purchase the needed supplies. Special thanks to Dexter's Hackney Hardware managers Shelly Adkins and Andy Reiser for their generosity in their support of our mission. Two of the Post 46 members and Charles S Kettles VVA Chapter 310 member Steve Hitte loaded up their trucks and delivered the supplies to Alpine Power in Redford Township. Thanks to Ken Wright of Alpine Power, all the supplies were unloaded off our trucks, palletized, and shipped to Baton Rouge, LA at no cost to us. We received word that we shipped 2000# of supplies! All in all, a great day for a great cause.



Member Spotlight

Glen Johnston



Spec 4, U.S. Army National Guard

1970- 1976

“I enlisted during my senior year at EMU in the Michigan Army National Guard. I served from February 1970 to February 1976. My MOS was 62J20, which is a General construction Machinery Operator. I operated an entrenching machine, paving compactor, road grader, air compressor, and a lot of dump truck driving. My company was the 1436th Engineering Co. based in Muskegon, Michigan. Most of our weekend drills and summer training were held at Camp Grayling. Our company prepared sites for buildings, road repairs and construction, runways, etc. Other enlisted men in the 1436th operated earth movers, bulldozers, and other similar machines.”

“My basic training and AIT were at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. My rank for most of my six years was specialist 4. Enlisting in the National Guard allowed me to keep on with my college studies. At EMU I majored in Business Administration with a degree in Accounting. After completing Basic and AIT and EMU, finding a full-time job was quite difficult as many potential employers felt that I would be activated to go to Vietnam and wanted me to apply after that tour of duty. By mid 1971, President Nixon had started moving American forces out of Vietnam and wanted me to apply after that tour of duty. By mid 1971, President Nixon had started moving American forces out of Vietnam taking that pressure off my being able to find work. I eventually was able to go into a Bank Management training program which led to a 25-year career as a Bank Manager and Small Business Loan Officer until one too many bank mergers led to having to find something else to do.”

Glen has been serving us as Adjutant for the past two years and a Legion member for nine years.

* * *

SALUTING OUR MEMBERS

Member Birthdays



<u>Name</u>	<u>BDay</u>
Bill Yek	Jul 04
Oleg Michejlenko	Jul 06
Tom Preston	Jul 07
Joel Murray	Jul 10
Bob Ongaro	Jul 12
Brian Williams	Jul 14
Bob Biggs	Jul 20
John Devine	Jul 21
John Kinzinger	Jul 21
Chris Malley	Jul 21
Clifford Morris	Jul 28
Harold Brinkley	Aug 04
Warren Fisher	Aug 08
Paulo Pereira	Aug 09
Steve Duncan	Aug 10
Horace Frazier	Aug 12
Ken Motley	Aug 13
Terry Tison	Aug 19
Bob Harvey	Aug 23
Laurel Burkel	Aug 23
Mark Lindke	Sep 01
Bob Kurtz	Sep 01
James Mattke	Sep 02
Margaret Gersh	Sep 03
Stephany Escobedo	Sep 06
Glen Johnston	Sep 10
David Dobritt	Sep 11
Dale Thronberry	Sep 15
James Harper	Sep 16
Roger Losey	Sep 19
Mark Kolander	Sep 19
Ulysses Grisham	Sep 23
Michael Rudisale	Sep 27
Bob Warner	Sep 29

Veterans Honor Guard of Washtenaw County



I have had the honor of being part of the Honor Guard for several years, although I have not been active for the past couple of years. The service is very gratifying when we honor a fallen veteran. The families usually come up to us after the service and are emotionally thankful. There have been times when it has been challenging. The frigid cold during winter and long winded gravesite services in 80 to 90 degree heat standing at parade rest are examples. We persevered though it in a dignified manner to pay proper tribute to a fellow veteran.

As a member of the Honor Guard I had the distinct honor of presenting the honorary flag to my sister-in-law at my brother's funeral . It was way more emotional than I had anticipated. If you've every been to one you know how moving it can be. [Contributed by Dave Draper](#)

The Veterans Honor Guard currently has 32 active and 17 inactive members, with 11 in Memorium. As of this writing they have performed 58 services, and that's with none in January or February because of COVID. If you have loved ones that passed who are veterans, one can contact the funeral home where they will be serviced and ask them for Honor Guard services. This can be just *Taps* or rifle firing and *Taps*.

