



CHRONICLE

The Newspaper for Veterans and All Who Love Them.

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 5

JULY/AUGUST 2018

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— Norman Rockwell





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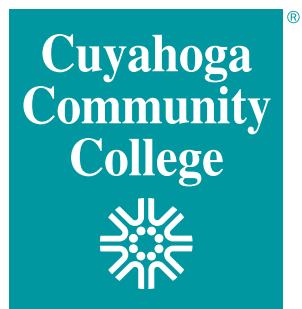
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UNIFORM OF THE DAY

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 5 Ruck to Remember mission honors nation's heroes | 10 VA Commits \$17 Million to Expand Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program | 15 D.R.E.W. Songwriters Record Local Veterans' Stories |
| 6 "Homeless Jesus" Sculpture on display at Community West Foundation | 12 WW II Medic Beat Post-Concussion Syndrome | 16 Banners Salute Independence Hometown Heroes
Odyssey of an Iron Knight |
| 7 Memorial Day: A day of sadness and gratitude, family and burnt hot dogs | 13 Veterans Matter to help homeless vets in Cleveland | 17 Bob Feller Act of Valor Foundation launches exhibit |
| 8 Disabled vets build futures with Medina restoration firm
American Legion marks 100 years of service and patriotism | 16 Anatomy of a Miracle Examines the Unknowable | 18 Leaving Blood and Guts in Korea |
| | 14 Re-enacting War: Entertainment or History Lesson? | 19 Homestead Exemption Benefit |

VA Healthcare in Cleveland

Okay, just a few random thoughts. Man, I'm crazy about the Louis B. Stokes VA Hospital in Cleveland. Same with its outpatient center in Parma.

Friends avoid me because I brag about our health service.

I know VA health service in other parts of the country has been banged around, and it's reprehensible – no veteran should be subjected to poor or inadequate health care. Finding excuses is more difficult than drawing to an inside straight.

But Cleveland? One of the best VA health centers in the country. Here's my latest example. Yester-



day I had an appointment with my regular physician. I was taken in right on schedule. A nurse took my blood pressure, weight, asked lots

of questions. Then into my physician's office. She never looked at the clock. Lots and lots of questions. She listened closely to my answers.

Bad news? Well, all the blood work showed me to be a pretty healthy guy. 'Cept for high blood pressure. Not bad.

I like telling this brief story when the VA is the subject: I was running late for an 11 a.m. appointment. I was racing through the front door of the clinic when my phone rang. It was my nurse, telling me I was late.

If you can tell a better story about doctor/patient service, I'll be hornswoggled.

LETTERS RECEIVED BY DRILL SERGEANTS FROM OUR WORRIED MOMS

- Please don't let my little boy know I wrote you, but could you remind my little man not to get too close to your guns? He really doesn't have any experience.
- Who is this Jody boy?
- Sergeant, is my boy eating his vegetables? He never cared for broccoli, but you know how important it is.
- Were you able to fix my boy's problem with cursing?
- My sweet and darling boy wrote he was in a secret location? Is this one of the games you boys play?
- My boy told me one of the commands you give him is 'stand at ease.' Please don't let him slouch. It would break his Father's heart.
- My boy said your favorite name for him is, Maggot. Could you call him, 'Sparky,' instead? That was always his nickname.
- My little boy says you are always yelling, 'Gimme ten!' Are you making my son pay you?
- How you ever got my little darling to shine his shoes, I will never know, but thank you.
- My little trooper says he eats in a mess. Would it kill you to clean the dining room?

HOROSCOPES by FOOPA WOOPA

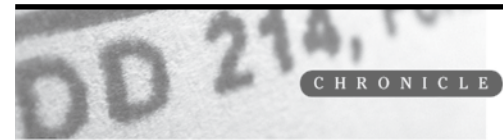
June 21 - July 22

You may say, every time the phone rings, "Oh, what now?" While life has not been without some serious bumps recently, it is not as bad as you think. Having the electric, water, and gas cut off seems troublesome, but the bright side of you sees, "At least it's warm weather. Plus my phone still works." Cancer is a cardinal sign and one of your many virtues is your ability to work best under pressure. What about phone scams? Good money and minimal expense. Work from anywhere, too. When the goin' gets tough, the tough get goin'!



July 23 - August 22

Recent decisions might backfire on you, but fear not. Even though you now see the idiocy of taking a middle-of-the-night newspaper route for the Plain Dealer, you get a free paper and last night's scores. Loaning your car to your brother-in-law to get to AA meetings sounded good. In retrospect, maybe it wasn't. But at least he was rescued. The Fire Department said hauling your car out of Lake Erie is your problem, not theirs. "Public servants, my ass," was not the comment you should have said; live and learn.



*The Newspaper for
Veterans and
All Who Love Them.*

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Editorial Statement

DD214 Chronicle is committed to its readers: Veterans of every generation and all who love them. The printed newspaper is delivered across northern Ohio without charge: More than 60 libraries, colleges and universities that welcome veteran students, VFW and American Legion posts, city halls, Veteran Administration offices and health care facilities, organizations in support of veterans, advertisers, political offices, and Veteran Service Commissions. DD214 Chronicle also maintains dd214chronicle.com and DD214 Chronicle/Facebook.

The Chronicle would not exist without its advertisers. Make the effort to patronize them.

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Ruck to Remember mission honors nation's heroes

By Barry Goodrich

While the Memorial Day weekend gives many a chance to attend parties, fire up grills and celebrate the onset of summer, our nation's veterans realize the holiday goes much deeper. For them, it is a solemn occasion – a time for honoring and remembering those who went far beyond the call of duty.

Few events do a better job of saluting the nation's heroes than the Ruck to Remember mission, a 60-mile Memorial Day weekend trek that begins in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., continues through Purcellville, Va. And eventually reaches The Iwo Jima Memorial and, finally, Arlington National Cemetery.

