

NEWSLETTER

Honor, Educate and Heal... A Place for All

thehighground.us — 715.743.4224



A rendering of what the new building will look like. See page 12 for additional illustrations.

The Highground Rising: The Journey to Building a Strong Future

The Highground Staff and Board of Directors are excited to bring you the latest update on our mission to create a lasting legacy for The Highground and those who hold it close.

Our \$4-million capital campaign has been a testament to the unwavering support and dedication of our veteran community and advocates, and we are thrilled to share the progress that has been made so far.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of donors and supporters, we are proud to announce that we have successfully raised \$1.69 million through our capital campaign. This achievement reflects the shared belief in The Highground's mission and the impact it has on our Veteran community. Each contribution, no matter the size, has brought us closer to realizing our vision. In the course of our journey, we have encountered challenges that have required us to adapt and innovate. **Read more on page 12**



“Vets & Guitars” and Ukuleles Fall Session

Registration is open for the Fall “Vets & Guitars” and Ukulele course which begins on Thursday, October 5.

Because of generous donors, these 10-session courses are free for Veterans.

Learn more on page 11

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Roger W. Haller Remembered Across All 50 States

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Spouses & Loved Ones of Veterans Peer Support Group

Honor Stones, Memorials & Honorariums

From Alabama to Wyoming, CSM Roger W. Haller is remembered across all 50 states.

Command Sergeant Major Roger W. Haller had only 927 miles on his brand-new Harley Davidson Road King when he deployed to Afghanistan in December of 2006. Shortly before his tour, the highest-ranking enlisted soldier of the 70th Regiment, Maryland Army National Guard phoned his older brother, John. “He told me that when he gets back, I’d better have a Harley of my own, because we’re going to hit the road together.”

This would be Roger’s second deployment abroad, serving a 6-month rotation in Afghanistan and Iraq as a senior adviser with the National Guard Bureau. A 24-year member of the Maryland Guard, Haller was responsible for educating sergeants in the Maryland area hoping to become commissioned officers, teaching recruits basic and advanced leadership courses. After the September 11 attacks Haller, who was working as a plumber, returned to the Guard full time. He urged his superiors to deploy him overseas, ardent and devoted to the cause, unshakeable in his belief that he was doing the right thing by serving.

On January 20, 2007, CSM Roger Haller was one of 12 soldiers killed aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter that was shot down in the Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad. He left behind two daughters, Morgan and Alex, and a son Daniel, his mother, four siblings, and countless comrades. “No matter where he was, he had a friend before he left,” said a Captain with the National Guard Bureau, “Roger was the best person I’ve ever met.” Haller is buried in a mass grave located at Section 60 in Arlington National Cemetery, marked by a single headstone with the names of all 12 men who lost their lives that day.

It has been 16 years since Roger has been gone, during which time John has collected scrapbooks full of tributes to his youngest brother. Newsweek published an article, Haller’s hometown of Cambridge put up billboards, hundreds of sympathy cards arrived, tributes were placed across Maryland in his honor at Camp Baker, at the Old Trinity Church, at the local Mission BBQ restaurant, and at the Federalsburg Memorial Site.

In May of 2023, a chance conversation inspired John. “I was buying a suit at Men’s Wearhouse, and overheard a gentleman asking about Veterans discounts. I thanked him for his service and told him about Roger and the memorial paver I placed for him in Federalsburg. A member of an American Legion Post in Delaware, he mentioned they also have a paver program. I decided to ride over there and purchase one. After that I asked myself ‘why can’t I get one in every state?’ and I got on the computer”.

Three short months later, John has remarkably completed his honorable charge. CSM Roger Haller has a memorial tribute placed in all 50 states, a spreadsheet with the address of each location a solemn but dignified homage from one brother to another. “I have had several people ask me, ‘do you think you are going to be the first person to accomplish this goal?’ and I don’t really know. It’s not about me, it’s about keeping Roger’s sacrifice alive. It’s about all service men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. I just wanted his name in every state for the whole country to see.”

