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Read about Sunday's parade, Blue Star Mothers and more in the main edition of today's Times Leader



'It saved me'

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Kyle Jones, a volunteer and veteran of the Navy, pilots one of the Camp Freedom Trex Wheelchairs out of the garage, to be used by a guest at the facility. These special chairs are designed to go over the terrain at the camp.

Carbondale outdoors facility aims to help disabled veterans, first responders

By Patrick Kernan
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CARBONDALE — A few miles north of Scranton, located off a side road, itself off another side road in the city of Carbondale, is a recreational facility unlike any other in our area, because it's focused on one thing: being a supportive place for disabled veterans and first responders.

Home base at Camp Freedom is a beautifully remodeled cabin, and it's the first thing visitors will

notice as they emerge from a heavily forested dirt road on their way to the property. Pulling into the driveway, a Times Leader reporter was greeted by Matt Guedes, executive director of the facility.

Guedes said Camp Freedom has been open since January 2018, and since then has been focused on helping veterans and first responders who are struggling with either physical or mental disabilities, along with Gold Star Families. While the facility is open to anyone with

disabilities, these groups serve as the target audiences.

'Breaking the pattern'

Their way of helping is a bit different from other nonprofits that are targeted at the same populations. Camp Freedom doesn't provide physical therapy or psychiatric help; instead, it's about offering a getaway from the stressors of real life.

"Man, we do everything," Guedes said. "We hike, we bike, we walk, we

See FACILITY | 31E



Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Father and son Bruce Crane and Bruce Adam Crane, of Wisconsin, pose for a photo before going hunting at Camp Freedom in Carbondale. Both are Army veterans and the senior is suffering from muscle atrophy due to agent orange exposure. The elder Crane wouldn't normally be able to hunt due to his disability. The younger Crane shot his first deer with a bow and arrow while on the trip and the father took down a 14 point buck.



Times Leader file photo

Joseph Barna, 89, a Korean Conflict Veteran, won the National Gold Medal in the Veteran Administration Creative Arts Contest for his essay 'Tears.'

Korean War vet wins top prize in national VA essay contest

By Bill O'Boyle
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FREELAND — For years, Korean War veteran Joe Barna said he couldn't cry — not even during the saddest of moments in his life.

Barna, 89, told of an emotional encounter with a fellow Korean War U.S. Marine Corps veteran that

moved him to tears.

It was such a moving experience, Barna wrote an essay about the encounter and how he can now, finally, cry tears.

The essay, appropriately titled "Tears," was chosen as the National Gold Medal winning entry in the Veteran Administration Creative Arts Contest.

Barna was invited to

attend the National Creative Arts Festival, held in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Oct. 30 thru Nov 3., where he received his first place award — the best of regional winners from the 140 VA hospitals nationwide.

"The essay talks about the many years that I couldn't cry," Barna said.

See ESSAY | 13E



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Veterans parade honorees in focus

By Bill O'Boyle
boboyle@timesleader.com

KINGSTON — The 2019 Wyoming Valley Veterans Day parade was held on Sunday, Nov. 10, and honored Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Chief Petty Officers (CPOs).

You can read more about it on the front page of today's main edition, but here is background on the event itself, and those honored.

The Parade Committee named this year's Parade Grand Marshall — MSG John P. Karpovich, PAARNG.

A pre-parade brunch was held at the VFW Post 283, Wyoming Avenue, Kingston.

Charlie Luce, COL, MP, USA, Ret., Parade Committee Secretary, said Rear Adm. Linda Wackerman, ret., and MSG Karpovich spoke at the brunch.

Luce said the Parade Committee worked in partnership with the South Wilkes-Barre Residents Association and Steve Taren on Wet Paint Printing & Design to hold the Veteran's Day Parade 5-K Walk/Run.

The 5-K was held on Sunday, Nov. 3, at Miner Park in South Wilkes-Barre.

Karpovich, of Luzerne County, was recently presented with the Pennsylvania Veterans Service Medal at Fort Indiantown Gap — the first soldier to ever receive this award.

The medal was presented by the Adjutant General of the Pennsylvania National Guard, Major General Anthony J. Carrelli, during a ceremony in December 2018.

The Pennsylvania Veterans Service Award was authorized by Gov. Tom Wolf in 2017. The award recognizes individual achievements in support of Pennsylvania veterans.

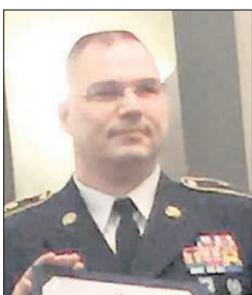
"I was totally honored to be selected as the first recipient of the Pennsylvania Veterans Service Medal," Karpovich said.

Karpovich is the son of Anthony and Nancy Karpovich of Hanover Township. He currently resides in Hunlock Creek with his wife Taveynn and their two children, Georgia, 18, and Hailey, 15.

Karpovich said he got involved with the AMVETS, American Legion, Wyoming Valley Veterans Day Parade Committee, and NEPA Veterans Multi-Care Alliance because a veteran asked him.

"I saw what these organizations do for their fellow members, as well as how they give back to the community," Karpovich said. "I wanted to be a part of that and help make a difference."

Karpovich said he feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know World War II and Korean War veterans because of his involvement in the veterans organizations. He



Karpovich

said he has connected with the veterans community and feels he is a better person for it.

"My wife, children, and family always support me and understand when I take time away to attend meetings," Karpovich said. "They also attend many veterans events with me. My wife, children, and parents were able to be there and witness me being presented the medal. I am honored to be able to serve the veterans of our community."

Active in 109th Field Artillery

Karpovich said he developed many relationships and became involved with multiple veterans service organizations while assigned to the 109th Field Artillery in Wilkes-Barre. Even though his military service would find him stationed outside the Wyoming Valley, he maintained his commitment to the veterans in his community and beyond.

Karpovich is currently stationed at Fort Indiantown Gap, where



Wackerman

he serves as the Joint Force Headquarters, G1 Operations Sergeant.

Karpovich has been an active member of the Wyoming Valley Veterans Day Parade Committee for 19 years, is a life member of AMVETS Post 59 in Hanover Township, member of American Legion Post 395 in Kingston for 18 years, serves on the board of directors for the Northeastern PA Veterans Multi-Care Alliance, and is a member of the Honorary First Defenders in Allentown.

Rear Adm. Linda Wackerman

Wackerman grew up in Key Biscayne, Florida. She is a graduate from Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado, with a B.S. in Aerospace Science, M.A. with Pennsylvania State University in Homeland Security, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI alumni. She was designated a Naval Aviator in October 1987.

Her active duty tours include HC-3, the Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS); and fleet tour

assignment with HC-11, NASNI, California flying the H-46D and deployed to WESTPAC. Wackerman was assigned to shore duty with VT-6 and the Instructor Training Unit, NAS Whiting Field, Florida instructing flight training in the T-34C Mentor. Her Full Time Support (FTS) officer duty assignments were both at NAS JRB Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, as the Assistant Reserve Program Director for 2,300 reservists and flying the UC-12B; and VR-52, flying the C-9B/DC-9 providing world-wide fleet logistics support.

Wackerman became a Selected Reservist (SELRES) with VR-52 in June 1999 where she became the Commanding Officer of VR-52. Subsequent SELRES tours include training officer of Navy Reserve Capabilities Assessment Unit (OPNAV N8) in the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. She served as the Commanding Officer for Navy Reserve, Commander, Navy Region Mid Atlantic, Region Operations Center (ROC) in Norfolk, Virginia. She then served as Commanding Officer, Navy Reserve, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Operations and Planning N3/N5 unit in the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. She was assigned as Navy Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (NEPLO) for the state of Pennsylvania and Deputy Commander for the NEPLO Program

at Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC). She then served as the Commander, NR CNIC NEPLO leading the NEPLO Program; and COS for the WNY Shooting.

Her flag assignments include Reserve Deputy Director, Assessment Division, OPNAV N81 and Deputy, Naval Inspector General, and Deputy Commander USNAVSO and FOURTH Fleet.

Rear Admiral Wackerman's personal military decorations include the Legion of Merit (4th Award), Meritorious Service Medal (3rd Award), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (2nd award), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (3rd award). She was selected as 2005 Federal Women and 1995 NAS JRB Willow Grove Women of the Year. She is a 757/767 International Pilot with American Airlines where she has accumulated over 5,400 military and 10,000 civilian flight hours. She continues to serve as the Navy Representative for Secretary of Defense's Reserve Forces Policy Board, an appointed Professional Standards National Volunteer for Allied Pilots Association for all American Airlines' Pilots, an Executive Board Member for the Boy Scouts of America Washington Crossing Council and the YMCA of Bucks County.

We can never thank our veterans enough



Bill O'Boyle

Beyond the Byline

WILKES-BARRE — Where would we all be if it weren't for veterans?

We sure wouldn't be living in a free country where we can speak freely, worship freely and always feel safe.

That's why we should always shake the hand of a veteran and thank them for their service. It's a big deal, really.

For as long as I can remember, I wondered what happened to my father in World War II. Why he lost his right leg and why he had to go through life wearing a wooden leg that was both difficult to move with and drew attention to him.

Dad never wore his courage on his sleeve. Like all veterans, he was called to serve his country and went into battle willingly. Veterans knew what was at stake. They knew what could lie ahead. They were filled with fear and uncertainty, but they went forward — they met the enemy and they won.

In battle after bloody battle, our guys won. Our freedoms were preserved. So many lives were lost, yet more came to battle.

Veterans are special people, indeed. Patriotism is in their blood, Loyalty to country is part of their DNA. Call it courage, bravery, commitment — they all had it and they accepted the task at hand.

How else can you explain all those GIs on those landing boats on D-Day? Standing there, weapons in hand, waiting for the gate to open to charge the beach and run to meet a waiting enemy. They all knew that many of them would never return to their homes and families and friends and communities. Yet they ran to meet the enemy.

It's chilling to try to put yourself in their shoes. Young soldiers — 18, 19, 20 years old — charged with the responsibility of fighting for our freedoms. They must win, they must fight, they must, in so many cases, die on those battlefields.

It was the same in every war America has fought in — the stakes were always the same. History reads of bloody battles, thousands of lives lost, freedoms preserved.

Never a doubt. Never a question. Never a disobeyed order. Soldiers fought. Soldiers died. Victories were won. Freedoms preserved.