Founded in 2011 by former Marine Keith Jolley, the Ruck to Remember also includes a shorter (six miles) Final Miles Mission, whose members meet up with the 60-mile participants at the Iwo Jima Memorial early Memorial Day morning before both groups embark on the emotional final mile to Arlington.

"It's grown year after year and I'm very humbled by it," said Jolley, who was involved in security forces training in Washington D.C. and currently works for a defense contractor. "It's gone way beyond anything I had imagined."

Jolley initially created the Ruck to Remember as a tribute to a fellow Marine and close friend who committed suicide. "It's really about raising awareness, a mission of remembrance," he said. "But it's also about making it fun and bringing back that camaraderie we all once had."

That first year's mission included

just 27 participants, only four of whom completed the rigorous 60-mile journey. Last year's Ruck to Remember drew 170 and had a 90 percent completion rate. The 2017 Ruck was made up of 35 percent veterans and 65 percent civilians with women accounting for 40 percent of all participants.

"It's a life-changing event for civilians and veterans," said Jolley. "We have some veterans in their 70s who have completed it."

Ruck to Remember participants, who are divided into teams, are asked to raise \$500 each but many double or triple that amount. "After year three we started partnering with charities and went from \$7,000 to north of \$60,000 per year," said Jolley. "What's even more special to me is the veterans' population (of the Ruck) is increasing by 30 percent each year."

All of the funds raised this year will go to Fisher House, Team RWB, the Oscar Mike Foundation, Operation Enduring Warrior and Team TAPS. Since the inception of the event, Ruck to Remember has raised over \$225,000 for veterans organizations.

What Jolley calls "the goosebump raising moments" occur each year when each team member relates a story of valor involving servicemen and women who have died in combat.

But the former Marine's most memorable moment came in Virginia as his team, marching in

formation and carrying an American flag, passed a young boy riding a bike.

"He stopped, got off the bike and gave us a hand salute," said Jolley. "It was a

chilling moment...he understood the meaning of the flag."

For more information on the 2018 Ruck to Remember, visit rucktoremember.org.



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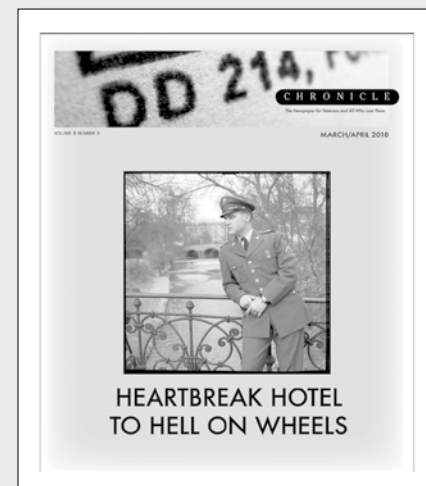
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“Homeless Jesus” Sculpture on display at Community West Foundation



WESTLAKE - A life size sculpture titled “Homeless Jesus” is on display at the Community West Foundation campus in Westlake. This moving work, created by Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz, depicts Jesus as a homeless person lying on a bench covered by a blanket with wounds in his feet.

The sculpture is a visual representation of the Gospel passage in Matthew 25:40, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” This symbolic work of art is one of a se-

ries of inspiring sculptures crafted by Schmalz.

Copies of the sculpture have started appearing in cities around the world, and now, the Community West Foundation has “Homeless Jesus” on display outside of its office building as a reminder of what the organization values. “Homeless Jesus” reflects the core principle of the work and mission at Community West Foundation to care for the least of our brothers and sisters in need.

“We want to share this gift with our entire community”, said David

T. Dombrowiak, President and CEO, Community West Foundation. “The relevance of “Homeless Jesus” reminds us to show love, care and compassion to our less fortunate neighbors.”

All are invited to take the opportunity and see “Homeless Jesus” at the Community West Foundation campus. There is even space at the end of the bench to sit for a while, to pray and meditate. The Foundation plans to make the sculpture available for area churches to borrow and display for inspiration to their congregations.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY WEST FOUNDATION

Community West Foundation is a local philanthropic organization dedicated to supporting organizations that provide the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and medical care to the most needy in our community, as exemplified by the SocksPlus campaign. Learn more at communitywestfoundation.org

DD214 Chronicle

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MEMORIAL DAY

A day of sadness and gratitude, family and burnt hot dogs

By Chaplain Joseph Calipietro

Many of my days begin with hope. I've always thought hope was a close relative to prayer. Prayer without any of the formalities.

By the end of the day, most of my hopes have been lost in the maelstrom of life. For hopes realized, my evening prayers were of gratitude.

Would you pray with me? Or hope with me?

It is likely we share many hopes, that many of our prayers are similar.

I like to make my hopes known to God, especially for Memorial Day, when we honor those many men and women who sacrificed their lives to protect us and our way of life.

You'll join me, won't you?

We hope that the souls of those lost in battle are aware of our gratitude.

We hope the souls of all combatants are blessed with peace; understanding that our enemies

on Earth are fellow souls in Heaven.

We hope those who knew and loved our fallen might be comforted, this day and for all days.

We hope and pray that by our actions we prove we are worthy of their sacrifices.

We hope to further open our

hearts to all God's children, the animals He created, and the forests and mountains He fashioned for us.

We hope to learn better about our planet. It is God's most wonderful gift and will be home to a thousand more generations.

We hope the cacophony of politics

will be replaced by listening, considering, and respecting all individuals.

We hope to honor memories and we hope to later enjoy the comfort and love of our friends and families. We hope for potato salad, cold beer and soda, hamburgers and hot dogs, watermelon, big smiles and long, warm hugs.

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Disabled vets build futures with Medina restoration firm

By Barry Goodrich

After five years in the Navy and another six years with the National Guard, Geno Conley saw four tours of duty and sustained a serious neck injury, a broken back, a shoulder injury and the loss of part of his foot. Upon returning home, the Portage county native was not about to bemoan what could have been – he was more interested in what could be.

