FAREWELL

“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.” These words by Winnie the Pooh ring so true this month. How lucky I have been to spend the last four years walking alongside you in working the mission of QOVF. The tremendous growth since 2015 has doubled our membership and enabled us to award the commemorative 200,000th QOV. This has all been possible because of YOU. Giving of your time, talent, and resources to honor and comfort our active duty service personnel is one of the most selfless acts of kindness. You know that the mission is not about you, but about them. As you continue to work that mission, I will be there in spirit. Until we meet again, quilt in peace and happiness, knowing you are making a difference.

Transitions

By Sue Reich, Chair,
QOVF Board of Directors

As QOVF begins its 16th year, we can be extremely proud of so many outstanding accomplishments. During 2018, we not only surpassed the 10,000 members mark, we also awarded the 200,000th QOV, bringing honor and comfort to veterans nationwide. Making and awarding approximately 30,000 quilts annually is a herculean effort. This success can be attributed to our members from the grass roots to the QOVF Board giving 110%, one and all. As I travel and meet with other national, non-profit organizations, there are few who can make that claim and QOVF is the envy of many.

Over the past four years, Ann Rehbein, QOVF Executive Director has been at the helm. Ann is known nationally for her important positions in the American Legion Auxiliary and her extensive involvement in the ALA Girls State program that guides young women “to become knowledgeable stewards of freedom, democracy, and patriotic citizens.” Fortunately for QOVF, Ann has promised her continued support as she fosters the next generation of women in allegiance to their communities and country. Ann, good luck in your future endeavors!

As QOVF forging ahead, Tammany McDaniel will be serving as QOVF’s new Executive Director. We are blessed to have Tammany at the helm. With her background in social work, the business community, and serving veterans and challenged youth in the non-profit community, we are confident Tammany is the right person for the position. Welcome Tammany!

In the coming year, be prepared to hear exciting news about partnerships in the quilt industry and beyond, expanding the national awareness and impact of QOVF. The successful kickoff for another big year for QOVF was just marked with Sew Day on February 2, 2019. On behalf of the QOVF Board of Directors and the more than 200,000 QOV recipients-to-date, thank you for all you do for Quilts of Valor.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: LOOKING FORWARD

As we continue to create comforting and healing QOVs, we serve individuals who made a commitment to our safety and way of life. We aim to honor them with our gift of patterns, colors, warmth, and unity. In choosing to serve this great mission, I frequently ask myself, ‘How can I be the leader this organization needs?’ When I look at our volunteers and their work, I envision a membership comprised of those who piece together fabric into intricate quilt tops. Those patchwork tops are layered with warm batting, then backed and bound. Wonderful stitch patterns complete a beautiful composite. These tactile and visual “stories” created by our members are then lovingly awarded to service members and veterans. This mission and our volunteers deserve a leader who exhibits compassion, empathy, strength of purpose, and dedication. It is my hope to be a leader who can be an active listener; who takes positive action for the good of the entire organization, and advances its mission. I hope my leadership “story” is colorful and beautifully detailed. Much like a QOV,
Major General Dee Ann McWilliams, USA (Ret.), was awarded a QOV on Veterans Day 2018 at the Women’s Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. McWilliams is the current (and only the second) President of the Women in Military Service for America, or Women’s Memorial. She assumed this post January 1, 2016, having served on its board of directors since 2007. During her 29 years in the US Army, she held a variety of human relations positions, including command of four companies, a training battalion, and a personnel brigade. She also served as Director of Military Personnel Management for the Department of the Army. She retired from the Army in 2003. She was the 2013 recipient of the Lillian K. Keil Award for outstanding contributions to women’s service in the US military and was named a Trailblazer by Women Veterans Interactive.

The distinguished MG McWilliams knew there would be a presentation by QOVF as part of the Veterans Day program, but she was unaware that she was the recipient. The award was made by Dr. Kathleen Decker, leader of Peninsula Patriots (QOVF group, VA) assisted by Lt. Col., USA (Ret.), Marilla Cushman, Public Relations Coordinator for the Women’s Memorial. The secret was closely guarded until the moment of the award, when MG McWilliams was asked to “demonstrate” and then told it was her QOV.