We can't ever thank them enough. Those that died in defense of their country hold a special place in our hearts. They gave it all for us. And those who returned, wounded, scarred — we owe them too. We will never know or understand what they



Lt. Col. James H. Harvey, a Tuskegee Airman, talks with a neighbor and childhood friend Ivan Pettit on his final day of traveling through Northeast Pennsylvania in May. Harvey grew up in Nuangola and lived in Wilkes-Barre and was a part of the first all-African American military pilot team to fight in World War II. During his four-day return to the area he spoke about his time as an airman, and was honored with a final celebration at the American Legion 781 in Mountain Top.

went through. We will never feel what they felt on those battlefields. We will never know what it was like to meet the enemy in battle — to kill or be killed.

So to honor veterans with a parade or a handshake and a thank you is the least we can do. To stand along the parade route, holding an American flag is a symbol — a message — to all veterans that we love them, we respect them and we thank them for all they have done for us.

Veterans are proud of their service, as they should be. We should be even more proud that they served in the military for us. They defended their country — our country. They fought for it. They fought for us.

And they would do it again and again — for us.

My dad kept his story inside for most of his life. It was near the end of his life that he decided to tell me what happened on that day. How he ran onto the beach, up a hill, firing his weapon as the enemy fired back. And then he woke up in a MASH unit.

He was told his right leg was gone. Dad's response was, "I guess I'm going home."

He came home, got fitted for his wooden prosthesis, and got a job. He served his community. He joined every veterans organization he could find. He attended every veterans ceremony held every year.

Dad never forgot. He knew, despite the loss of his right leg, that he was one of the lucky ones to come home alive. He knew thousands never made it back. Dad never forgot that and he always honored veterans.

That's why I'll be on the roadside to watch those proud veterans go by. I'll wave and I will feel proud. And every veteran I encounter, I will thank each and shake their hand. Dad would like that.

Celebrate our veterans every day.

If not for them, we wouldn't be able to enjoy every moment of freedom that we all have.

Reach Bill O'Boyle at 570-991-6118 or on Twitter @TLBillOBoyle, or email at boboyle@timesleader.com.

A MILITARY FAMILY'S VIEWS

Marine showed early interest in military, service to community



In honor of Veterans Day, the parents of one Wyoming County serviceman shared their thoughts with the Times Leader about their son's time in the military, and what the day means to them.

NAME: Connor Jenkins
AGE: 20
BRANCH: United States Marine Corps
JOB: Field radio operator
MOM AND DAD: Meg and Brian Jenkins
HOMETOWN: Center Moreland

EDUCATION: Tunkhannock Area High School, 2017

WHAT LED CONNOR TO SIGN UP?
 He always had an interest in law enforcement, the military.

At an early age Connor decided to serve the people by becoming a fifth-generation volunteer firefighter as a member of the Northmoreland fire company.

During high school he decided he wanted to serve his country. In September of his senior year he took us

down and had us sign the papers for him to become a United States Marine.

ARE YOU A MILITARY FAMILY?

Not really in the immediate family, but we do have a niece in the Air Force.

WHEN DID HE ENLIST?

He graduated boot camp on Dec. 1, 2017. He then went to his MOS (Military Occupation Specialties) training and after that assigned his PDS (Permanent Duty Station) at Miramar (California).

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING A MILITARY MOM?

It really is a mix of extreme pride, but also fear with him so far away.

DO YOU GET TO SPEAK TO HIM OFTEN?

Well, when he's on ship it's emails only.

DOES VETERANS DAY MEAN MORE TO YOU NOW?

Yes. All these (patriotic) days really do.

— As told to Roger DuPuis

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A veteran and a scholar

Lackawanna College President Mark Volk, an Army veteran, talks about vets on campus

By Roger DuPuis
rdupuis@timesleader.com

SCRANTON — Lackawanna College President Mark Volk understands the needs of the veterans in his student population.

That's because he is a veteran himself. Volk spent 26 years in the U.S. Army, retiring with the rank of colonel, before entering the world of academia.

He respects that many of the college's students, including veterans, increasingly seek education which is relevant to the world of work and will help their employability. Many, especially the veterans, appreciate an education that is relatable and usable.

"It's about experiential learning versus book learning," he said during a recent interview. "People now want to make a

difference."

For Volk, helping move the college in that direction has been the capstone of a long and distinguished career.

Volk, an Easton native, is the son of a World War II veteran who joined the U.S. Marines in 1945.

"I kind of grew up with the idea of service to the nation," he said. "I also knew in my mind that I wanted to be an officer."

Volk earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from the University of Scranton in 1977.

He said a chance encounter with a friend on the rifle team led him to ROTC and then to the military. That friend was Ray Angeli — whose career in many respects mirrored his own, and who was Volk's predecessor as Lackawanna's president.



Times Leader file photo

Lackawanna College President Mark Volk is seen at his desk. Volk is a veteran who served 26 years in the U.S. Army, retiring as a colonel.

Volk entered the military thinking he would serve for two or three years.

"But then it all kind of clicked for me," he recalled. "I loved the community, the mission."

That mission would take him to diverse corners of the world, and lead to increasingly important roles.

As his official college biography points out, Volk served in a variety

of command and staff positions at home and overseas.

He also trained as a Middle East/North Africa Foreign Area Officer (FAO) regional specialist studying Arabic at the Defense Language Institute, the bio adds, and is also a graduate of the Department of State Foreign Service Institute, Tunisia, where he continued his Arabic studies and traveled extensively throughout



Times Leader file photo

Mark Volk, president of Lackawanna College, is seen at his office. the Middle East and North Africa.

The transition to academia, again, was one where Angeli played a role, acting as a mentor when Volk was teaching in the 1980s, and eventually drawing him to Lackawanna.

Volk was appointed to the position of Vice President of Planning and Operations in 2004 and then was promoted to Executive Vice President of the College in 2007. He succeeded Angeli in 2012.

Under Volk's tenure, the student body has grown 26%, to about 1,860, he said.

Lackawanna has many programs to benefit veterans, and Volk said that thanks to that and their benefits, many can attend for almost no

cost.

He also encourages them to be active members of the student community, from classroom to clubs and groups.

Volk is in the process of transitioning into retirement on a high note, and also had words of wisdom and admiration for those who serve the nation, like himself, this Veterans Day.

"We all serve for different reasons, and at different times, from different cultures, but we all have a common bond," Volk said. "We all at one point raised our hands and took an oath."

"Veterans Day is an opportunity to acknowledge the debt we all owe to those who served, including those of us who also served."

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"A modern approach with traditional dignity"

Cartwright listens to concerns of veterans at event

By Bill O'Boyle

boboyle@timesleader.com

KINGSTON — Pete Kondrosky said he knows several military veterans living under bridges in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Kondrosky, founder and chairman of the Susquehanna Valley Military Affairs Council, was at Friday's "Coffee with Veterans," hosted by U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright at the Black Diamond American Legion, 386 Wyoming Ave., Kingston.

Kondrosky and about 25 other veterans took advantage of the opportunity to let Cartwright know what issues they are confronted with in hopes that the congressman can help find solutions.

Kondrosky said he was going to ask Cartwright if funding can be allocated to create spaces in buildings — churches, large vacant buildings — for dormitories for homeless veterans.

"I'd like to see more programs to distribute needed items to homeless veterans," Kondrosky said. "We can have programs, like free haircuts to those who need them. We need to do more for our veterans."

"As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I was honored to join the Subcommittee on Military Construction & Veterans Affairs in 2019," said Cartwright, D-Moosic. "This as a unique opportunity to lead on the issues affecting veterans in our district and in the rest of Pennsylvania, which is proudly home to more than 800,000 men and women who have served our country."

Cartwright said since America's founding, ser-

vice members have made countless sacrifices to keep families safe.

"In return, our nation owes veterans an invaluable debt, and our government has a unique responsibility to care for them when they come home," Cartwright said.

Friday's event was Cartwright's 22nd of an ongoing series of events he has held across Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District this year.

Sean Sweeney, a U.S. Navy veteran from Shavertown, agreed, adding that more funding is needed for programs like suicide prevention.

"We also need more money to fund re-integration programs for veterans returning from overseas deployments," Sweeney said. "And we need to make those programs easier to access."

Thomas Rusak of Hanover Township, a U.S. Army veteran, told Cartwright that he is an alcoholic who has been sober for 20 years and he credited the programs offered at the VA Hospital for helping him.

The VA Hospital is a great asset for this region," Rusak said.

Rusak was also concerned about parking at the hospital. He was told that the VA plans to construct a multi-level parkade, but Rusak said that could take years. He suggested Cartwright propose the VA rent spaces at the Wyoming Valley Mall for employees to free up space for veterans.

U.S. Army Signal Corps veteran Steve Radzinski of Kingston told Cartwright that he has concerns about the direction the country



U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright shakes hands with Thomas Rusak at the Black Diamond American Legion during "Coffee with Cartwright" on Friday.

is going regarding its treatment of the military.

"Our intelligence gathering is being degraded," Radzinski said. "There doesn't seem to be the respect on the part of the current administration."

William Uggiano, a U.S. Navy veteran from Wilkes-Barre, said the U.S. seems to be retreating from the rest of the world.

"How can we lead from behind?" Uggiano said. "How can we exert our influence around the world?"

Uggiano, whose son survived a shooting, said he is concerned about gun violence and the types of weapons available to criminals.

Ben Gorda of Swoyersville said he wants to see more done to crack down on the flow of illegal drugs into the country.

"More and more drug dealers are coming to our area," Gorda said. "And we are seeing more people becoming victims of gun violence."

Rich Pries, commander of the Black Diamond American Legion, said he was pleased that Cartwright was on hand to talk to veterans.

"Anytime we can host an event that addresses the concerns of veterans, we are honored to do so," Pries said.

Mary Moczulski of Shavertown said she was there to ask about the national health care bill that is expected to be rolled out in December.

"I'm married to a veteran," she said. "I want to know how that health bill will affect veterans."

Two local Armed Forces recruiters — Staff Sgt,



U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright, D-Moosic, talks with Steve Radzinski at the Black Diamond American Legion during 'Coffee with Cartwright' on Friday.

Gregory Guido and Sgt. 1st Class Jose Longoria — said that they are signing up recruits every day. Guido said incentives like benefits for college help convince young people to enter the military.

Jim Spagnola, director of the Luzerne County Veterans Affairs, said the face-to-face meeting between

veterans and Cartwright is effective.

"It's best that Congressman Cartwright hears the concerns of veterans directly from the veterans," Spagnola said. "If he is going to be making decisions about veterans, it's best that he hears the concerns directly from the veterans."