“I didn’t want to sit around and just collect my disability and do nothing,” said Conley from his Medina home. “I thought about what kind of company I could start where disabled veterans could work and earn a decent living.”

Four years ago, Conley founded Band of Brothers Restoration. The new business was put on hold for a period until starting back up last December, when Conley formed a partnership with fellow veteran Justin Wagenschutz, who moved to Medina from Michigan.

Wagenschutz joined the Army in 2004 and served for three years before a stint in the National Guard. While in the Army, he served in Iraq

from 2005-06, sustaining a traumatic brain injury and PTSD in the process. “I don’t have a construction background by any means but I have the same philosophy as Geno has,” said Wagenschutz. “This is a good fit for us. We both want to supply a livelihood for others.”

Four of the six workers employed by Band of Brothers Restoration are veterans and the other two have military connections. “We have people who have served, their kids have served, or they have lost someone in war,” said Conley.

At present, company is restoring a home in the Akron area, using not only a team of veterans but a majority of Made in the USA materials. California-based investor William Selling, a Desert Storm veteran, acquired the home and contact-



ed Conley’s firm to do the work. The home inspection was done by a veteran and Tony Perry, a former Marine and owner of Akron-based Stars and

Stripes Plumbing, is also involved in the work. Selling’s realtor, Jason Horton, is also an Army veteran.

“Will approached us a little over a year ago and we found a home on the outskirts of Firestone Park in Akron,” said Conley. “Some bad weather held us up but we were able to finish up in June.”

“My goal is to sell the home to a veteran and repeat the process, as a way to support and employ veterans while also using 100 percent U.S.-made materials and bringing jobs back to America,” said Selling.

Band of Brothers Restoration is also involved with government contract work all across the country and has worked on everything from hotels to new construction to retail space. The company also does work for handicapped residents of ADA-approved homes.

“The bigger the company gets, the bigger our ideas get,” said Conley. “Money is ultimately not our number one motivation. Our goal is to start a technical school for veterans...one with a scholarship program.”

American Legion marks 100 years of service and patriotism

By Barry Goodrich

In 1919, a group of battle-weary but patriotic World War I veterans formed a new organization called the American Legion, chartered and incorporated by Congress. They had no way of knowing, 100 years later, their small group’s membership would swell to over two million with more than 13,000 posts worldwide.

Those founding members were devoted to the themes of service, patriotism and camaraderie. Today, the nation’s largest wartime veterans’ service organization is committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of community programs while advocating patriotism and honor.

American Legion Baseball is one of the largest and most successful amateur athletic programs in the country, stressing the importance of sportsmanship, citizenship and fitness. The Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors supports recovering wounded warriors and their families and the organization raises millions of dollars in donations at the local, state and national levels to

help veterans and their families in times of need.

But some of the Legion’s greatest accomplishments came during its formative years, leading the movement for government support of those who served their country. The founders established programs that endure today, from working with the National Education Association to improve school attendance to creating children’s programs for kids who had lost parents due to war.

“The World War I veterans who formed the organization fought to establish a flag code in 1923 and 1924,” said Jeffrey R. Stoffer, the Legion’s media director. “They also fought for the establishment of the Veterans Administration in 1930.



And in 1943, the Legion drafted and fought to pass the first G.I. Bill, democratizing higher education, home ownership and advancing civil rights... ways in which the American Legion believed it could strengthen the nation.”

Last year, the Legion elected Denise Rohan as the first ever female National Commander in the organization’s history. Rohan heads up the Legion’s Temporary Financial Assistance program, which awards cash grants to the minor children of veterans eligible for American Legion membership. The grants help families in need meet the costs of shelter, food, utilities and health expenses.

“It’s important to remember that women were original Legion members

and leaders in 1919 before they had the full right to vote,” said Stoffer.

The Legion has been able to adapt to each new era during its long history while retaining the original values it established a century ago. Today, a diverse 21st Century committee of mainly post-9/11 veterans is drafting strategy for the next 100 years.

“These new generations of Legionnaires are as dedicated as the Legion’s original founders,” said Stoffer. “They are demonstrating our time-honored values in different ways, like (organizing) yoga therapy at Legion posts for those suffering from PTSD.”

The American Legion’s 100th National Convention will be held Aug. 24-30 in Minneapolis, the same city that hosted the Legion’s first convention.

“From rural posts raising money for disaster relief to battling on Capitol Hill for an effective Veterans Administration, the Legion continues to work to strengthen the nation, regardless of war era, duty station or gender,” said Stoffer.

LORAIN COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

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VA CLAIMS ASSISTANCE

Our Veterans Service Officers (VSO's) serve as a liaison to the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA). VSO's advise and assist Vets and their family members of their rights and/or obtaining possible benefits through the VA, the State of Ohio and Lorain County.

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- Non-service Connected Pension for Wartime Vets (Aid & Attendance/ Housebound Pension, and Survivors Pension).
- Service Connected Compensation.
- Ohio War Orphans Scholarship.
- Notice of Disagreements & Appeals.

VSO's also submit application for:

- Military Awards and Medals.
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*1 May depart earlier if all riders are present.

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VA COMMITS \$17 MILLION TO EXPAND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Services address healing from physical, psychological and social effects of violence

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking action to address Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) by earmarking \$17 million in funds to support Veterans in need.

The funds will strengthen IPV Assistance Programs in VA facilities nationwide.

“VA recognizes that intimate partner violence is a health issue faced by many Veterans and their families,” said Acting VA Secretary Peter O’Rourke. “We are giving careful attention to this program, ensuring it is integrated into clinical care and workplace safety. Both are important to the safety of Veterans and VA employees who report experiencing violence.”

IPV affects millions of Americans. The term “intimate partner violence” describes physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples.

Awareness and identification of intimate partner violence among Veterans has increased. Research suggests Veterans may be at greater risk than their civilian counterparts, given the unique stressors posed by military life.