“I’m truly humbled to be a QOV recipient. How did you know there are days when I can really use this?” she said and was visibly moved by the award, certificate, and official QOVF coin.

Among many wonderful tributes to veterans, MG McWilliams invited Ms. Ellan Levitsky Orkin, one of the oldest veterans present, to say a few words. Ms. Orkin served as an Army nurse in the European theater during WWII. She sang a song which was popular among nurses at the end of the war encouraging President Truman to “bring home the troops,” as nurses were among the last to return with their wounded charges. The Women’s Memorial continues the tradition of honoring female veterans of all branches.
CEREMONY IN INDIANA HONORS SEVEN VETERANS
by Melissa Johnson

Southern Indiana QOV Group awarded quilts to three World War II veterans, three Korean War veterans, and a Vietnam era veteran in a ceremony at Towne Park Assisted Living in Brazil, IN, on December 22, 2018.

After viewing a recent news piece on WTHI Channel 10 News (Terre Haute, IN) honoring several World War II veterans living in the facility, group leader Kay Miller reached out to Towne Park’s activity director Tyra Bushee to inquire if the QOV group could honor all of their veterans.

On a beautiful December afternoon, group leader Kay Miller introduced and presented each veteran with a certificate as members Sally Haler and Melissa Johnson wrapped each veteran with their quilt. The recipients’ collective stories share quite a history. Quilts were awarded to:

Mr. Thomas Hill, Navy, Pearl Harbor survivor: Mr. Hill entered the Navy at the age of 16 in February, 1940. He was on deck of the USS Sacramento on the morning that Pearl Harbor was bombed. He was a Quartermaster, First Class when he left the Navy.

Mr. W. Harold Plunkett, Army Air Force Corps: Mr. Plunkett served from 1941–1945. He enlisted on December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed. Mr. Plunkett was in the 48th Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group, located in northern Africa. He served as a radioman (gunner in the ball turret) in 56 missions, and his duties included logging dropped bombs and recording enemy planes. He received two Purple Hearts. He was Staff Sergeant when he left the service. Mr. Plunkett’s story and his diary are in the Library of Congress.

Mr. Paul Redenbarger, Army Air Force Corps: Mr. Redenbarger was drafted in 1943 and served in WWII until 1946. In 1949 he enlisted in the Army and served in Korea until 1953. In 1955 he enlisted with the National Guard and spent several years in France, where he was a guard at the Berlin Wall; he served until 1962.

Mr. Bill Evans, Army: Mr. Evans was drafted in 1952 and discharged in 1953. Mr. Evans did six months of landmine training at Camp Atterbury in Indianapolis, IN, and in MI. Just prior to being deployed, his unit went on a speed march with full gear and a full backpack. That day the temperature was 110 degrees and Mr. Evans suffered heat stroke. He was in the hospital when his unit was shipped out. Unfortunately, six months later he was discharged.

Mr. William "Billy" Giltz, Navy: He enlisted in 1948 at the age of 17. Mr. Giltz served until 1952. He was a watchman, keeping an eye out for planes and mines. Most of his time was served in a task force at sea, where he saw many shore bombardments.

Mr. David Reberger, Army: A Korean War veteran serving in 1952–1953, Mr. Reberger went straight to Korea after boot camp. At the time, if you served for sixteen consecutive months, you were allowed to return home, which is precisely what he did.

Mr. Michael Branum, Army: A Vietnam era veteran from 1966–1969, Mr. Branum served most of his time in Germany as a mail clerk. He needed top-secret clearance level during that time. In 1968, he also served for a period in Czechoslovakia. He recalled having the opportunity to dance with the frauleins while stationed in Germany.

The Southern Indiana Quilts of Valor group was honored to award each of these veterans with a quilt to thank them for their service to our country.

As the ceremony began, the seven honored guests were gathered together for the presentation.
The mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.

Quilts Reported

2012: 6,169
2013: 12,314
2014: 17,373
2015: 18,772
2016: 19,051
2017: 24,009
2018: 31,259
2019: 1,650

Total: 210,760
(from date of first recorded award through 31 January 2019)

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