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A VETERAN'S VIEWS

Pittston Twp. native Suchecki reflects on his service

In honor of Veterans Day, one Luzerne County serviceman shared his thoughts with the Times Leader about his time in the military, and what the day means to him.

NAME: Sgt. Kevin Suchecki
AGE: 31
HOMETOWN: Pittston Township
PARENTS: Diane and Ed Suchecki
EDUCATION: Pittston Area High School class of 2006, Bloomsburg University

TIME IN THE MILITARY: I have been in the Army Reserves since 2012 in the military police.

WHY DID YOU ENLIST?
 I joined because I feel everyone has an obligation to serve their country in some type of capacity, so I chose the military.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR SERVICE.
 I've been deployed to Guantanamo Bay Cuba twice. While I was there I worked in the detention facility where detainees are held.



Sgt. Kevin Suchecki's grandfathers, who both served in the Navy, are seen in their uniforms — Lawrence Kelly, left, and Joseph Suchecki.

WHAT DOES VETERANS DAY MEAN TO YOU?

Veterans day means to me that I represent a group of individuals who have fulfilled their obligations and took an oath to uphold. In my situation I am somewhat younger than what most think of when they think of veterans, so I feel I represent a younger generation of veterans who may be facing different issues than veterans in the past, but some issues are the same.

— As told to Roger DuPuis



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The Wall That Heals is coming to Tunkhannock



Times Leader file photo

Julianna Blaylock an Outreach Manager with Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund speaks to Wyoming Valley West students about the names on The Wall That Heals on Sept. 5 in Plymouth.

Staff Report

TUNKHANNOCK — It drew thousands of visitors to Plymouth in September, and a moving memorial to America's Vietnam War dead will return to North-eastern Pennsylvania next spring.

The Wall That Heals, a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., is scheduled to be displayed in Tunkhannock from April 30 to May 3, 2020, along with a mobile education center.

The exhibit will be on display at Tunkhannock Area football field and will be open 24 hours a day and free to the public.

Sheldon-Kukuchka Funeral Home, Inc. is leading the effort that will bring the exhibit to Tunkhannock.

The Wall That Heals honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed forces in the Vietnam War and it bears the names of the 58,276 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

"The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is pleased to bring The Wall That Heals mobile

exhibit to Tunkhannock to allow local veterans and their family members a chance to experience

"The Wall and honor and remember those who have served and sacrificed," said Jim Knotts, president and CEO of VVMF.

Community support is needed to bring The Wall That Heals to Tunkhannock. More than 100 volunteers will be needed

to set up and take down the replica Wall, staff the exhibit and guide visitors 24 hours a day. Financial and in-kind donations are also needed to help support this community event.

"It is with great pride that we welcome an extraordinary traveling replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall to our hometown of Tunkhannock. I firmly believe that the community deserves the opportunity to say thank you to some of the bravest Americans who have ever lived," said Louis Marcho of the

Sheldon-Kukuchka Funeral Home, Inc.

To learn more about how you can help the effort, please call or email Marcho at 570-836-3321 or twtunkhannock@gmail.com.

Donations can be made to the First National Bank in Tunkhannock, checks can be made payable to "The Wall That Heals Tunkhannock" or mailed to 73 W. Tioga St. Tunkhannock, Pa.

Local sponsors that have already stepped forward to support the event is the

SheldonKukuchka Funeral Home, Inc., Black Walnut American Legion, and Dennis Strong Post 510.

School and youth groups are encouraged to visit The Wall That Heals.

Trained staff from VVMF will be on site to provide free educational tours of the exhibits. Tours can be customized based on ages so visitors can learn about the history of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, hear stories of those who served in Vietnam and learn about the impact of the Vietnam War on America.

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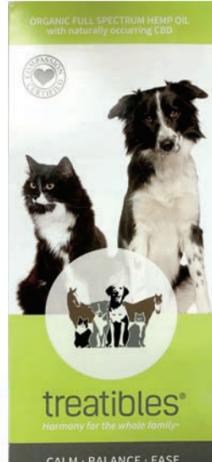
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Trump to kick off NYC Veterans Day Parade and offer tribute

By Jill Colvin
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will speak at the opening ceremony of the New York City Veterans Day Parade today, organizers and the White House announced. United War Veterans Council Chairman Douglas McGowan said Trump will offer a tribute to veterans ahead of the 100th annual parade. While presidents have always been invited, McGowan said that, as far as he knows, Trump is the first to accept. The Republican presi-

dent was born in Queens and his brand has long been synonymous with the city. During the 1990s, he pledged \$200,000 and offered to raise money from friends in exchange for being named the parade's grand marshal, The New York Times reported at the time. He also donated toward the creation of the city's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. "This is a day when we put politics aside to focus on honoring our veterans, and to re-commit ourselves as a community to providing them with the services

they have earned, the services they deserve and, for many, the services they were denied," McGowan said in a statement. More than 25,000 parade participants, including veterans, active-duty military personnel and their supporters, are expected to march along Fifth Avenue during this year's event. In addition to speaking at the kickoff event, Trump will lay a wreath at the Eternal Light memorial in Madison Square Park, White House spokesman Judd Deere said.



Trump

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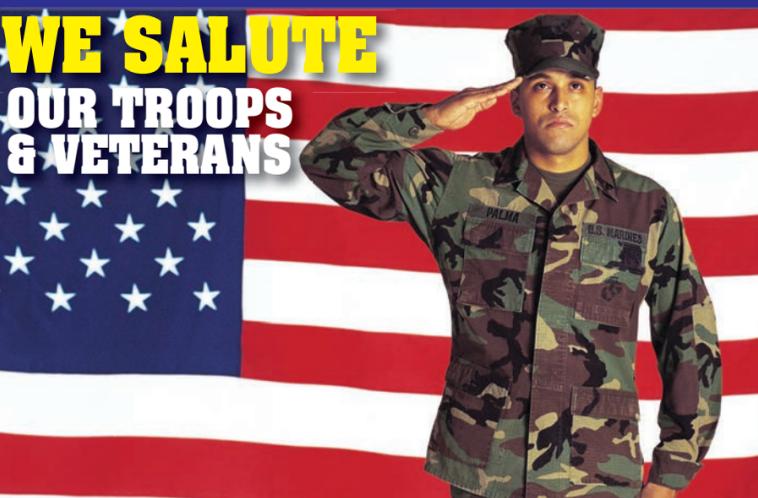
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VETERANS DAY NOVEMBER 11

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Many offer special deals for veterans today

Staff Report

Several businesses in our area have promised special deals for veterans this Veterans Day, including restaurants, convenience stores and even the Luzerne County Transportation Authority. If you're a veteran or an active military member, read how to take advantage of the deals below.

Applebees Grill + Bar - 253 Wilkes Barre Township Blvd, Wilkes-Barre

Veterans and active duty military can select a free entree from a special menu on Nov. 11. Only valid after 11 AM and is for dine-in customers only. No reservations will be accepted.

Buffalo Wild Wings - 119 Bear Creek Blvd, Wilkes-Barre

Free small wings and fries for active and retired armed services members on Nov. 11.

Chili's Grill & Bar - 375 Wyoming Valley Mall, Wilkes-Barre Township

All veterans and active-duty military members can choose a free meal from a select menu on Nov. 11.

Cracker Barrel - 2320 Wilkes Barre Township Blvd, Wilkes-Barre Township

Veterans and active duty military can enjoy a free slice of the Double Choco-

late Fudge Coca-Cola Cake, crafted coffee or traditional espresso beverage (iced or hot) on Nov. 11.

LCTA - The Luzerne County Transportation Authority will offer free rides on its fixed bus routes to veterans and active duty military. Veterans should show their military ID card, VA medical card or certificate of discharge.

LCTA's interim executive director, Lee Horton, a Marine Corps vet, will host a meet and greet for veterans at the James F. Conahan Intermodal Transportation Center in downtown Wilkes-Barre from 10 to 11 a.m. Monday, offering veterans a small token of appreciation.

IHOP - 770 Kidder St, Wilkes-Barre

On Nov. 11, veterans and active duty military can show proof of military service to receive free Red, White & Blue Pancakes with a combo of two eggs, hash browns and choice of two bacon strips or pork sausage links. Proof includes: US Uniformed Services ID Card, US Uniformed Services Retired ID Card, Current Leave and Earnings Statement (LES), veterans organization card (i.e. American Legion, VFW, etc.), photo-

graph of self in US military uniform, wearing uniform, DD214, military dog tags, and citation or commendation.

Olive Garden - 561 Arena Hub Plaza, Wilkes-Barre

Veterans and active-duty military can enjoy a free entree from a special menu on Nov. 11.

Red Lobster - 10 East End Center, Wilkes-Barre

Free appetizer or dessert from a special menu on Nov. 11.

Sheetz - All locations

Sheetz invites all veterans and active duty military personnel to enjoy a free 6 inch turkey sub and a regular size fountain drink at any of Sheetz's 596 store locations. Sheetz locations offering car washes will also provide a free car wash to veterans and active duty military. Military ID or proof of service must be presented to qualify.



Roger DuPuis | Times Leader

Texas Roadhouse - 465 Wilkes Barre Township Blvd, Wilkes-Barre Township

Free lunch from a special menu on Nov. 11 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

TGI Fridays - 880 Kid-

der St, Wilkes-Barre

Free entrees from a special menu on Nov. 11 all day long.



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You can help honor memory of local vets

Shawnee Fort DAR seeks volunteers for Hanover Green wreath laying

Roger DuPuis
rdupuis@timesleader.com

HANOVER TWP. — You can help a local historical group honor the memory of area veterans next month.

Members of the Shawnee Fort Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, are looking to honor veterans buried in Hanover Green Cemetery by placing festive greenery on graves for National Wreaths Across America Day on Dec. 14.

The chapter is seeking volunteers to sponsor the wreaths — they're \$15 each — and to help place them on graves on the day of the ceremony.

"There are other DAR chapters in the area, and we'd love their support and participation — as well as the veterans groups, the Legions, anyone that

wants to participate," chapter member Kathleen Smith said Sunday as chapter members and cemetery volunteers gathered at Hanover Green's Spanish-American War memorial to talk about the project.

Wreaths Across America coordinates wreath-laying ceremonies at more than 1,600 locations across the United States, at sea and abroad, according to the nonprofit group's website. There is no cost for groups to participate, except for obtaining wreaths.

Anyone wishing to volunteer or sponsor a wreath for Hanover Green can do so by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/hanovergreen-wreaths>.

As part of the event, there also will be ceremonial wreaths laid in honor of the nation's uniformed branches.