VA’s IPV Assistance Program focuses on the individual and works on developing a culture of safety. This holistic approach involves understanding, recognizing and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. The ultimate goals are to end violence, prevent further violence and promote healthy relationships.

The Veterans Health Administration launched the IPV Assistance Program in January 2014 and has since established IPV Assistance Program Coordinators at more than 115 VA facilities to offer assistance to Veterans, their partners and VA staff. Program Coordinators use resources from mental health, primary care, women’s health, Veterans justice outreach and employee occupational health and assistance programs.

The IPV program also offers intervention through VA and community partnerships that address housing, education and employment needs. This additional funding will allow VA to expand the program to all VA medical centers and build greater awareness of IPV as a serious health issue.



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WW II Medic Beat Post-Concussion Syndrome

By Jerri Donohue

PFC Richard Claes strapped the injured Dutchwoman's litter to the hood of a jeep. As he slapped Red Cross emblems on both sides of the vehicle, her two sons climbed into the back seat. Then the medic rushed his patient down a road held by Germans and delivered her to a hospital.

"The Wehrmacht boys rose out of their foxholes and waved," the Medina resident said. "On the way back, they did the same thing."

Drafted during his freshman year at Ohio State University, Claes landed in France a month after D-Day with the 104th ("Timberwolf") Infantry Division, 329th Medical Battalion. He soon used his combat medic training when his convoy was shelled and men dove into a mined ditch.

In Belgium, Holland and Germany, Claes set up aid stations in any serviceable space, including a barn, a school, a lodge, a butcher shop and a convent basement. In addition to GIs, he treated civilians and wounded Germans who called him "Ami." Not to be confused with French for "friend," this hostile derivation from "American," was similar to the American usage of "Jap" for "Japanese."

During a shelling in Germany's Hürtgen Forest, a prisoner shoved Claes against a tree trunk, yelling, "Ami, up against!"

"When the shells hit the top of the trees, branches would come down like spears," Claes recalled. "He protected me against the tree."

The Timberwolves were night-fighters and Claes often labored in the dark. On one occasion, he had to leave a captain with a compound fracture to help more seriously wounded men. The medic once held vigil all night with a gut-shot soldier he expected would die before dawn. The next morning the man was evacuated. Claes learned he had survived when the two met at a



reunion decades later.

Claes was injured, too, when he was caught in a bombardment as he knelt over a man shot through the lung. His patient died and Claes suffered a concussion.

"They said I was goofy for about three days," the veteran said.

When the war ended, Claes completed college at Ohio State and married a classmate. Post-concussion syndrome ambushed him one day in 1949, as he and his pregnant wife were driving through farmland in central Ohio.

"It felt like a heavy wind was coming on my left side," Claes recalled. "I felt the most excruciating pain over this right eye."

He pulled onto the berm. When a tractor rumbled down the road toward him, Claes thought it was a German tank and crawled beneath his car.

He immediately was admitted to the VA hospital in Dayton, suffering from paralysis on his left side. His first child was born a few days later.

Although her sister urged Claes's late wife, Lois, to leave him, she stood by him during the vet's 6-year recovery. The couple raised a close-knit family and Claes enjoyed a rewarding career working for the Welfare Department on the county and state levels.

As he approaches his 95th birthday, the former medic advises younger veterans not to lose hope as they deal with post-concussion syndrome or other combat-related problems.

"It gets better," Claes said. "It just takes time."

Veterans Matter to help homeless vets in Cleveland

By Barry Goodrich

Ken Leslie once rubbed shoulders with the likes of Jerry Seinfeld and Sam Kinison, performing stand-up comedy in Cleveland Comedy clubs such as Hilarities during the late 1980s.

But that is only one part of Leslie's amazing story. While touring the country on the comedy circuit, the Perrysburg native became a casualty of the fast lane and nightlife which provided easy access to booze and drugs. Leslie became an alcoholic and drug addict before getting sober in 1992.

Yet another formative period of Leslie's life came before his comedy career when he spent several weeks as a member of the homeless population. He lived in his car, eating peanut butter out of a jar.

Those memories have driven Leslie ever since. In 2012, he founded Veterans Matter, a Toledo-based organization dedicated to housing homeless veterans. Providing a security deposit and, in some cases a first month rent payment for homeless veterans who have received long-term housing vouchers from HUD and the Veterans Administration.

That first year, Veterans Matter helped house 35 veterans in the Northwest Ohio area. The organization has now grown to serve 18 states across the nation, with over 2,150 veterans housed and a new initiative to house an additional 1,000 vets by the end of the year.

Up until May, Veterans Matter did not have a foothold in the Greater Cleveland area. That has changed thanks to a \$60,000 donation from the University of Toledo's Songfest, an annual event

with student groups raising funds by putting on dance routines. The donation will also allow Veterans Matter to expand into the Columbus area as well.

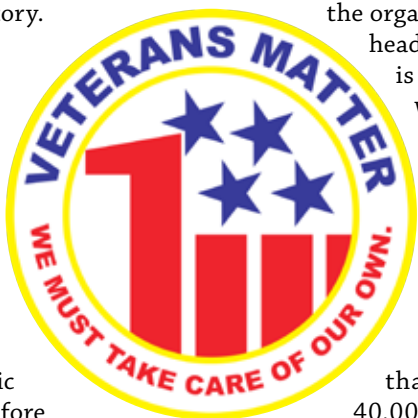
"This is something that resonates with the kids," said Leslie from the organization's Toledo headquarters. "Our goal is to unite those of us who care about homeless veterans into one cohesive force that successfully returns veterans to a home for the brave in the land of the free.

"It's heartbreaking that we still have over 40,000 homeless veterans in the streets," he added.

One of the biggest advantages of Veterans Matter is a low documented administrative expenses figure of eight percent. "Every dollar results in a veteran or veteran's family with children housed in a long-term HUD-VA partner program that has a 91 percent success rate," said Leslie.