That Harley Roger had only just taken around the block in 2006 now has 58,587 miles on it. John fulfilled his promise and has hit the road on his brother’s bike. “Well, I guess I have to travel to every state to see each tribute. That will be another journey.” The Highground is honored to have been selected as the site where Roger’s Wisconsin tribute is placed. His Legacy Stone was placed on the plaza this August as a few Harleys rumbled paying their respects to a lifelong rider and hero.



CSM Roger W. Haller’s Honor Stone

IN MEMORY OF

Donald I. Johnson
Shelly Voight
Chuck Mouradian
Earl Verhasselt
Thurston Trumbower
Edward G. Borkowski Jr
Ronald L. Steward & K9 King

James Follen
Christopher Carson
Sheldon CE Voigt Jr
Reva Moore
Norman Fellenz
Wendell Ott

Brent T. Vroman
Andy Rueth
Bob Schueller
Jim Griepentrog
Peter A. Jecovicus

IN HONOR OF

Norman H. Wittman
Samantha Kotula
Dale Slowick
David Kubatzki
Filas Brothers
Gary Leonhard

Highlights

MDRT Grant Award Received for the 2023 Veterans Retreats

Juli McNeely with Financial Clarity by Design presented Executive Director Chris Pettis with a grant check for \$10,000 from the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) to help fund The Highground's 2023 Veterans Retreat Program. The grant funds are being used to offer Veterans of all ages unique experiences and workshops that have been proven to help manage post-traumatic stress. These funds supported the Female Veterans Retreat (held June 16-18), the Ice Age Trail Female Veterans Hike Retreat (held June 22-25) and the Male Veterans Retreat (held August 11-13). **Thank you MDRT!**



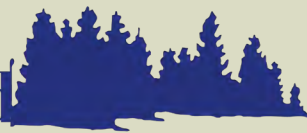
The Highground
Holiday LIGHTS
• HONOR STARS •

Purchase an "Honor Star" on the plaza to be lit in memory or in honor of a loved one or for your business to show support for our Veterans.

NOV 4–MAR 31, 2024
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 715-743-4224
OR VISIT THEHIGHGROUND.US

The Highground
715-743-4224 • W7031 Ridge Rd, Neillsville, WI 54456 • thehighground.us

The Highground



2023 Event Updates

NOTE: The Veteran & Family PTS Peer Support Group meets monthly. All other upcoming event and exhibit dates are subject to change depending on construction.

Veterans Day Ceremony CHANGE

The Highground is collaborating with Atmos Filtration Technologies and Clark County CVSO Aaron Greisen to host a Veterans Breakfast at the American Legion Post 73 in Neillsville on Friday, November 10 from 6:30am–9:30am.

- Jan 29 10th Annual Winter Bowl (Eau Claire)
- May 10–13 Spring Work Week
- May 13 Volunteer Appreciation Lunch
- May 14 Hmong Lao Day Ceremony
- May 20 Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Spring Bake Sale
- May 29 13th Annual Honor Ride; Memorial Day Ceremony
- June 10 Korean and Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- June 16–18 Female Veterans Retreat
- June 22–25 Female Veterans Retreat Ice Age Trail Hike
- June 24 Freedom Celebration Fireworks at Dusk
- July 15 Persian Gulf and Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- Aug 4–6 39th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour (Ceremony Aug 6)
- Aug 5 Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- Aug 11–13 Male Veterans Retreat
- Aug 19 23rd Annual Ride to Remember® Motorcycle Ride & Rally
- Sept 16 Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Military Working Dog Ceremony
- Sept 21 The Highground Day of Peace Community Event
- Oct 3–6 The Highground Education Days
- Oct 7 Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Fall Bake Sale
- Oct 13–14 Fall Cleanup Days
- Nov 11 Honoring Our Veterans ATV Raffle Drawing at 3pm
- Nov 4–Mar 31, 2024 The Highground Holiday Lights
- Nov 28 Season of Giving – Pledge your support for The Highground
- Dec 9 Patriotic Quilt Raffle Drawing (Quilts displayed through Dec. 9.)