Cemetery Board Chair-

man Len Luba, a Vietnam veteran who served in the Navy, will lay the wreath for his branch, while cemetery Treasurer Loren Keiser will lay the wreath honoring the Air Force, in which he served. Smith said a veteran of the former Women's Army Corps will lay a wreath for the Army.

"Anyone sponsoring wreaths for this can designate at the cemetery who it's for," Luba said. "If they have a loved one buried here, their grave will be adorned with the wreath."

A member of the Shawnee Fort Chapter has participated with Wreaths Across America at Arlington National Cemetery since 2016, Smith said — while area Girl Scouts held their own tribute last year by creating about 50 wooden flag holders for Hanover Green, Luba added — but



Roger DuPuis | Times Leader

Len Luba, chairman of the Hanover Green Cemetery Board, kneels at a memorial to Wayne B. Wolfkeil, a local Air Force pilot whose plane crashed in Laos during the Vietnam War, and whose remains were never located. More than 1,600 veterans are buried in the cemetery, where members of the Shawnee Fort Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, plan to lay wreaths in their memory next month for National Wreaths Across America Day.

this is the first year the chapter and the cemetery have hosted the ceremony. Their goal for this year is

300 wreaths.

"It's great to do it all across the country, but we also wanted to do it here

locally, at this historic cemetery, which is older than the country," Smith said.

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Essay

From page 1E

“It was tearing me up inside.”

From the essay

In the essay, Barna talks about how some people lose the ability to make tears from time to time.

“I speak of tears,” Barna wrote. “Tear is such a beautiful, simple word that shows love, compassion, remembrance and yes, sometimes pain. My first tear came the day I was born. I imagine I was lying in my mother’s arms; maybe I was looking up at my father, or the old-time doctor who delivered me. This day would be the first of many tearful days in my young life.”

Barna wrote that when I did something wrong as a child, or fell while playing, he was certain there were many tears flowing. Then, through his teenage years, as with most boys, the tears were kept inside.

Barna talked about tears he would see on other people’s faces — when he graduated from high school, entered the military, and at his wedding with his beautiful wife, Eleanore, who is still at his side.

“While I was at war, I know my mother must have shed many tears while I was away,” Barna wrote. “My family told me that when I was wounded, mom received a letter from the War Department. She wouldn’t open it, fearing that it would tell her that I had been killed. When she finally read it, she cried tears of joy learning that I was only wounded.”

Barna said when he was in Korea, he watched young boys fight and die.

“Although the tears didn’t come out, I know they were there inside me,” he said. “I remember seeing South Korean people — men, women, children, even old people — walking among the wounded and dead on a battlefield. They would carry the bodies, each taking an arm or leg. They would take the bodies down the mountain to the aid station. I would also see these same people going through garbage piles, looking for something to eat. Seeing this, I pictured my family in the same positions and I felt the

tears well up in my eyes.”

Then Barna said he lost the urge to cry. He wondered if God had only given him a certain amount of tears and he had used up his allotment.

Barna said when he returned home from Korea, something was different.

“I had a mind full of the hell I lived through,” he said. “Something inside me was different and it was tearing me apart. As the years went by, I lost my grandmother, father, and youngest brother. Then I lost one of my daughters. God knows I wanted to cry, but I couldn’t. I begged for one tear to fall, but none came.”

The encounter

Then, Barna said a few years ago, he was at the VA Hospital for a doctor’s appointment. As he sat in the crowded waiting room, an African-American man was brought in on a wheelchair. Barna said the man was wearing a Marines cap and was covered in a blanket. Barna went over to talk to the man.

Barna said the man appeared to be about the same age, so he asked if had served in Korea, which he was. Barna then was called into his appointment. When he came out, he went to say goodbye to his new found comrade.

“The blanket was off and I saw that he was missing an arm and a leg,” Barna said. “I began to feel a little funny and sad because I had all of my limbs. As I was leaving him, he grabbed my hand and said to me, ‘Thank God you came home in one piece.’ I knelt down beside him and I pictured myself in that wheelchair. It was there and then that I filled with tears and started to cry. He did also, along with most of the people in that waiting room. It took a long time, but maybe it was written in heaven this way. I finally found out how beautiful it was to once again cry.”

Barna said it was then that he discovered that you should never be ashamed to shed a tear.

“When you do, it means you are human and have feelings toward others,” Barna said. “It is hard for me to tell you how it feels to not be able to cry.”

Barna has some advice for people going

through the agonizing time of not being able to shed tears.

“Don’t give up,” he said. “It took a long time for me to find that special key to the vault that held my tears. Once I was able to cry, my life began to be what I wanted it to be. As I said earlier, tears mean love, caring and compassion. These things we should all share.”

A friend comments

Frankie Balon, 60 of Freeland, is a friend of Barna’s and knows him well. He said Barna is a proud Marine Corps combat veteran of some of the most terrible fighting in Korea.

Balon said Barna was part of Weapons Company and used all the weapons at the Marine Corps disposal, including the M1 Rifle, the BAR or Browning Automatic Rifle, rocket and mortar launchers, and perhaps one of the most feared weapons of modern times, the M2-2 flamethrower, which he carried for five months.

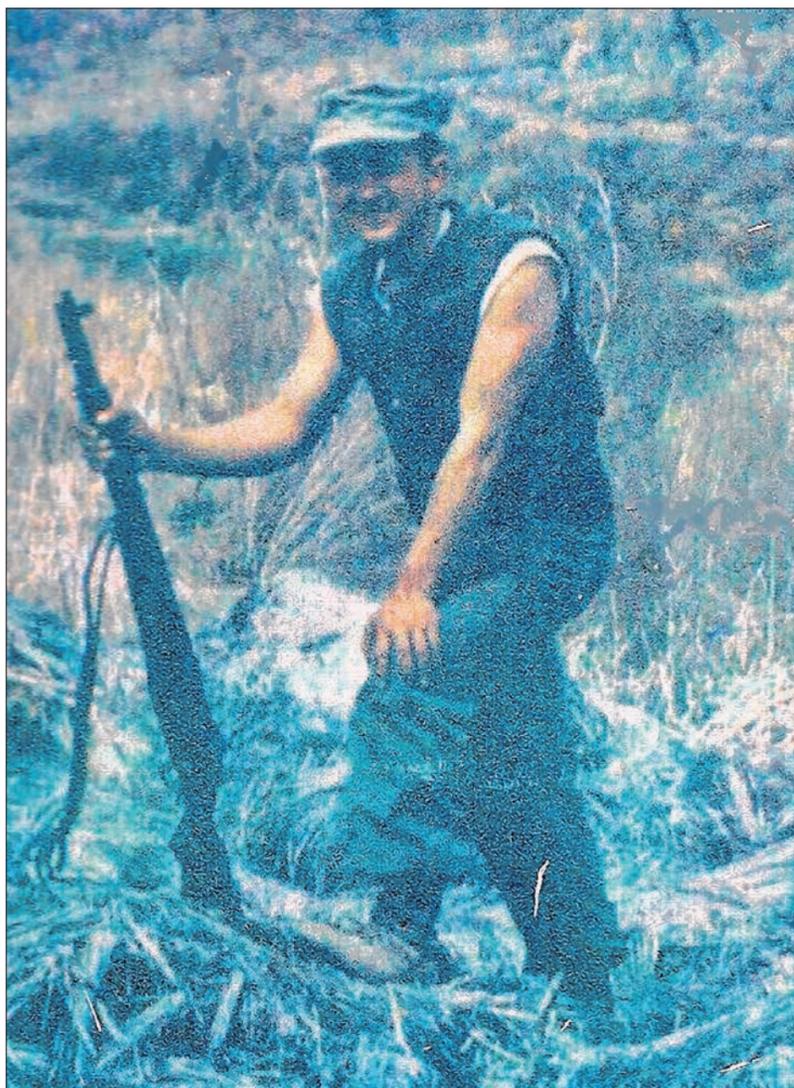
“Joe firmly believes in promoting the causes of all of our veterans and frequently writes and speaks about the common experiences of veterans in editorial letters and speaking engagements,” Balon said. “He writes the monthly column, ‘Veteran’s Journal,’ in the Freeland area monthly newspaper ‘Progress Magazine.’ Joe was also honored to be one of the featured speakers on the Hazleton television station WLYN for a 90-minute special entitled ‘Korea: the Forgotten War,’ which first broadcast in November of 2015.”

For Memorial Day 2017, Balon said Barna was selected as Legionnaire of the Year by the Freeland American Legion Post 473.

Barna is an active member of the Freeland Post 5010 VFW, where he holds the office of Senior Vice Commander and the Freeland American Legion Post 473 Joint Military Honor Guard and he serves as a rifleman for military funerals and ceremonies.

Barna and his wife, Eleanore, have been married for 66 years. He and Eleanore have 3 children, 6 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren and one great-great grandson.

Reach Bill O’Boyle at 570-991-6118 or on Twitter @TLBillOBoyle.



Courtesy Frankie Balon

Joe Barna is seen on duty in Korea.



Courtesy Frankie Balon

Joe Barna holds the certificate he received for his essay.

‘Tears,’ an essay about serving in Korea

By Joseph R. Barna

USMC Korea 1952-53

I would like to talk about something that all people possess. However, some people lose the ability to make them from time to time. I speak of tears.

“Tear.” It’s such a beautiful, simple word that shows love, compassion, remembrance and yes, sometimes pain.

My first tear came the day I was born. I imagine I was lying in my mother’s arms; maybe I was looking up at my father or the old-time doctor who delivered me. This day would be the first of many tearful days in my young life. Growing up, when I did something wrong or fell while playing, I am sure there were many tears. Then, thru my teen years, as with most boys, we kept the tears inside mostly. I guess this is when you start saving them for later in life. The tears would appear on other faces as I graduated from high school, entered the military, and at the wedding with my beautiful wife.

While I was at war, I know my moth-

er must have shed many tears while I was away. My family told me that when I was wounded, mom received a letter from the War Department. She wouldn’t open it, fearing that it would tell her that I had been killed. When she finally read it, she cried tears of joy learning that I was only wounded.

In Korea, I watched young boys fight and die. Although the tears didn’t come out, I know they were there inside me. I remember seeing South Korean people: men, women, children, even old people walking among the wounded and dead on a battlefield. They would carry the bodies, each taking an arm or leg. They would take the bodies down the mountain to the aid station. I would also see these same people going thru garbage piles, looking for something to eat. Seeing this, I pictured my family in the same positions and I felt the tears well up in my eyes.