Celebrity advocates have been a huge part of the organization's success. One of the earliest was John Mellencamp, who worked with Leslie in Toledo's Tent City program. Entertainers such as ZZ Top's Dusty Hill, John Fogerty, Gary Sinise, Anne Heche, Kid Rock and Katy Perry have helped raise funds through public service announcements and fundraisers. Last month, rocker George Thorogood donated a signed guitar to the cause during a tour stop in Toledo.

According to the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, there has been a steady increase of homeless veterans in the Greater Cleveland area. Those who wish to contribute to Veterans Matter can text VETS to 41444 or visit VeteransMatter.org.



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Anatomy of a Miracle Examines the Unknowable By Nancy Peacock

What happens when a 26-year-old, paralyzed Afghanistan War veteran is somehow able to rise from his wheelchair? Four years after the fragments from a land mine severed the nerves of his lower vertebrae, Cameron Harris inexplicably stands up in the Biz-E-Bee convenience store parking lot in Biloxi, Mississippi. What follows is *Anatomy of a Miracle*, the third novel by Jonathan Miles (Random House, 2018).

The book examines all aspects of the event's aftermath: busloads of tourists wanting to observe the actual square of asphalt where the healing occurred, a formal investigation by the Catholic Church, the medical community's attempt to scientifically explain the event, and the creation of a reality TV show. At the center of this cultural and religious maelstrom is Cameron, the veteran whose young life was filled with loss, conflict and unbearable secrets.

Author Miles recently talked about the book with DD214 Chronicle. Although he is not a veteran, Miles said he did extensive research and reporting on the U.S. conflict in Afghanistan, and the wounded veterans who survived.

"When it's fiction, you don't have any sort of concrete obligation to get things right," Miles said. "But I feel that there is an artistic obligation to make it as true as possible, to reflect the commonality of the experience in the most accurate way possible."

Miles said he set the story in the coastal town of Biloxi, Mississippi for religious reasons. He quoted the late southern writer Flannery O'Connor, who described the south

as "Christ-haunted."

"I realized that this should happen in a place where it would be immediately comprehended as a miracle," he said.

Although the state of Mississippi is known for its Baptist church influence, Miles described the Mississippi coast as "a spur of Catholicism coming off New Orleans. And the Catholic Church is the only major faith that purports to investigate and certify miracles."

Cameron's modern-day miracle prompts the Vatican to dispatch an investigator to file a report. The Vietnamese couple who own the convenience store begin reaping windfall sales from the spiritual tourist trade. A reality TV show producer travels to Biloxi and convinces Cameron and his sister Tanya to open up their lives to a camera crew. But the attention brings out a secret that threatens to ruin the good fortune of those who are benefitting from all of the publicity.

In terms of his own spirituality, Miles describes himself a fundamentalist agnostic. Agnosticism is the view that the existence of God, of the divine or the supernatural, is unknown or unknowable.

"Agnosticism is almost a default condition of novelists," he said. "I think writing novels is one way to explore that sense of not knowing, that sense of uncertainty, to

try to grope closer to some sort of certainty."

So what did happen to the young veteran? Was it an actual miracle?

"I had no intention of coming to an answer," Miles said. "There is a vacuum created by Cameron's recovery. What interested me is what would fill that space because people can't bear an unanswered question. So we fill it and what would that get filled with became the prevailing question."

In keeping with a southern literature tradition, the book is filled with beautiful turns of phrase. For example, Miles writes that the church sees miracles not as proof of God's existence but as proof of a deceased person's presence and stature in heaven, "as signals of saintly or pre-saintly intervention in the frail, chipped gearing of human existence."

In another scene, Cameron's doctor drives to his house and turns off her car's engine: "The vibrations she felt weren't from the engine but from her own body. She gripped the steering wheel for calm, as if to absorb some of its mechanical logic."

In yet another chapter, Miles describes an Army staff sergeant as having "that alertly grizzled bearing that comes from being shot at numerous times."

In the book's acknowledgements section, traditionally filled with the

names of real people who helped in the book's creation, Miles thanks the characters who populate the novel for their access and willingness to be a part of the project.

"My thinking was that if the entire book was intended as a fictional construct, then the acknowledgements should be no different," Miles said. "That's caused some confusion, which I'm OK with."

Perhaps the most unexpected part of the book comes before the first chapter. The book's dedication page states: "This is for JOHN H. TIDYMAN who made smoking Camel straights while cursing at a typewriter look like fun, even if it isn't (sometimes it is)."

Miles said he was 17 years old in 1988 when he met Tidyman, the future Publisher and Editor of DD214 Chronicle. Tidyman hired Miles to be his assistant, which meant organizing files and purchasing cheeseburgers and cigarettes for his boss.

"He was such an inspiration," Miles recalled. "He was the first living writer that I had ever encountered. I'd watch him work on that electric typewriter when he was smoking those Camel straights and cussing his head off at that typewriter and I used to think, 'God, that looks like fun.'"

In addition to Tidyman's larger-than-life personae, Miles said he was struck by his boss's ability to tell a good story.

"When I met him he was the best storyteller I had ever encountered," Miles said. "It's hard for me to understate the influence he had on my life and certainly he nudged me in good directions – except for the smoking."



Re-enacting War: Entertainment or History Lesson?

By Eli Beachy



It's called reenacting, the hobby to recreate and participate in some moment of the past. Primarily an American phenomenon and usually related to war, it's an endeavor that is enjoyed by thousands and witnessed by tens of thousands.

A part of the nation since October, 1862, reenacting has always seemed to confuse its purpose: Is it entertainment or is it a history lesson? Like any war movie, it can be both.

For more than 30 years I marched with the Confederate Army in the world's most popular version, Civil War reenacting.

It was the advantage of having the right look, just 5'5", 145 pounds and a bad attitude; I could portray the expectation of a Confederate trooper.