Below is a little history of the Veterans Honor Guard of Washtenaw County as provided John Kinzinger. John is a member of our Post, the Honor Guard, and past head of the Honor Guard.

In the mid-1990s local Veterans organizations were unable to put together an honor guard unit to provide a good military funeral. And if they had one, they would generally only do one for their members.

Around 1995, the Ypsilanti American Legion, led by Jerry Sims and Tom Ernst, formed a group who would do any honorably discharged Veteran in the area. We were not all Veterans, but we did the best we could. We used a boombox with a cassette recording of *Taps*. In the beginning, we might only get 3 or 4 members out to do the entire service. And on cold winter days, or when the batteries ran down, the boombox would not play right, it just froze up some or played it very slow.

In the beginning, we were an honorable but somewhat ragtag group. We did our best and I believe those we honored looked down and said thank you. Then things began to improve. We eventually had our own set of rifles and did not have to borrow from different organizations. We established a protocol, uniform design and started a nice esprit de corps among our group.

In 2000, we were contacted by a local former music teacher, Ralph Harris, who had read about "Bugles Across America." They wrote about units like ours needing live buglers. He has been with us ever since and has performed more than 2,000 funerals in our county.

Since 2000, we added three other buglers, which makes us a most versatile unit. We also moved the group under the auspices of the VVA Chapter 310, the only county wide Veterans group. We still bring along an electronic bugle, just in case. We also carry a defibrillator to each service, just in case the need arrives.

Our Veteran ranks grew and now today, it is not unusual for us to have 15 Veterans show up to perform military honors.

We fire rifles, fold the Flag, present the Flag and we adopted an educational narrative performed during the Flag folding. It covers the history and words for *Taps* and the meaning of the 13 folds in the Flag. This has become a most important aspect of the service we provide.

During non-Covid years, we average 140– 160 funerals per year. We have been known to cover up to four funerals in one day. These funerals are just in Washtenaw County.

Our all-volunteer, proud and most dependable Veterans group, at our own cost, proudly perform funerals all across our county. Our median age is nearly 80 years old. But we are most dependable when it comes to honoring a brother or sister Veteran.

The AARP Ride@50+ Program

Filling Transportation Gaps to Get People Where They Need to Go

Feonix Mobility Rising and the AARP have teamed up to provide a new way to help people bridge transportation gaps and get to the places that they need to go – the AARP Ride@50+ Program.

The Ride@50+ Program – built on the Mobility as a Service (MaaS) framework and powered by Feonix – Mobility Rising – provides a single point of access to review, compare, book, and pay for local transportation alternatives through a mobile application, online booking platform, or by phone. Individuals can book trips, such as the grocery store, employment, medical appointments, meetings, and social events. The cost of each ride depends on the length and transportation option chosen and is clearly stated at the time of booking before payment is made. Payment is made using any major credit card. Most participating transportation providers do give a discount to be part of the Program.

People can book and pay for rides for themselves – the Ride@50+ Program is a great tool to have in your toolbelt to source local, affordable ground transportation!

Community Organizations can also create accounts in the Ride@50+ Program, and can then book and fund transportation for those in the community they serve for whom transportation is often a barrier.

The Ride@50+ Program is open to people of all ages and AARP membership is not required. This is a program for anyone who simply needs a way to get from A to B.

Currently, free door-to-door rides to and from COVID-19 vaccinations are available to Washtenaw County residents who book through the AARP Ride@50+ Program call center – 1-844-900-4892 – and use the code “Vaccinate Washtenaw.” The free rides were made possible through a grant from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

The Ride@50+ Program offers a simple, affordable, and efficient solution to finding local transportation for people of all ages. Feonix and the Ride@50+ Program are honored to partner with American Legion Post 46 to help Veterans in our community access critical services, provides options to get to where they want to go, and helps folks live fuller and healthier lives. *Alison Petersen, Community Development Manager*

As many of you know our Post enhanced the AARP Ride@50+ program by offering FREE rides for veterans, active military, and their caregivers for essential services to anywhere within Washtenaw County. Instead of calling the AARP number, we have set up a Post number where we handle the calls ourselves. We book the rides so we can assure that the veterans are going to an authorized destination. You can book a ride by calling our Legion Ride number at (734) 707-7785.