After a while, I lost the urge to cry. Maybe God only gave me a certain amount of tears and I had used my

allotment up? After I came home from Korea, I had the same body that I went in with. But something was different. I had a mind full of the hell I lived thru. Something inside me was different and it was tearing me apart. As the years went by, I lost my grandmother, father, and youngest brother. Then I lost one of my daughters. God knows I wanted to cry but I couldn’t. I begged for one tear to fall, but none came.

Then, a few years ago, I was at the V.A. Hospital for a doctor appointment. As I sat in the crowded waiting room, an African-American man was brought in on a wheelchair. He was wearing a Marine cap and was covered in a blanket. I went over to talk to him. He looked like he was near my age and I asked if he was in Korea, which he was. I was then called into my appointment. When I came out, I went to say good-bye to my new found comrade. The blanket was off and I saw that he was missing an arm and a leg. I began to feel a little funny and sad because I had all of my limbs.

As I was leaving him, he grabbed my hand and said to me “Thank God you came home in one piece.” I knelt down beside him and I pictured myself in that wheel chair. It was there and then that I filled with tears and started to cry. He did also, along with most of the people in that waiting room. It took a long time, but maybe it was written in heaven this way. I finally found out how beautiful it was to once again cry.

I found out then that you should not be ashamed to shed a tear. When you do, it means you are human and have feelings toward others. It is hard for me to tell you how it feels to not be able to cry.

For anyone who is going thru the agonizing time of not being able to shed tears, don’t give up. It took a long time for me to find that special key to the vault that held my tears. Once I was able to cry, my life began to be what I wanted it to be.

As I said earlier, tears mean love, caring and compassion. These things we should all share.



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VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS

From the Air Force to the civilian work force



Dominick Aritz Jr. is seen in the dining room of B3Q Smokehouse in West Pittston.

Roger DuPuis | Times Leader

Dominick Aritz talks about taking over West Pittston's B3Q Barbecue

By Roger DuPuis
rdupuis@timesleader.com

WEST PITTSTON — The transition from military life to entrepreneur has been a fulfilling one for Dominick Aritz Jr., and he is finding the skills developed in two decades of Air Force service still come in handy running a restaurant.

“That ability to manage time, people, resources, they all help,” said Aritz, who is the new owner of B3Q Barbecue on Wyoming Avenue. “You have to have a schedule, you have to have a plan.”

What is different from working in military life? Now Aritz also has to manage a big thing that was primarily Uncle Sam’s concern in the Air Force.

“Yes, there’s also the financial piece,” he said of being a civilian business operator.

Otherwise, the discipline and work ethic remain hallmarks of daily life, which starts around 6:30 for the newly minted restaurateur.

Aritz grew up in West

Pittston, the son of a Navy veteran. After attending Syracuse University, he was thinking about career options with job security, given the ups-and-downs of the local economy.

So Aritz joined the Air Force, which became a 20-year odyssey that took him to more than 30 countries.

Among his greatest memories: serving on presidential support duties, including one trip to Ghana in Africa, where Aritz recalled being humbled to see the lifestyles of the residents and how their lives had changed under different regimes and forms of government.

Aritz retired in July of this year at the rank of technical sergeant. He had worked on the flight line in a number of roles, including as an instructor, but finished out his service as a recruiter.

And then it was time to return to civilian life, fulfilling Aritz’s dream.

“That was always my goal,” he said. “Do 20, retire, and in some capac-



Dominick Aritz Jr. stands by the smoker at his restaurant, B3Q Smokehouse in West Pittston.

Roger DuPuis | Times Leader

ity work for myself.

High school classmate and family friend Barry Hosier, proprietor of B3Q,

was looking toward the next stage of his career as well after operating the business since 2012.

There was a bit of overlap, with Aritz coming in as manager to learn the ropes before taking over

the business in April. “It was the right time for me and for him,” Aritz said.



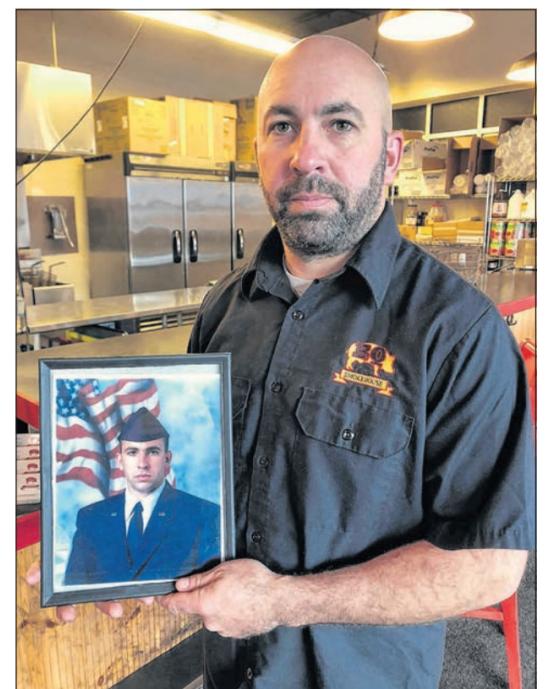
Courtesy Dominick Aritz

Dominick Aritz Jr. is seen in Afghanistan during his military service.



Roger DuPuis | Times Leader

Dominick Aritz Jr. holds a collage dedicated to his time in the military.



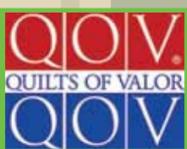
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Dominick Aritz Jr. holds a photo of himself from 20 years ago.



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Nine Yurkanin brothers served in the U.S. military

By Maryellen Aton
Special to Times Leader

Veteran's Day means a lot to Andrew Yurkanin. And for good reason.

The Mountain Top resident is one of nine brothers who served in the United States military.

The 94-year-old Army veteran served in World War II along with five of his brothers. Three younger siblings, Patrick, August and Thomas joined the military shortly after the end of the war and served during the Korean Conflict era.

Born in the small town of Treskow just south of Hazleton in Carbon County, Yurkanin was one of 15 children – nine boys and six girls.

"Large families were not uncommon in those days," said the veteran, recalling his youth. "We weren't even the largest in town," he quipped.

By the time he started high school at West Hazleton in the early 1940s, his four older brothers, John, George, Joseph and Frank, already had been drafted and were serving in the U. S. Army. With his brothers away in the service Yurkanin left school in his junior year at age 17 to work in a knitting mill.

Though he was working to help support the large family, there was little doubt what Andrew would do when he turned 18. Rather than wait to be drafted, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1943. A younger brother Michael followed him into the military a short time later.

Yurkanin entered pilot training, but never got to fly planes in the war. He was injured in training and was unable to serve overseas.



Courtesy Maryellen Aton
Andrew Yurkanin

As a result, he was assigned to the Air Corps training command, working with bomber groups until his discharge in April of 1946.

Meanwhile, John, George, Joseph, Frank and Michael all served in the European Theatre during the war in various capacities. While all five were in harm's way during the war, fortunately only Joseph was injured, sustaining wounds from shrapnel.

"At that age, you think you are immortal," Yurkanin commented. "You never think about being killed." While all his brothers survived World War II, he did have some friends who lost their lives.

It is estimated 16 million men and women fought in World War II. Yurkanin is one of only about 500,000 veterans of the "Great War" who are still alive. His brother Tom Yurkanin of Levittown is still alive, along with two sisters, Irene Lazarsky of Conyngham and Anna Mae Yurkanin of Norristown.

His three younger brothers, Patrick, Tom and August, enlisted in the military, but did not serve during World War II. "At one time, all nine of us were in the service," Yurkanin noted proudly.

Besides his brothers, two of Yurkanin's grand-



Courtesy Maryellen Aton
The six Yurkanin brothers who served in the United States army together, are from left, John, George, Mike, Frank, Joe and seated, Andrew. Brothers Patrick and August also served in the US Army and Thomas in the US Naval Reserve.

sons also have served in the military.

Following his discharge, Yurkanin earned his high school diploma and then enrolled at the University of Scranton. He received a bachelor's

degree from the University of Scranton and then matriculated to Columbia University where he earned a master's degree in clinical social work. After finishing his education, Yurkanin worked

for a few years for the Veterans Administration and later Luzerne County Child Welfare Bureau. He left social services in 1963 when he started the first Mountain Top newspaper called the

Mountain View, it was eventually sold and Andy maintained a commercial printing business in Mountain Top with the same name for over 50 years.

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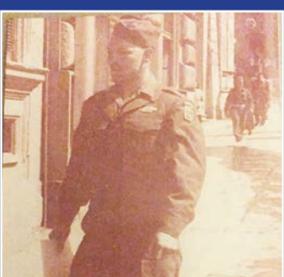
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VA Hospital holds Veterans Day ceremony in honor of guests

By Patrick Kernan
pkernan@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE TWP. — While it wasn't quite Veterans Day yet, the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center held its celebration a few days early, with the hospital's director noting that, for their department, every day is Veterans Day.

The hospital held a reception in its Recreation Room, featuring a keynote speech from Sgt. Major Claudette Williams, who served in the U.S. Army between 1985 and 2014.

Before Williams' speech, Russell E. Lloyd, director of the hospital, thanked the veterans who are staying in the hospital for their service.

"At the Department of Veterans Affairs, every day

is Veterans Day," he said. "Today, our country rightly offers its full measure of gratitude to citizens who wore uniforms for the armed services."

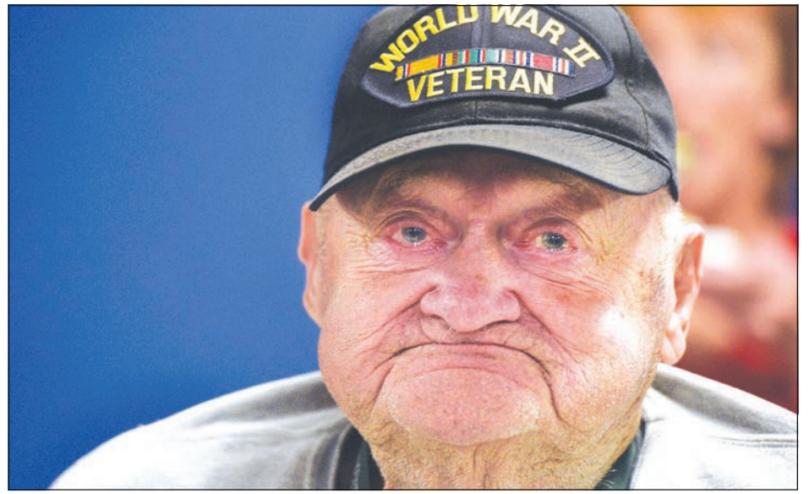
Lloyd's comments were followed by a procession by the AMVETS Post 189 Honor Guard, along with a stirring rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner by Madison Dompkosky, VAMC Youth Volunteer.