Museum Exhibits

On display through October "Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name" (Vietnam Memorial) Exhibit

Visit thehighground.us for more information

13th Annual Honor Ride Recap

Hundreds of Motorcyclists Honor the Fallen on Memorial Day

On Monday, May 29, 274 motorcyclists and 85 passengers from across Wisconsin and beyond began their day en route toward Neillsville and The Highground as part of the 13th Annual Honor Ride. For many, Memorial Day means camping, boating and enjoying their federal holiday sales events. For Honor Ride riders, it's a day of remembering family, friends, brothers and sisters in arms who lost their lives in service to their country.

The Highground's Annual Honor Ride hosted two new routes this year, Wausau and Onalaska, and five new route leaders for a picturesque day of riding. All eight routes met at the Neillsville American Legion Post 73 to support The Highground's efforts to enrich their Veterans Programs for Veterans and their families. The Highground raised just over \$14,300 with help from the route leaders, riders, volunteers and sponsors.

Chris Pettis, The Highground Executive Director, gave a moving Memorial Day address. Reflecting on the relevance of the day, he highlighted the service and sacrifice of Army Cpl. Mitchell Red Cloud Jr. from Hatfield and Staff Sgt. Todd D. Olson from Loyal whose remarkable stories are just a few of many. The Northwest Region Wisconsin Army National Guard Military Funeral Honor Guard, led by Specialist Chris Walton, with members from the Neillsville Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts provided the ceremonial Honor Guard. In honor of the selected 100 KIA names from the Korean War to present day that were read by volunteer guests, the Honor Guard folded a funeral flag and placed it at the base of the "Fragments" Tribute.

The Highground is tremendously thankful for the volunteer ride organizers and leaders: Bill Fimal and VFW Riders District 7 leading the Appleton/Waupaca/WI Rapids route, Chad Garcia with CVMA leading Reedsburg, Wade Hartung and David Loudon leading Eau Claire, Mark Konichek leading Richland Center/Tomah, John Napierala with Bull Falls HOG® Chapter #4667 leading Wausau, Dennis Fick leading Neillsville, Eric Johnson with American Legion Riders District 7 leading Onalaska and Kenneth Lanier leading Minocqua. The Neillsville Volunteer Fire Department provided escort for the VFW Riders District 7 as they led the riders through Neillsville and out to The Highground. For such a successful and reverent day, The Highground owes the following sponsors immense gratitude: American Legion Riders District 7; American Legion Post #73–Neillsville; WWIS FM105.3 | FM99.7; Central WI Broadcasting WCCN | WPKG; Scheels–Eau Claire; VFW Riders District 7; H & S Manufacturing Co., Inc.–Marshfield; Leathernecks Motorcycle Club Road Warriors Chapter; CVMA 45-6; Reel Brothers Harley Davidson–Mauston; Patriot Motorcycle Hearse Co.; Gentleman's Quarters–Chippewa Falls; JBC Screenprinting & Embroidery–Neillsville; Applebees–Wisconsin Rapids. On behalf of all the riders, The Highground extends a special thank you to the Clark County Sheriff's Office for providing safe traffic control during the parade through Neillsville.

The 14th Annual Memorial Day Honor Ride will be held on Monday, May 27, 2024. Supporters are encouraged to visit the Honor Ride website at thehighgroundhonorride.com and follow The Highground on Facebook at [TheHighgroundVeteransMemorial](https://www.facebook.com/TheHighgroundVeteransMemorial) for updates.



Supporters welcome riders to The Highground during the 13th Annual Honor Ride on Memorial Day.



The Northwest Region Wisconsin Army National Guard Military Funeral Honor Guard folded a funeral flag and placed it at the base of the "Fragments" Tribute during the annual Memorial Day Ceremony.

Vietnam Veterans Reunion Recap

The Highground pays tribute with honor and respect each day to those who served in the Vietnam War. This was the purpose in which the park was originally established almost 40 years ago. On Saturday, July 15, we hosted a special day for these Veterans—The Highground’s Annual Vietnam Veterans Reunion.