The Magic Moment is that micro-second when it all feels real, as if you have achieved the impossibility of having

transported across time. In these many years, to me it has happened only twice.

It was time to hang it up but the old war horse wasn't ready. It hit me right between the eyes. I'm headed off to World War II.

How is a 5'5", 155-pound, long-haired, longer-bearded-bad-attitude, 67-year old going to pull this one off? Be reading next edition.

It's so damn good it even amazes me.

D.R.E.W. Songwriters Record Local Veterans' Stories

By Jerri Donohue

One by one, the six songwriters take the stage in Carnegie Hall, a renovated barn in Avon Lake. On a hot afternoon in May they sing about a forward observer's experience in Vietnam, a First Gulf War veteran's sense of belonging to a team, and a female soldier's silent suffering after being raped.

Each musician composed the music and lyrics within one day of meeting with an individual veteran to learn his or her story.

"We had the easy part," Charlie Wiener tells the audience of vets and their families. "We just had to write the song. We didn't have to live it."

The program, Delivering Restorative Energy to Our Warriors (D.R.E.W.) is retired social worker Marilyn Zeidner's memorial to Avon Lake native Drew Ferguson. A close friend of Zeidner's daughter during their high school years, Ferguson spent many hours in Zeidner's home. He became an Army Ranger after graduation, and later a Green

Beret officer. He received three Bronze Stars before leaving military service after multiple deployments.

Although he hadn't seen Zeidner in years, Ferguson sent donations to her non-profit organization, Music on a Mission, after he moved to the West Coast.

"He was a musician, a poet, an artist," Zeidner said.

Ferguson died by his own hand last summer.

Soon after, Zeidner founded D.R.E.W. under the umbrella of Music on a Mission. Its logo – a drum embellished with a flag – is based on Ferguson's poem, "My Drum," and uses his art.

Zeidner said D.R.E.W. offers veterans a non-threatening way to tell



their stories, release pain and connect with others. Instead of publically relating their military experiences to a group, they share them privately with a songwriter.

"The songwriters make the program," Zeidner said.

Their music ranges from lively to mournful and their lyrics cover light-hearted topics as well as serious ones.

Participants responded positively to the first four workshops. A Vietnam veteran marveled at the song that resulted from his story.

"It was amazing to him that someone was listening so intently, that someone could turn what he was feeling into a song," Zeidner said. "It made it universal and not just his personal wound."

D.R.E.W. affects its songwriters, too. Ray Flanagan, a full time musician based in Lakewood, was paired with Drew Ferguson's longtime friend, Lt. Zac Lewis. Their song, "Living on the Strong Point," describes Lewis's soul-numbing assignment in Kandahar in 2012. Flanagan eventually recorded the song in a studio and posted it on Bandcamp, a website where independent musicians sell their recordings. He donates all proceeds from "Living on the Strong Point" to the Travis Mills Foundation. Mills, who survived an IED blast as a quadruple amputee, was one of Lewis's men.

"Songs are a good vehicle to tell stories," Flanagan said. "They can't fix anything, but they do have value emotionally. Sharing the past makes it more bearable."

D.R.E.W. is funded by donations. Veterans from all branches are welcome to participate at no charge. Each receives a recording of his/her song. To register for future workshops, contact Zeidner at Marilyn@musicmission.com

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Banners Salute Independence Hometown Heroes

By Jerri Donohue

From April through Veterans Day, motorists on Route 21 in Independence travel beneath banners saluting the city's veterans and current servicemen and women.

"A city named Independence was the perfect venue to honor our military," Mayor Anthony Togliatti said of the project he initiated last year.

Independence employee Gayle Rudary discovered Corning, New York's Hometown Heroes program while on vacation in 2016. Corning acknowledges its veterans on small banners hung at eye level in a pedestrians-only district. Rudary snapped a photo of one depicting Shawn Lane, a Marine killed in Iraq in 2004. When she showed the picture to Togliatti, he immediately resolved to create a similar tribute to his city's veterans and active duty personnel.

Independence residents embraced the idea. In 2017, the project's first year, 30 persons participated. Another 32 were added this spring.

Each sponsor purchases a banner for \$165. The city prepares the graphics in-house, which Carroll Graphics in Cleveland then reproduces on sturdy fabric.

Measuring 30 inches by 100 inches, every double-sided banner features an honoree's picture, name and branch of service. The photograph usually reveals the era in which the individual served.

"We have two banners from the Civil War, and that continues to World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the War on Terror," Togliatti said.

Representing members of all branches, the banners include men killed in action and former prisoners of war as well as those who returned home unscathed.



Relatives occasionally share the honoree's experience in "Behind the Banner," a short column in Independence's monthly newsletter. Upon former submariner Edmund N. Chrzanowski, Sr.'s death, the city enlarged and mounted his son's written account to exhibit at the wake. Some families ask to display a veteran's banner during calling hours, and the city rehanges it after the funeral.

The banners inform Independence residents of the military service of neighbors and acquaintances. When retired Police Chief Tony Appenzeller died in May, people left flags and wreaths by the pole that held the World War II corporal's banner.

Flags adorn telephone poles that cannot accommodate the hardware necessary for hang-

ing the banners. To give more residents access to the 62 available spots, banners are retired after two years and returned to their owners. About 30 veterans wait their turn.

Togliatti acknowledged the origin of Independence's project by writing to Gunnery Sgt. Lane's parents in Corning. He thanked them for sharing their son's legacy through their town's banner project and he described the positive impact this eventually made on his own city.

Other communities are taking note. A western suburb recently approached Independence for details on implementing a banner program.

"We have had hundreds of phone calls from participants, residents, visitors and those in surrounding communities, to let us know how much they enjoy the banners, how it has re-sparked their patriotism," Togliatti said. "Not one negative comment in two years."

Odyssey of an Iron Knight

By JC Sullivan

My introduction to Don Evans began with a message on our answering machine. It was from his son. He'd seen a notation at the end of one of my published stories that I had served with the Second Armored Division.