Williams directed the setting of a symbolic table, set in remembrance of soldiers who were unable to return home from war. The Army officer explained the symbolism behind each item in the set-up, including a dash of salt in recognition of tears cried for the soldier, and a chair leaned up against the table to show it would not be sat in.

Williams, who had been deployed three times in operations throughout the Middle East and South-west Asia, recounted a heart-wrenching moment years ago before she returned back to Iraq after a period of R&R.

Before she boarded the airplane to return back to the front lines, she said she heard her son calling for her. She said she was tempted to turn back, but still got on board the plane.

"I stood there, I looked at my son, and I looked at the walkway," she said, emotion heavy in her voice. "And I turned around, because I know that my service to country was also service to my son and my family and freedom of our country... so I continued on, back to Iraq, because I could not leave



Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

John Wrazien 96, of Dupont, a World War II veteran, watched at the VA Medical Center Veterans Day Ceremony on Friday.

my soldiers on the battlefield without me."

Williams asked all in attendance to take a moment on Veterans Day, especially at 11 a.m., when

the armistice that ended World War I was signed, in recognition of the nation's veterans.

After her comments, a wreath was laid in memory

of veterans and fallen soldiers, and Dompkosky closed the ceremony with a rendition of "God Bless America."

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Reflecting on a family legacy of service

Jeff Urbanski, of Fashion Floor Carpet Galleries, talks about his dad and uncle's time overseas

By Roger DuPuis
rdupuis@timesleader.com

KINGSTON — When the Wyoming Valley Veterans Day Parade marched down Market Street on Sunday, it passed a business that has been family-owned and veteran-owned since 1966.

At the front desk of Fashion Floor Carpet Galleries on Friday, co-owner Jeff Urbanski reflected on the meaning of the day, and on his family's service to the nation.

"Without those people, the men and women who put their lives on the line back then ..." Urbanski said, growing a little choked up.

"They were called to duty and they went. They did what they were supposed to do."

Urbanski is himself a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, "but this isn't about me," he says.

"This is about them," Urbanski adds, gesturing to a sepia-toned photo of his father, John, and uncle, Edward, showing the brothers wearing their World War II Army uniforms.

John and Edward Urbanski founded the business 53 years ago. Today, Jeff Urbanski and his brother Jared are in charge.

That business did play a role in his own life.

"If my dad did not have this business, I would definitely have made it a career," Urbanski says when asked if he misses the Marines, in which he served from 1977 to 1983.

"My dad and my uncles both served in the Army. A friend of mine said 'let's join the Marines. They're an elite fighting group,' so off we went," he recalled.

Like many children of World War II veterans, Urbanski often found his dad reluctant to discuss the war years.

"I often used to talk with my dad about what he did in the service, and he would say 'nothing, nothing, nothing,'" Urbanski said.

Eventually, that silence broke.

"Then one day a piece of mail came in, and it had a picture of the world, Eastern Hemisphere and Western Hemisphere," Urbanski recalled.

"And he looked at it, and he said, 'this is where I started, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and from there I went to Fort Indian-town Gap.'"

John Urbanski drew up what his sons recalled as "the Holy Mother of Travel Guides," describing his path from Pennsylvania to Missouri to San Francisco, then Australia, New Guinea, various islands and finally Japan before returning home nearly three years later.

There were poignant moments, such as when John and Edward met up in San Francisco before John went to the Pacific and Edward to Europe.

Both returned home safely.

"A lot of those guys didn't come back," Jeff



Jeff Urbanski displays a photo of his father, John, and uncle Edward in their World War II uniforms. The brothers founded Fashion Floor Carpet Galleries in 1966. Today it is operated by Jeff Urbanski and his brother Jared.



Jeff Urbanski holds photos showing his late father, John Urbanski, opening a shadow box of his World War II decorations as a Christmas present. 'That was the only time I saw my dad cry,' Urbanski said.

Urbanski said. "Thank God my dad and uncle did."

Edward Urbanski passed away in 1983, John in 2015.

Some years before he died, John's sons wanted to help their father obtain the medals and decorations he never did see when he

left the service and came home.

With help from an aide to then-Congressman Paul Kanjorski, they were able

to obtain them, and created a shadowbox display.

They told their dad not to open what they said was a Christmas present for

their mother. On Christmas Day, she handed the wrapped package back to John.

"That was the only time

Roger DuPuis | Times Leader

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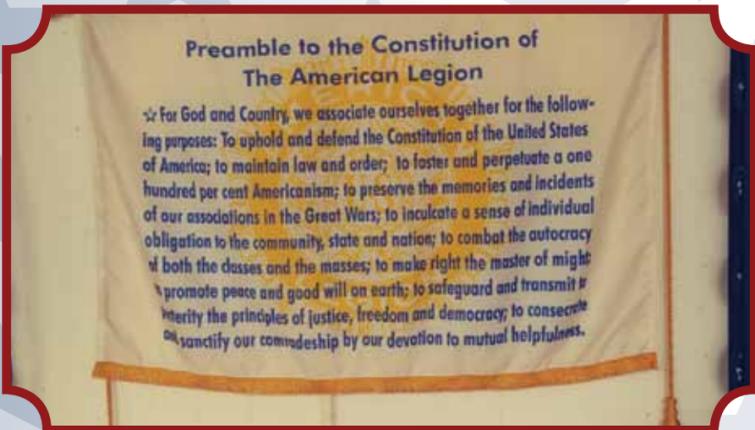
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Casey: More must be done to protect veterans from scam artists

By Bill O'Boyle
boboyl@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — According to a 2017 AARP report, 78 percent of veterans reported receiving a scam attempt related to their veteran status.

The same study also found that veterans are twice as likely as civilians to lose money to a scam.

U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, held a hearing this week entitled, "Veterans Scams: Protecting Those Who Protect Us."

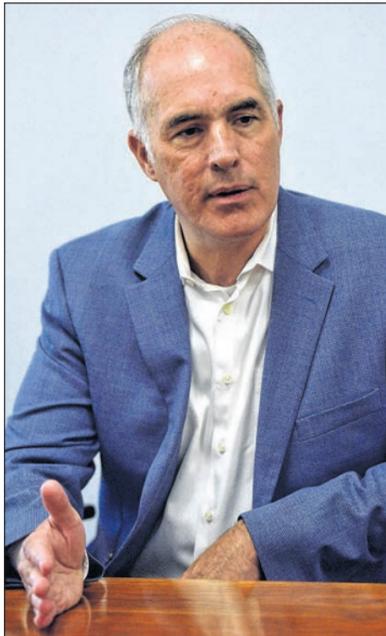
During the hearing, Casey, D-Scranton, highlighted his bipartisan letter that calls on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take a more active role in tracking these scams and educating veterans about these schemes.

"Veterans Day, which is right around the corner, is a day to honor those who served our country and it is a reminder of our responsibility to serve veterans in return," Casey said. "It is unconscionable to me that someone would stoop so low as to steal money from someone who has sacrificed so much for our country. We must fight back against unscrupulous con artists by ensuring that not one more veteran loses one more penny to a scam. I urge the VA to do more to combat scams against veterans."

In order to protect those who have protected our country, Senators Casey and Susan Collins, R-Maine, Chair of the Special Committee on Aging, joined by 11 members of the Committee, are sending a letter urging the VA to play a more active role in combating financial exploitation by scammers.

In the letter, the senators cite an October 2019 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, which found that the VA does not centrally collect or analyze information assessing the threat of scams against veterans receiving pension benefits.

Casey invited Sgt. LaVerne Foreman,



Casey

an 82 year-old veteran from Herndon, Pa., to testify at the hearing about his experience losing money to a veterans charity scam.

"It isn't easy to talk about being scammed, but what I am doing today is an extension of my service," Foreman said. "These scam artists rip-off innocent people, and as a result, contributions are diverted away from the organizations actually doing the work of caring for those who served and who are now in need. On behalf of veterans, I ask everyone who can help to stop this activity to play their part."

In the letter to Robert Wilkie, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the senators say they are concerned that America's veterans are being targeted by unscrupulous scammers who are seeking to rob them of their life savings and defraud them of the benefits they have earned in service to our country.

"It is imperative that the Department

"These scam artists rip-off innocent people, and as a result, contributions are diverted away from the organizations actually doing the work of caring for those who served and who are now in need. On behalf of veterans, I ask everyone who can help to stop this activity to play their part."

— Sgt. LaVerne Foreman

of Veterans Affairs (VA) take action to alert our veterans to the risk of these scams, and what can be done to combat them," the senators wrote.

The senators state that studies show that veterans are disproportionately affected by scams. An AARP study from 2017 found that veterans were twice as likely as non-veterans to lose money to a scam. The same report found that nearly 80 percent of veterans had reported being targeted by a scam that related to their veteran status.

The Senators said several types of schemes are used to steal money or personal identifiable information from veterans:

- Scammers may contact veterans pretending to collect money to help other veterans.
 - Pretend to "update their file" to obtain their personal identifiable information.
 - Inform veterans that they qualify for a "secret" government program that requires an initial payment.
 - Charge inappropriate fees for helping veterans apply for the benefits they have earned.
 - Swindle them out of their life savings in aid and attendance scams where victims are coached into restructuring their assets in a way that could be financially detrimental and cause issues with qualifying for benefits down the line.
- As scammers become more sophisticated in their efforts, the senators said it is imperative that the VA play an active role in combating financial exploitation posed by scammers. They

said veterans and their families have a right to expect that the nation they served will fight to protect them from such unscrupulous tactics.

With that in mind, the senators requested responses to the following questions:

1. Has the VA examined the extent to which America's veterans have been victimized by the type of scams described above, or other forms of financial fraud? If so, to what extent are these scams deliberately structured to target veterans?

2. How is the VA working with federal and state agencies and stakeholder groups to protect veterans from financial frauds?

3. What has the VA done to educate veterans and their families about these frauds, and the steps they can take to combat them?

4. How will the VA's proposed approach in response to GAO's recommendation provide the agency with the ability to assess the prevalence of scams targeting veterans and inform outreach and education efforts?

5. What plans does the VA have in place to increase these efforts, and what further legislative or regulatory authority does the VA need to do so?

"It is critical that Congress fully understands how our nation's veterans are affected by financial fraud, and what Veterans Affairs is doing to protect them," the letter states.