Over 300 Vietnam veterans and their spouses gathered for the reunion lunch (*thank you to sponsors Carol Shea, Mike Lynch and Pam Nesbit*), to view exhibits, tour The Highground and to enjoy the camaraderie of fellow Vietnam veterans.

There were several exhibits that were available to the Veterans and other visitors. The Museum displayed the “Wisconsin Remembers – A Face for Every Name” banner exhibit honoring the men from Wisconsin who were killed or remained missing in action during the Vietnam War. Carl Bogar Jr, owner of Historic Military Impressions in Kenosha, displayed an extensive exhibit of Vietnam War artifacts and uniforms in his “Vietnam Experience” exhibit. Don Anibas displayed his two military Jeeps to add to the day’s displays. The weather on July 15 was bright and clear, allowing The Highground to roll out its Big Map of the Vietnam War for Veterans, or those representing a fallen Veteran, to sign. Until The Highground has an indoor space large enough to accommodate the 16’ x 24’ map, it can only be displayed and signed outdoors with the appropriate weather conditions.

The Highground was very fortunate to have two Huey helicopters onsite for the reunion. The VVA 331 brought their static display Huey to serve as a hands-on display, inviting the public to climb inside the trailered Huey. Combat Helicopters landed their UH-1H Huey at The Highground. This landing and lengthy visit by the Huey and crew (*sponsored by John & Donna Koutre*) is always one of the most powerful moments of the year at The Highground as the sound of the Huey is an unforgettable and important memory of their service for many Vietnam Veterans. Most Veterans tell staff at The Highground that it is a welcome sound, a sound of protection and aid. Some Veterans, particularly those who served in Vietnam as nurses, have told staff that the sound was an uncomfortable memory as it meant that wounded were being brought to them... and that they now appreciated an opportunity to associate a Huey coming in with a “good” experience.

The Highground thanks all the volunteers that made this special day possible! Planning is already underway for the 2024 Vietnam Veterans Reunion which will be held on August 5, 2024.

Veteran & Family PTSD Peer Support Group

The Highground holds a monthly peer support group for not only veterans that are managing post-traumatic stress (PTS), but also for the family and loved ones of Veterans with PTS.

The Peer Support Group offers a confidential and casual gathering to learn from others who are “in your shoes”; listen to speakers on topics chosen by the group; and obtain resources. The group is an opportunity to find support and comfort in a welcoming environment, to share experiences and make new friendships. Families and Veterans can attend separate from their loved one(s). Veterans who are struggling with PTS are invited to attend to gain additional skills, information and tools that others have found helpful in managing PTS. This is not a clinical, counseling group, but there are presentations and information available from professionals in PTS management.

The Veteran & Family PTSD Peer Support Groups are generally held every third Sunday of the month at 2pm at The Highground. The upcoming scheduled group meeting dates are September 17, October 22, November 12 (on the second Sunday) and December 17.

Major funding for the Veteran & Family PTSD Peer Support Group has come from the Charles E Kubly Foundation and Harold Schmitt.

For more information, please send an email to Theresa at museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.

*’Tis the
Season
Giving of*

The Season of Giving, which starts on “Giving Tuesday” (November 28) will be here before we know it. We hope you will consider supporting The Highground this year when making your contributions. If you are looking for ways to support our organization, we invite you to explore our website at thehighground.us

Featured Veteran Don Marine

Veteran Donald Marine was Known to Friends and Family as Being Selfless, Funny and a Doting Father

The loss of this veteran, father, son, friend to veteran suicide on January 21, 2016 was a life-changing blow to all who loved him. His memory lives on now in many ways. At the Highground, Don's service and struggles are being remembered with honor and dignity as one of the reasons behind our conviction and dedication to coordinating and hosting several Highground veteran programs. The Veteran & Family PTSD Peer Support Group was specifically conceived of with members of Don's immediate family, his mother, Linda Brey and sister, Kari Marine, as co-leaders. In 2003, Don entered service with the 307th Engineer battalion of the 82nd Airborne. He served five tours in Afghanistan and Iraq and was honorably discharged in 2008. He found joy in Afghanistan building schools for the Afghan people. He was also involved in carrying the voting ballots (by donkey!) from the remote Afghanistan villages during the country's first independent election. An Iraqi family he stayed with while on assignment was told by the mother that she would be his mother and his own mother should not worry because he was in good hands.