I returned the call to Spring City, Pennsylvania, near Valley Forge. John Charles picked up. He asked me if I knew his father, Don. I asked him what unit within the Division? "Sixty-sixth Armored Regiment Recon."

I then asked what time frame. "Nineteen-forty-two to 1945."

Purple Heart recipient Don Evans was a very lucky man; since he'd joined, he was in the thick of the action.

His military journey took him through Algeria and Tunisia, French North Africa, then on to Sicily, England (once for treatment for his wounds,) and France (Normandy D+3).

He described the aftermath of D-Day as being devoid of a single bird. "But dead soldiers were everywhere. There were intact bodies, pieces of bodies, and burned bodies. Feet and arms were protruding from the plowed-up earth. I hoped I would not have to die as these men did."

During the period of July 26 to August 12, 1944, Evans' 66th Armored Regiment was cited for extraordinary heroism and

outstanding performance of duty during their advance from St. Lo to the Argentan-Falaise pocket.

In August 1944 Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, commanding the 12th U.S. Army Group, abruptly halted the advance of the XV Corps of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army. He thus prevented its movement northward through Argentan toward a juncture with Canadian forces coming south from Caen toward Falaise.

As a consequence, the Allies failed to close the Argentan-Falaise pocket. The virtually surrounded German forces in Normandy, escaping through the Argentan-Falaise gap, avoided complete encirclement and almost certain destruction.

Evans' military biography details his combat actions and includes the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944.

Evans' experience is an exciting, first-hand read of well-known European battles, as well as a glimpse into what the soldiers thought about and what their feelings were, including their time in between combat.

"I was fortunate to have been able to spend all my military time as a member of the famed 2nd Armored Division (Hell on Wheels)," Evans said. "We were considered to be among the premier divisions in the European-Mediterranean Theater and because of our achievements we were selected to be the first American unit to occupy the fallen city of Berlin."

VA SHOWCASES NEW MEDICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN VETERAN CARE ON CAPITOL HILL

WASHINGTON —Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Office of Research and Development hosted a Research Fair at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill to share new medical advancements in improving health care and quality of life for Veterans across the nation.

"VA has a long and distinguished history of health-care research leading to new discoveries and innovations to benefit Veterans and all Americans," said Acting VA Secretary Peter O'Rourke. "VA continues to conduct cutting-edge research, such as the development and testing of advanced prosthetic limbs, the Million Veteran Program (MVP), precision-medicine initiative and regenerative medicine aimed at repairing severed spinal cords."

The event featured exhibits and demonstrations covering areas such as prosthetics, robotics, genomics and mental health. In the past, VA research has contributed to groundbreaking advances in medical care and technology, such as the CT scan, the cardiac pacemaker and the first successful liver transplant.

"VA research has resulted in three Nobel prizes, seven Lasker awards and numerous other national and international honors," said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, executive in charge of VA's Veterans Health Administration. "We are very proud of the impact our research collaborations has on the health of Veterans and the nation."

The event also featured more than a dozen leading VA researchers, including Dr. Rory Cooper, a pioneer in wheelchair and other adaptive technology; Dr. Ann McKee, an authority on traumatic brain injury and chronic traumatic encephalopathy; and Dr. JoAnn Kirchner, who directs efforts to bring innovative mental health treatments to Veterans.

For more information on VA research, visit research.va.gov.

Bob Feller Act of Valor Foundation launches exhibit

By Barry Goodrich

For Bob Feller, country came first. One of the greatest pitchers in Major League Baseball history, Feller was due to sign a lucrative new contract with the Cleveland Indians just as Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941.

Feller almost immediately made the decision to become the first professional athlete to enlist in the United States armed forces and would go on to serve on missions in the Pacific and the North Atlantic while achieving the rank of Chief Petty Officer and earning six campaign ribbons and eight battle stars.

This month, the Bob Feller Act of Valor Foundation launches a traveling educational exhibit at the National Museum of the U.S. Navy during Major League Baseball's All-Star Weekend in Washington, D.C.

The exhibit, specifically focused on today's youth, will educate the public on the qualities of the World



War II generation, providing inspiration through the importance of the service, citizenship, sacrifice and legacy demonstrated by those who served in World War II – including 37 Baseball Hall of Famers and more than 500 players.

"We are honored to be launching our educational initiative," said Peter Fertig, President of the Bob Feller Act of Valor Foundation. "It

is through this strong connection between Major League Baseball and the U.S. Military that we honor their incredible service and sacrifice."

"As an organization, we knew firsthand of Bob's absolute pride in the fact that he was a member of the U.S. Navy," said Cleveland Indians Senior VP of Public Affairs Bob DiBiasio, who has been with the Foundation since its inception. "One of our missions is to make sure the younger generation understands that the Greatest Generation was all about service to their country."

The foundation established its Bob Feller Act of Valor Award in 2013 to annually recognize eight recipients – one MLB Hall of Famer, one current MLB player, one U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer, two Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Awards, a member of the U.S. Marine Corps with the Jerry Coleman Award and two military children who are

winners of an essay contest written about one of the 37 Hall of Famers who served in World War II. Each honoree possesses the values, integrity and dedication to service demonstrated by Feller.

The winners of the Act of Valor Award will be announced in Washington D.C. this November. For the second straight year, the Indians have nominated Cy Young pitcher Corey Kluber. "Corey does a tremendous amount of work with the military," said DiBiasio. "He and his wife make regular visits to the VA Hospital and he brings vets and their families to ball games every time we're playing at home."

Previous winner of the Act of Valor Award include MLB Hall of Famers Yogi Berra, Tommy Lasorda, George Brett, Rod Carew and Tom Seaver. Current MLB players who have been honored with the award are Justin Verlander, Nick Swisher, Jonathan Lucroy, Brad Ziegler and Darren O'Day.