Guitars For Vets

22 per day. Up to 30% of veterans experiencing PTSD annually. The remnants and recollections of war can be devastating. While there are many helping vets get through tough times, from the VA Hospital system to other great charities, the mission is rightly focused on veterans, providing tools to help themselves through their own personal struggles. At Guitars for Vets, we offer one more tool in the toolkit, the power of healing through music.

Started by guitar instructor Patrick Nettesheim in Wisconsin, he helped a friend, a Vietnam Marine Corps Veteran work through his PTSD by opening up his hands and mind through the guitar. Since 2007, they've been sharing their story and built the charity to its nationwide status with dozens of chapters.

Our local Ann Arbor Chapter, started by Vietnam Vet Dale Beddingfield and OEF/OIF Vet John McMahon, has faced numerous challenges. Once finally established as a chapter in 2019 and after only a couple sessions at the Kettles VA Medical Center, COVID 19 interrupted the lessons. Undaunted by the virus, Instructors Horace Frazier, Curt Jaksen and John McMahon persevered. The VA Medical Center prohibited volunteer groups from operating in the hospital. The Ann Arbor VFW Post 423 and American Legion Post 46 opened its doors to provide a place for our instructors to responsibly distance from students, even teaching outdoors to continue the mission.

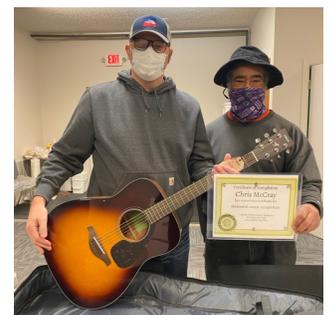
Instructors also taught virtually to keep the mission from slowing down.

The end result is over a dozen students creatively endured ten lessons and graduated from the program since the rocky start. Additionally, the VA shared awareness of the program through an email blast in the late spring resulting in high demand for the program and a backlog of 28 students.

We've received generous support of the Ann Arbor VFW, American Legion and the Vietnam Veterans of America and continue our harmonious efforts. G4V Ann Arbor is also on the lookout for old guitars and musical equipment to use as loaners, fund raisers and for our companion organization, Operation Art Strings where vets learn to paint, create and share their designs at auctions throughout the year.

Additionally, we are seeking volunteer instructors as well to help reduce our backlog.

We are also offering sponsorship of a custom designed Dean Zelinsky electric guitar, which will be awarded to one of our graduating students. For more information, contact John McMahon at mi.annarbor.ad@guitarsforvets.org or check out the G4V web site at guitarsforvets.org





September 11- Let us never forget!

The September 11 attacks, often referred to as 9/11, were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Wahhabi Islamist terrorist group al-Qaeda against the United States on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. Four California-bound commercial airliners, which took off in the northeastern United States, were hijacked mid-flight by 19 al-Qaeda terrorists which then took out the Twin Towers and part of the Pentagon. Thanks to the bravery of the passengers of the fourth plane, destruction of the fourth destination was never accomplished. Thousands of troops over the ensuing years were sent to Afghanistan to take out the head of the snake. Last month we prepared ourselves to celebrate the second decade anniversary of the event. Now, as we pull our troops out of Afghanistan, we once again fell victim to terrorism as more deaths are inflicted on our troops. It is a stark reminder to us to never let our guard down.

Our Post celebrated the twentieth anniversary by co-sponsoring a 9/11 Remembrance at the Ann Arbor VFW Post on September 11. First responders, veterans and their families, and the general public were invited.

Who is WACU?