When Don returned home, he found purpose in helping others. He "provided Christmas" for a struggling veteran. He was also a devoted father to his young daughter, Del.

The war does not and cannot return the same person. Sleep did not come easy for him. As a civilian, Don's PTSD continued to greatly affect his everyday life, day and night. Noises, touches, flashbacks, nightmares constantly caused alarm, stress and frustration. A ticking clock in a garage gave him the acute alarm of a bomb. In spite of alcohol treatment and a long list of medications, his post-traumatic stress continued for years. Don's sister, Kari, recalls a breakdown when all she could do to console him was hug him tightly while he wept and shook uncontrollably. His moral war injuries were insurmountable.

Del, Linda and Kari submit this poem, written by Del to give others a glimpse into the suffering of the surviving loved ones of those lost to veteran suicide. We encourage anyone that is struggling to seek assistance so this pain may never be felt by their loved ones.



47,979 by Del Marine

Suicide

*A word that has sent shivers up my spine for seven years
I can't do it anymore.
The nights of screaming and oceans of tears.*

I can't do it.

*But I'm not the only one
You are not alone
For all my nights of crying on the phone.*

I'm one of hundreds.

*Days of hating how and who I am for feeling this way.
I am not alone
Leaving reality for days and days
I am not the only one*

Fighting a battle that no one gets to see

*47,979 lost in the fight
Leaving behind a sorrowful unfinished symphony.
47,979 families left in distress*

Left to never see their father, best friend or daughter ever again.

*Left like me
Left like hundreds
Left like thousands
Left to worry it's genetic
Left to worry they caused it
Left lost
Left alone.*

Death is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

*You can do it
The world can make you feel like you're at the bottom
But it's temporary
You will be found*

No problem is worth a life

*You will be found
Even when the words can cut as deep as a knife
One call can save someone.*

988



Day of Peace

The Highground will recognize the International Day of Peace on September 21 at noon.

To bring awareness of the human cost of war around the globe, Dr. Khalil Dokhanchi, Professor & Dept. Chair, Social Inquiry Department, University of Wisconsin Superior, will give a special presentation, "The International Refugee Story", about the history, current situations and unique struggles that are unknown to the general public. The Highground will serve light refreshments at this family-friendly event.



Dr. Dokhanchi holds a PhD in Comparative Policy Analysis with a focus on Middle Eastern politics from Binghamton University in New York. He has been faculty at the University of Wisconsin Superior for the past thirty years. His teaching and research has focused on the international relations, international humanitarian law, peace and

reconciliation in areas of conflict, and issues of refugee populations around the world. He has led study abroad programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. Each year his students, in collaboration with the Northland Chapter of the American Red Cross, hold an interactive exhibit, Refugee for 50 Minutes: From Afghanistan to Germany.

For more information about this event, send Theresa an email to museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.



THE BENEFITS OF A CHARITABLE BEQUEST

Each year, the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project (dba The Highground) receives bequests that help us meet our current funding needs, expand Veterans programs and plan for the future.

A charitable bequest is an amazing way for you to support the work of The Highground and its continuing mission. Here are some of the reasons why you may consider bequest giving:

- Making a bequest today will cost you nothing.
- You can make a gift of any amount while retaining control of your assets during your lifetime.
- Bequests can be modified at any point in time.
- An outright gift from your estate is entirely free from federal estate taxes, permitting The Highground to utilize the full amount of your gift. Bequests made to individuals, in contrast, are usually heavily taxed.
- Enjoy the satisfaction of creating a legacy and having a lasting impact on the long-term health and recovery of our Veterans.