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Anna Lupson, Navy veteran and LCCC psychology student who is using her veterans benefits to attend school. She plans to continue her education through LCCC's University Partnership program.



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Leaving Blood and Guts in Korea

By Jerri Donohue

The Chinese soldier appeared so suddenly that John Stiles mistook him for another American. Almost simultaneously, Stiles saw the flash of a burp gun.

"I knew I got hit because I felt warm," the Akron veteran said. "But I felt no pain." Before drifting in and out of consciousness, Stiles watched his

attacker fall, shot by another American. When awake, the teenager heard gunfire, shouts in English and Chinese and the blood-curdling screams of wounded men.

Stiles had enlisted in the Army right after high school graduation. Early in September, he flew to Korea as a replacement with the 40th Infantry Division and found himself in a trench within a day of his arrival.

"It was a bad dream," he said of the months that followed.

All vegetation had been destroyed in artillery barrages, making it easy for the Chinese to spot and fire on Americans lined up for chow. During the night, shadows loomed in artificial moonlight created by spotlights reflecting off clouds. At Christmas, the enemy tormented homesick Americans by incessantly blaring carols. Nobody had decent winter gear. Stiles sometimes saw Chinese soldiers who had frozen to death.

Stiles was fighting for a position in Mundung-ni, North Korea when his war ended on December 27, 1952. The 19-year old sustained bullet wounds to his stomach, liver, colon, pancreas and right lung. He eventually lost a kidney, needed a colostomy bag for 10 months, and spent most of a year in VA hospitals. Wounds to his spine and thigh gave him a slight limp.

Doctors later told Stiles the low temperature the day he was shot bought him time.

"I've got to be thankful for two things," the veteran said. "One is the cold weather and the other is the number of people that it



took to get me off that hill, to the hospital, through the system and back home working again."

After the battle, a soldier from a Turkish unit discovered Stiles alive and bellowed for a medic. Stiles briefly regained consciousness in a field hospital, and later on a helicopter where he panicked because his litter was covered. He assumed medical staff thought he was dead. He slept again, and woke aboard a Danish hospital ship.

In Tokyo General Hospital, the doctor who operated on Stiles gave him a handful of bullets removed during surgery. Back in the States, Stiles spent many months in the hospital at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. For much of this time, he was confined to the narrow frame of a Stryker bed. Twice, his mother made the 3-day bus trip from Akron to visit, accompanied by a young woman from their church. After his discharge in 1953, a romance bloomed between the pair; they have been married for 64 years. Stiles ran a service station to support his family.

The veteran is not embittered by his military service despite the hardships it brought him.

"I got hurt, but that was part of the game," Stiles said.

"I could have got hurt in a car accident, too. I'm a happy soldier."

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Homestead Exemption Benefit

for Disabled Veterans & Surviving Spouses

(Tri-C to host tax appraisal workshops)



One benefit which many Cuyahoga County veterans and their surviving spouses know little about is the Homestead Exemption. The Homestead Exemption impacts eligible veterans' property taxes. Applicants must be 100% disabled by or be receiving 100% compensation for service-connected injuries on January 1 of the year for which the exemption is sought. See the attached instructions for filing a late application on page 2 of this form.

The Cuyahoga County Department of Community Services' main focus is to administer the Homestead Exemption Property Tax Reduction program and en-

hance participation through extensive public awareness. Its statutory obligation mandates the auditing of 100,000 Homestead Exemption recipients and 3,500 new applications on an annual basis. A meticulous examination of comprehensive supportive documentation is required to determine eligibility resulting in a saving to individual homeowners.

In an effort to assist in understanding the Homestead Exemption (and the application process), Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), in partnership with the Cuyahoga County, will be hosting workshops at the following Tri-C locations on the following dates:

Jerry Sue Thornton Center

2500 East 22nd Street
Cleveland, OH 44115
Wednesday, August 1: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Thursday, August 2: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Friday, August 3: 9:00AM - 1:00PM

Tri-C East Campus President's Plaza

(located in the main student services building)
4250 Richmond Road
Highland Hills, OH 44122
Monday, August 6: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Tuesday, August 7: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Wednesday, August 8: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Thursday, August 9: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Friday, August 10: 9:00AM - 1:00PM

West Campus Theater

11000 West Pleasant Valley Road
Parma, OH 44131
Monday, August 13: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Tuesday, August 14: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Wednesday, August 15: 10:00AM - 7:30PM

Thursday, August 16: 10:00AM - 7:30PM
Friday, August 17: 9:00AM - 1:00PM

Again, there will be representatives from Cuyahoga County at these workshops to assist with reappraisal and questions.

Rick DeChant (CDR USCG, ret)
Executive Director, Veterans Initiative
Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame - 2017 Inductee
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- Grave markers and flags
- Free Notary for Veterans & Families

Service Assistance:

- Preparations of forms and paperwork
- Documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Proper submission of claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs thru a service organization
- Submission for awards decorations and medals
- Notary Public & DD 214 Certification



Our services are **FREE** of charge!



Our Pledge

When you come into the County Veterans Service Office you will be assisted by one of our knowledgeable associates. The people that work in the Medina County Veterans Service Office have a compassionate understanding of the problems which confront veterans, widows, widowers, and their families.

Sincerely,
Veterans Service Staff



CONVERSATION
opens the door to support.

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 9

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255

Contact us:

210 Northland Dr. - Medina, Ohio 44256
veterans@medinacountyveterans.org
www.medinacountyveterans.org

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We're putting down deep roots and giving
back to the communities we serve.



We think it's only natural to cultivate meaningful relationships in the communities where we live and work. And at Dominion, that means we do more than write checks. So while we're very proud to invest more than \$20 million in our communities annually, we're even prouder of Dominion's employees for

volunteering over 130,000 hours of their time. From refurbishing homeless shelters to replenishing local food banks to cleaning up parks to helping soldiers and their families, we're donating the most precious resource of all: our energy. Learn more by visiting dom.com/foundation.



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