Warriors And Caregivers United (WACU) came about because of the absence of VA support for the caregivers of warriors returning from war experiencing the effects of PTS (Post Traumatic Stress). In 2016, I was talking with a mental health director at the VA and asked what they did for caregivers or warriors. She stated they had a couple-hour seminar for them on a Saturday the previous summer. I was astounded they had not done more to help the warrior through their caregiver (spouse, parent or other). Warrior Caregivers need to be given tools to help their warrior when he/she has a PTS episode. I had been searching for a way to personally impact the issue of Veteran suicide. That is when I decided to start the not-for-profit 501c3 organization WACU. We received our IRS determination approval on September 1, 2016.

WACU is structured so both warriors and caregivers can participate and hold officer positions. And both have input on the development of programs. Our current President is a very talented and compassionate caregiver, Stephanie Hall. And we have several Vietnam War Veteran mentors involved to support the program.

WACU Mission Statement:

Warriors and Caregivers United in supporting, connecting, and helping one another.

Our Mission:

- . Embrace Warriors and Caregivers in a nonjudgmental, safe, and unassuming environment.
- . Provide venues for the gathering of the WACU community.
- . Develop acceptance of existing resources and systems to educate and promote utilization.
- . Assist children in understanding the effects of PTSD on their loved ones.
- . Encourage and support development of new and old relationships.

We have a Board of Directors and officers but no members, as other Veterans groups have. Established Veteran groups have experienced difficulties in recruiting young Veterans. WACU decided to use the term associates for our participants, rather than members. WACU's network connection is through a closed Facebook group. Even though WACU is spread across much of southern Michigan, we come together through Facebook at monthly events in different locations. There are no traditional meetings. Most events are family oriented. We encourage the caregiver, warrior and children to attend. They have the opportunity to meet others also contending with PTS issues and their new normal life after returning home.

The number of WACU Associates we have is based on the number of closed Facebook contacts we have touched and connected with. That amounts to over 300. Although we focus mostly on Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans, we also include Vietnam Veterans.

Please check our WACU website at WACU.org.

John Kinzinger, WACU Director

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.



Emergency management: "Always remember that if one engine fails on a dual-engine plane, you'll still have enough power to safely reach the scene of the crash."

This Quarter's Accomplishments

June 30: Placed flags at Vets Park for Independence Day

July 1: Sent out 2nd quarter Prieskorn Press

July 8– 11: Department Convention took place in Sault Ste. Marie. Our post was recognized as the second best in new membership. New Dept officers were elected.

July 23: Cmdr Draper presented a \$2,500 check to Hope Clinic to benefit their \$5.5M fundraiser campaign to increase their free services to their patients.

July 24: Open House at the VFW Post. Many vendors and veteran related organizations attended. We gained two new members at this event.

August 2: We started a new program to provide free transportation to our veterans for essential services. This service is available to destinations within Washtenaw County.

August 8: Our Post was invited to the Michigan Army National Guard post in Ypsilanti for their open house. Several people stopped by our table to receive info and pamphlets.

August 9: We presented a donation of \$500 to Mrs. Karen Keezer. The donation was to offset her material costs for the scarves and stress balls she knits for the guests and patients at both the Fisher House & Ann Arbor VA.

August 26– September 2: Cmdr Draper attended the American Legion National Convention in Phoenix, AZ.

September 6: Our post placed 13 crosses and American flags at the Ann Arbor Veterans Memorial Park in memory of the 13 Service men and women who lost their lives in Afghanistan.

September 8: Donated supplies to the victims of Hurricane Ida in Louisiana.

September 11: Held a 9/11 Remembrance at our post where we honored those lost on September 11, and we also paid tribute to the thirteen military members that were lost in Afghanistan.

September 17– 19: Cmdr Draper attended the American Legion Department Conference at Shanty Creek in Bellaire, Michigan.

* * *

Post 46 Receives Membership Award

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.



At the Department of Michigan Annual Convention in Sault Ste Marie, Michigan, Commander Draper accepted, on behalf of our Post, an Award Certificate for Highest Membership Count Above Goal and a check for \$1000 . Our goal, as determined by National, was 99 members. We ended up with 120 at the end of the campaign. The picture above shows Post 46 Commander Draper receiving the award from Department Commander Barry Wood.

Erwin Prieskorn

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