Here are the many ways you can make a bequest:

- Make a gift of cash, securities or property.
- Give a specific dollar amount or asset.
- Specify a percentage on your estate.
- Specify a gift from the balance of your estate.
- Designate the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project as a beneficiary of your IRA, retirement account or insurance policy.*

***To designate the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project as the beneficiary (whole or part) of your life insurance policy/policies, you can request a beneficiary change form from your insurance company.**

Our information:

The Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project
PO Box 457
W7031 Ridge Rd.
Neillsville, WI 54456
Phone: 715-743-4224
EIN/Federal Tax ID#: 39-1512902

To learn more about bequest giving, please send an email to Chris Pettis at director@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.

Female Veterans Summer Retreats Recap

The Highground hosted two Female Veterans Retreats in June. The back-to-back scheduling was done for two reasons: The Highground had been awarded grants supporting the Female Veterans retreats which required that the retreats be concluded by a certain date. It also enabled us to have a very special co-leader and post-traumatic stress disorder / military sexual trauma (PTSD / MST) workshop presenter at each retreat – Vietnam Veteran nurse, Sarah Blum. With two retreats, we were also able to offer a choice of retreat experience to female Veterans with differing physical abilities and comfort levels. They could attend the retreat that would benefit them the most and that offered PTSD / MST management skills and workshops that would best fit the stage they were at in their personal journey. Both retreats were fully booked. As we have been told time and again by female Veterans, they feel that they do not have many opportunities such as The Highground Female Veterans retreats to gather together, discuss their PTSD / MST management, and experience activities such as we provide. Many female Veterans state that they feel isolated and/or many do not feel welcome or included at their local Veterans organizations.

The Highground Female Veterans Retreat at the Christine Center – June 16-18

Female Veterans that attended the June 16-18 retreat received first-hand experience with PTSD therapeutic activities in the safe, comfortable and peaceful setting of the Christine Center in Willard, WI. The activities and workshops included: equine therapy at Strides Equestrian Center; Tai Chi and stretching with Master Linda Imler of AKF Martial Arts Center; intuitive painting with artist, Sr Gabrielle Uhlein, Touch Drawing led by Sarah Blum, a drum circle and group gatherings for PTSD / MST discussions and management techniques. The Veterans were lodged in comfortable cabins or in guest rooms at the Christine Center. They were able to spend their free time enjoying the wooded spaces and trail system at the Center.

PTSD / MST management workshops and talking circle discussions were led by Vietnam veteran nurse and PTSD / MST therapy provider, Sarah Blum. Sarah was with the female Veterans for the entire retreat as a leader and as a veteran, herself. The bonding, discussions and trust formed



Attendees stopped for a photo by the Ice Age Trail sign.

from the immersive 3-day event resulted in a powerful amount of healing, sharing and support within the group of female Veterans. Much of the weekend was centered on “art”. The Christine’s Center large and comfortable art studio was open to the Veterans 24 hrs/day for the duration of the retreat. The experience of the “intuitive painting” workshop showed how art should be non-judgmental, even within the artist’s own mind towards their own art. Having the art studio available at all times for individual Veterans to explore and create was a powerful part of what the retreat offered. This allowed for instruction and group activities, but also provided a place for creation and privacy whenever a Veteran felt the need to express themselves.

A Touch Drawing workshop was led by Sarah Blum. This relatively “new” freeform painting technique starts as an individual activity with Veterans creating painted art “sight unseen” as the paint is underneath the paper and worked into designs by their hands. Then, the group of Veterans gathered to

view each other’s intuitive touch drawing art, supporting, interpreting and discussing the art that was created. This is an art technique that is very therapeutic for PTSD management and is also inexpensive for the Veterans to continue. The retreat was brought to a ceremonial finish with a group drum circle. This was the first time most of the Veterans have participated in a drum circle. The rhythmic drumming, the coordination of the group, the freeform music, and the joyous camaraderie within the group of female Veterans was the perfect way to bring the retreat to a close.