The senators asked for a prompt response to the inquiry on or before Thursday, Nov. 21.

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The Library is a member of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, MidAtlantic Region and is located at 47 Broad Street, Pittston PA, 18640.

The Network and Geisinger Hospital are the sponsors for this year.

**The event will be held in the
Pittston Memorial Library Conference Room
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Thursday, November 14, 2019
10:00 am - 2:00 pm**

For further information, contact:
**Howard J. Grossman, Fundraising Director
at the Library at
570-262-3443,
570-654-9565
(library), or
e-mail at
Grossmanhj@aol.com**



Opinion: Veterans, give us an opportunity to serve you

Each year, across our nation, we come together on Veterans Day to reflect on the service of our nation's veterans.

We graciously honor those who have served, in time of conflict and peace, as their collective dedication and sacrifice throughout the years has preserved our way of life for generations.

On the battlefield, veterans were challenged to overcome many obstacles and adversities, not all of which were left behind following their service. For those Veterans and their families, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical

Center in Wilkes-Barre stands ready to serve.

It is true that not all veterans are eligible for services through the VA, but utilization rates suggest that many eligible veterans may be failing to take advantage of the services they so bravely earned.

A veteran's eligibility for healthcare is based on a variety of criteria related to their service, but most veterans who served on active duty, with an other than dishonorable discharge, are eligible to receive some level of care through their local VA.

Just as time passes

and lives change, so may your eligibility and need for VA Healthcare or services. This year on Veterans Day, please take a moment to consider investigating your eligibility for VA services, and encourage your comrades, friends and family members to explore their options.

As a world class healthcare organization, we are here to serve our Veterans. This Veterans Day give us the opportunity to demonstrate our dedication to serve.

Russell E. Lloyd
Medical Center Director
VA Medical Center,
Wilkes-Barre, PA



Russell Lloyd

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LOOK BACK

1950 Armistice Day Parade dedicated to 109th soldiers killed in train crash

By Ed Lewis
elewis@timesleader.com

One of the largest Armistice Day parades in the Wyoming Valley since the end of World War I was held Nov. 11, 1950.

Ten divisions took part in the 1950 parade, the 31st year the parade was held since the end of the Great War.

The parade was dedicated to the 33 soldiers of the 109th Field Artillery Battalion killed a train crash in West Lafayette, Ohio, on Sept. 11, 1950. Nearly 280 soldiers and civilians were injured.

Soldiers from the 109th were on their way to active duty as assigned to the 28th Infantry Guard Division. They were being transported to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, at the time of the train crash.

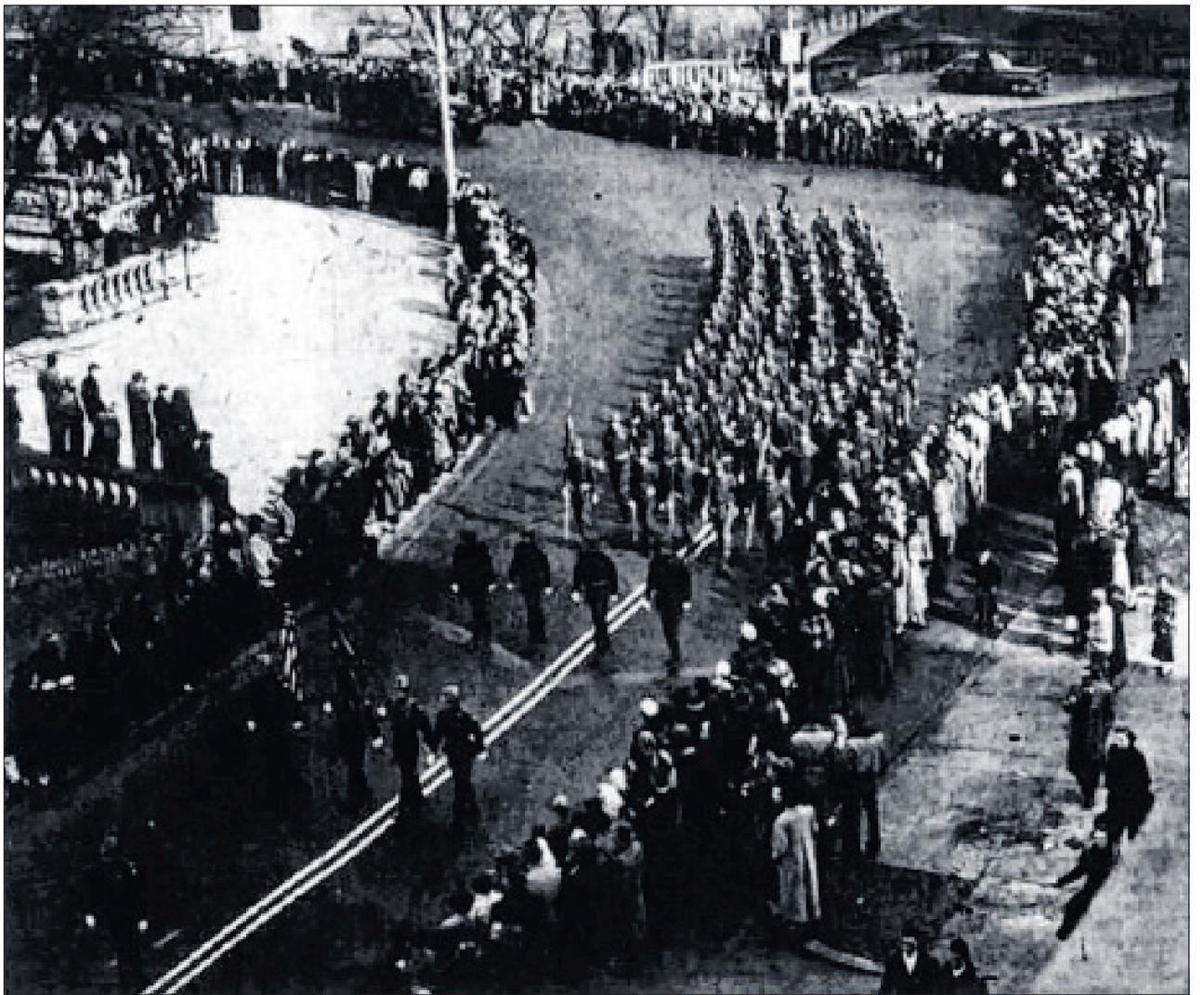
Lt. Col. Leon W. Beisel, commander of the 967th Field Artillery Battalion and general chairman for the parade, announced Nov. 3, 1950, that the parade would be dedicated to the 33 soldiers.

"Let the people at home pause in their work of peaceful living to rededicate ourselves to the cause of freedom by paying honor to those who gave their lives that we may live in peace," Beisel told the parade committee as reported in the Evening News newspaper on Nov. 3, 1950.

"Next of kin of Korean casualties and next of kin of the 33 train wreck fatalities were given honored places to view the parade, special bleachers having been provided on Market Street, opposite the West Side Armory," the Evening News newspaper reported Nov. 11, 1950.

The Evening News reported Nov. 6, 1950, the parade was "expected to be the most mammoth event of its kind in years."

Nearly every high school in the Wyoming Valley, at the time 20 high schools, took part in the parade with bands, strutters and cheerleaders attired in their school colors.



In perfect formation, the 967th Armored Field Artillery Battalion makes a right turn off the Market Street Bridge during the Armistice Day Parade on Nov. 11, 1950. Picture posted in the Evening News on Nov. 11, 1950.

The parade began at Hoyt Street and Wyoming Avenue in Kingston and marched down Market Street across the Market Street Bridge into Wilkes-Barre.

"The leading contingents had just reached River Street, Wilkes-Barre, at 11 a.m. when the whistles and bells from churches, industrial plants and mine collieries sounded and the marching stopped. All persons parading came to attention as the various musical organizations sounded Taps," the Evening News reported.

Men doffed their hats and women and children stood silent for a brief interval, and without a doubt, the thoughts of a large majority of those participating and viewing the parade were at that time with the 33 guardsmen of the 109th killed in the Ohio troop train wreck, the newspaper reported.

Military vehicles in the parade included half-tracks, jeeps, scout cars and tank destroyers. The Air Section of the 967th Armored Field Artillery did a fly over and dropped a floral tribute to all

comrades who sacrificed their lives for God and country, the Evening News reported.

Despite chilly temperatures in the low 40s, viewers were five to six deep along the parade route. Children sat on their fathers' shoulders to watch.

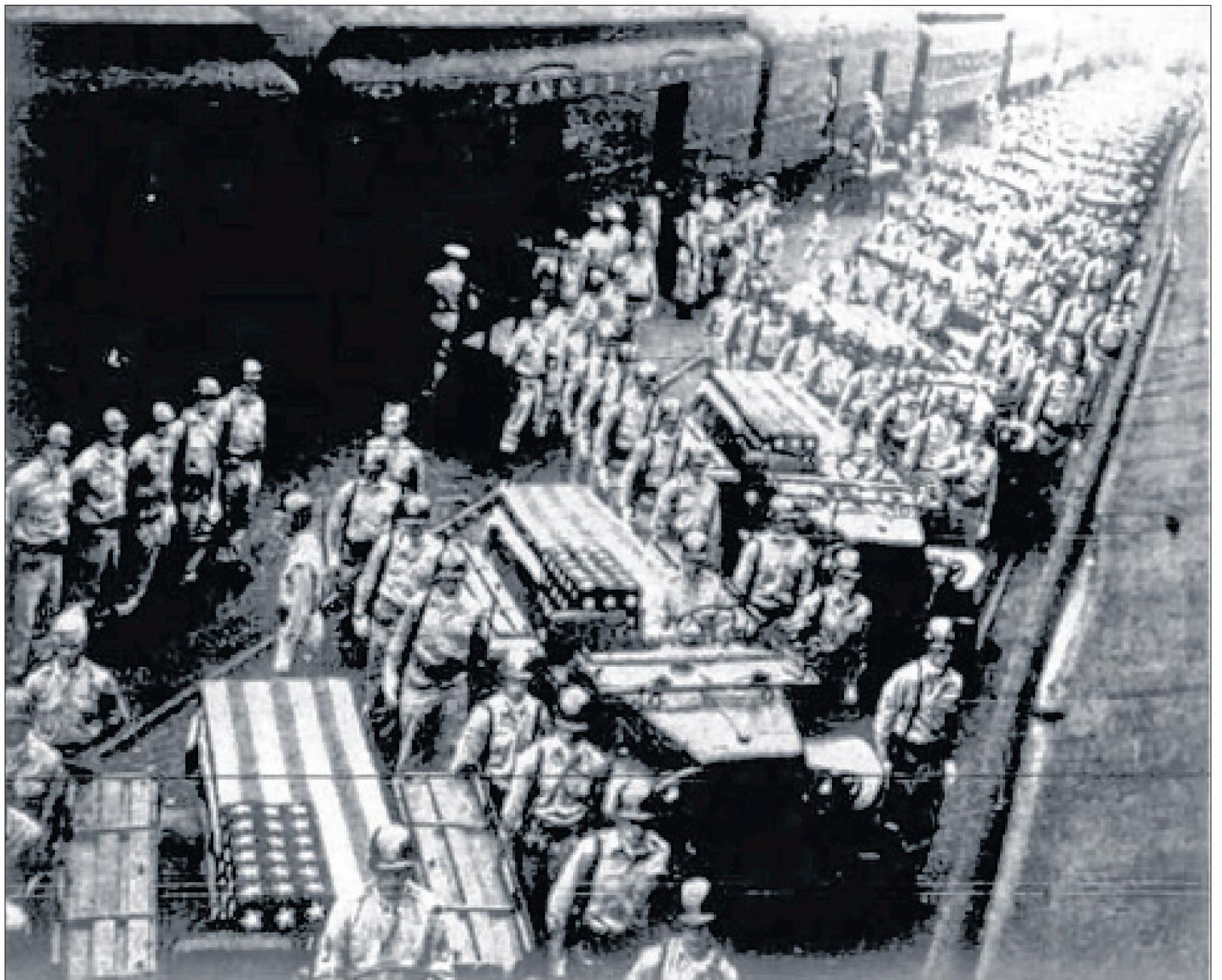
The 109th Field Artillery did not participate in the 1950 parade as they were in federal service.