The Highground Ice Age Trail Female Veterans Hike Retreat - June 22-25

This first-ever hiking retreat was very successful and the Veterans were able to return home with new skills, PTSD / MST resources, lasting friendships and items they can continue to use hiking and camping. The intent of the Ice Age Trail retreat was to offer a nature-based event to help female Veterans, who are often isolated, to form friendships with other female Veterans, gain trust to share and support others with PTSD / MST management, and to gain the confidence and actual experience to continue hiking and camping as part of their lifestyle.

Planning for the retreat was closely collaborated with Amy Lord, Sharon Dziengel and Vicki Christianson of the Ice Age Trail Alliance, Veteran Pete Kitzhaber who has several years of experience leading backcountry group hiking and camping expeditions, and Vietnam veteran PTSD / MST counselor Sarah Blum. Granite Gear helped make the retreat possible by donating all the backpacks for the program! The Birch Creek Town Hall and township members helped the retreat to be a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all by graciously allowing the town hall to be a base of operations for the hiking and camping.

The activities and workshops included: PTSD / MST talking circles led by Sarah Blum along with instruction, guidance and individual experience with the skills needed to summer hike and solo camp on the Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin. These skill workshops included tent set-up, backpack

fitting and packing, gathering and filtering water from lakes and rivers, backpacking stove use and meal creation. Other workshops included “car camping” techniques such as using cast iron pan and cast iron Dutch ovens to cook meals for a family or group. The outdoor skills workshops were led by Pete Kitzhaber, who was also very instrumental in equipment selection for the retreat. The Veterans hiked along the Ice Age Trail segments near Holcombe WI. The hikes were paced for the slowest hiker and were interspersed with breaks and a talking circle. Due to an unexpected heat wave during the retreat, the group set up their nightly campsites in the wooded area around the Birch Creek Town Hall and used this as a place to cool off in the evenings, wash up and hold in-depth PTSD / MST workshops and talking circles. This was still a “wild” area to tent and sleep in as the night before we arrived a sow bear and 4 cubs were seen at this site! The group bonded with conversation and had a great time nightly around a bonfire.

Many of the Veterans that attended had little or no experience with extended backpacking and camping “on the trail” or solo camping. This experience was very important in their PTSD / MST management journey as the healing effect of nature is a key that many Veterans are lacking in their lives. This was also a great confidence-building experience. Learning how to hike, backpack and camp among a group of female Veterans plus being able to take home supplies, gave the Veterans the knowledge and confidence to continue with hiking, backpacking and camping in their personal lives.

Veterans that attended the retreat were given supplies to take home that will help them to continue hiking and camping on their own. Among the items that they received were PTSD and MST management books and resources, headlamps, compasses, hiking stools, water bottles, water filters, and more. All Veterans were given the choice to take home one of the following: a tent, a sleeping bag and sleeping pad, a backpacking stove and fuel, or a Granite Gear backpack.

Sponsors of the 2023 Highground Veterans Retreats are:

WDVA

MDRT

Granite Gear

The National Society of the Dames of the Court of Honor



Maureen Hornung, Carol Shea, Bonnie Henchen, Simplicity Credit Union-Neillsville, Caribou Coffee, Festival Foods-Eau Claire, WWIS FM105.3 | FM99.7, In memory of Peter J. Jecevicus, Moraine Motel, Strictly Country, Marathon County Republican Women, Michele Benson, the Kokosz family, Melanie and Elizabeth Wrensch and Central Wisconsin Broadcasting

We are looking forward to planning The Highground Female Veterans Retreats for 2024!

The Highground Education Days – October 3–6

Two Events Designed for Different Ages!

5th Grade: October 3–4 // 9th–12th Grades: October 5–6

5th GRADE TOUR—Oct 3 and 4—Choose AM or PM session and day

AM session each day is 9:30am–12:15pm (no lunch break)

PM session each day is 11:30am–2:15pm (no lunch break)

9th–12th GRADE TOUR—Oct 5 and 6—Choose one full day

Both event days will run 9:30am–2:00pm (lunch break 11:30–noon)

For more details about the itinerary for each day, visit our event webpage at thehighground.us/events/education-days-2033

To book a tour for your students, please send an email to Theresa at museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.