Ten passenger cars made up the troop train that was stopped on tracks due to a ruptured air-brake hose on the steam locomotive when it was

struck from behind by another train that failed to adhere to multiple stop signals and a flagman waving a lantern and flares.

When deceased soldiers returned home on Sept. 14, 1950, more than 200,000 people lined the streets from the Lehigh Valley Railroad Station on East Market Street, Wilkes-Barre, to the armory on Market Street in Kingston, the Wilkes-Barre Record reported Sept. 15, 1950.

A monument outside the armory on Market Street honors those killed in the crash.



Stretching the length of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Station platform on East Market Street, Wilkes-Barre, are weapons carriers with caskets of the 33 soldiers from the 109th Field Artillery killed in a train crash in Ohio. Picture posted in the Wilkes-Barre Record on Sept. 15, 1950.

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Facility

From page 1E

relax, we fish, we hunt, we do shooting sports, we identify mushrooms, we identify trees. Really, the full spectrum of anything that can be done outdoors, we can do here.”

Guedes said the most important thing to him is getting people who are struggling out of their homes and to have a bit of fun for a few days.

“It’s about breaking the pattern,” he said.

That pattern gets broken, he said, over days-long hunting, fishing or other outdoorsy trips.

“It’s amazing what happens in a five-day period,” Guedes said, explaining he’s seen people’s outlooks on life totally turn around during their time at the camp.

Guedes said that Camp Freedom is fitted to support people of disabilities of all sorts — while he said the lodge and many aspects of the camp’s 1,800 acres of activities have been designed to make things easier for physically disabled people, he estimates approximately 80% of the vets and first responders who have visited the facility over the past two years have suffered from mental struggles like PTSD and depression.

‘It saved me’

One of the people who’s benefited from Camp Freedom’s help is Kyle Jones, a 28-year-old from South Canaan Township in Wayne County. Jones, a veteran of the Navy who was discharged after six and a half years due to an injury and a struggle with Crohn’s disease, said that helping at Camp Freedom has given him a reason to live again.

“(The discharge) wrecked my world, being told, ‘You can’t do this,’ something that I loved to do,” he said. “If I could still be in, I would be.”

Jones said he turned to alcohol after his discharge, which caused him to sink deeper and deeper into depression.

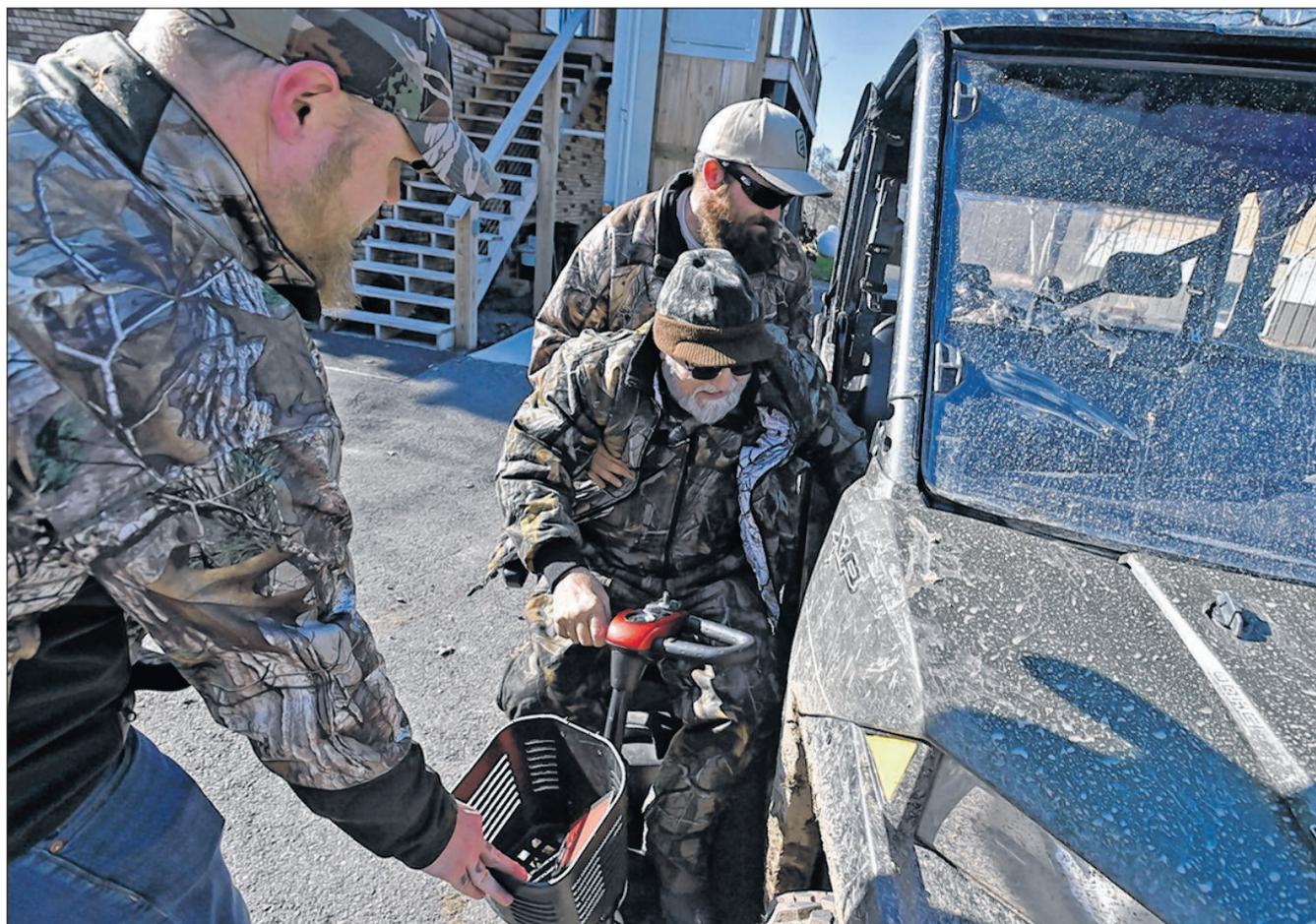
“I barely left the house, at all, for anything,” he said. “I had a meeting up here, and I fell in love with this place, and something happened and I had motivation again.”

The dark place that Jones had been in up until fairly recently belies his sunny disposition; when speaking with a reporter, he was obviously filled with passion, having visibly fallen in love with the work he’s been able to do at Camp Freedom.

Jones led a tour around the property, driving an off-roading vehicle through the facility’s miles of trails. His eyes were bright as he described all the insider knowledge of various areas: this area will be cleared of trees; if you look through that clearing, you might see a family of deer that often grazes there; there’s an abandoned mine shaft there, and you can see the steam belching from it during the winter months as the warmer air below ground hits the air above.

He’s been volunteering there for about a month now, and he said it’s already beginning to turn his life around. He hasn’t had a drink in a month, and he plans to keep it that way.

“If I hadn’t found this



Kyle Jones, a volunteer and veteran of the Navy, and Mike Johnson, a veteran of the Army and Camp Freedom guide, help Camp Freedom hunter Bruce Crane, of Wisconsin, into an all terrain vehicle to go hunting Wednesday Nov. 7, 2019, at Camp Freedom in Carbondale, PA.



Matt Guedes the Executive Director of Camp Freedom checks on hunters heading into the woods.



Bruce Adam Crane of Wisconsin prepares for an afternoon hunt while Mike Johnson readies to film the trip into the woods at Camp Freedom.



A large buck on the property of Camp Freedom.



One of the fishing spots at Camp Freedom.



One of the hunting blinds at Camp Freedom.



The lodge at Camp Freedom in Carbondale.

place, there’s a good chance I wouldn’t be here,” he said. “It saved me.”

‘We’re learning every day’

Guedes said Jones is hardly the only volunteer or guest who’s had that same story; in fact, those stories seem to be in the majority. He told of one of the camp’s few full-time employees, a combat veteran himself, who also turned his life around after his involvement with the facility.

“I remember his wife giving me a hug and say-

ing, ‘Matt, thank you so much, it’s giving me my husband back,’” he said. “And it’s not us. It’s what we do.”

Over the past two years, Guedes said Camp Freedom has helped out more than 500 guests from more than a dozen states around the country. And he said this is all done at zero cost to those participating. Guests are selected after a lengthy application and screening process, which Guedes said is largely based on who Camp Freedom knows it is best fitted to

help.

But he said they have plenty of plans to continue expanding and renovating to be able to help more people and better, including the eventual construction of another lodge with more private rooms for guests.

“We’re learning every day how to serve our guests better,” he said.

If you or a loved one would benefit from time away at Camp Freedom, or if you’re interested in volunteering, check out the group’s web page, campfreedompa.org.



One of the fishing spots at Camp Freedom.

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