Thank you to sponsors John & Donna Koutre and Virginia Stubblefield!



Students attend a Flag Retirement Ceremony in 2022.

Picnic tables are available for schools that think their students would like to eat lunch onsite.

A requested donation of \$3 per person is appreciated but not mandatory.

Museum Update

The “We Were There: Vietnam War” project is still open for Vietnam Veterans and their families to join and share their stories.

This project is a collection of how the Vietnam War affected both those who served in the military during this time and also the lives of the families back home. There are many ways to be a part of the project in a manner that is most comfortable for you. Personal recollections can be shared by being interviewed and/or by submitting photographs, written stories, creative works of poetry and music, actual memorabilia, letters, and more. You do not have to be a combat Veteran to be a part of “We Were There: Vietnam War”. The project will document a wide range of personal experiences of those that served in many ways, from the combat veteran to the many that served by supporting those in the midst of combat, and the families back home.

The purpose of this project is to remember and honor those who were affected by serving in Vietnam; give a voice to the stories of the families waiting back home; document the experiences to preserve them and to provide an educational exhibition. This project will also help promote healing for many veterans who continue to face post-traumatic stress (PTS). Sharing experiences, seeing that others are “in your shoes” and joining a creative project can help not only that veteran, but also Veterans of all eras who will view and learn from this exhibition. The “We Were There: Vietnam War” exhibition will also include information and resources for Veterans and families struggling with PTS.

Over 50 Vietnam Veterans and families are already part of the “We Were There: Vietnam War” project and more are welcome to join!

Interviews are a great way to record and connect your story to the world. Veterans and families are encouraged to set up an individual or group interview. If you would like to set up an interview, please contact Theresa at The Highground. Even though the deadline of May 29, 2023 to submit information to be a part of the banner exhibition has passed, Veterans and families who wish to submit photos and stories for this can still join. Please contact Theresa as soon as possible if you wish to submit items for the banner exhibit! The virtual exhibition, which will be available online, will include the interviews, photographs and written submissions. **Note: Items in the banner exhibit will also be available on the virtual exhibit. The deadline for the first set of virtual exhibition items is October 15, 2023.**

This is a big project and would not be possible without financial support. Sponsors of the We Were There - Vietnam War project are: VFW 9202 - Germantown, WI, Dennis and Jessie Meister, Diane Becker and Gary Koenigs. For information about becoming a sponsor and about this project in general, please contact Theresa at The Highground museum@thehighground.us 715-743-4224.



(Left) Photos from the family of Vietnam Veteran Jim Kendall



(Above) Items donated by Vietnam Veteran Jonathan Kostreva in honor of his friend, Bill Roeglin, who was KIA in Vietnam.

“Vets & Guitars” and Ukuleles

Veterans – Register now for Fall “Vets & Guitars” and Ukuleles which starts on Thursday, October 5!

Music is a powerful tool in bringing joy to life. Peace and mental focus can be found almost immediately when we listen to and create music. The Highground’s “Vets & Guitars” and Ukuleles course is a fun way for Veterans to learn a lifelong artistic skill in the company of fellow Veterans.

The Fall Session starts on Thursday, October 5 and is scheduled to end December 14. Ukulele class starts at 4:30pm and acoustic guitar starts at 6pm. Classes will meet on Thursdays at these same times.

All courses are instructed by local award-winning musician and instructor, Victoria Shoemaker. Victoria has partnered with The Highground to develop this music program for Veterans. More information about Victoria and her music performances with Peter Phippen in their band, Virginia Steel, can be found at virginiasteelmusic.com.

The acoustic guitar course is geared toward Veterans who have little to no experience, or

haven’t played in several years, who would like to refresh their skills and enjoy the company of fellow Veterans. It is suggested that the Veteran sign up for either the guitar or the ukulele, not both, unless they already have experience with one of the instruments, as it may be difficult to begin completely new with both at the same time.

The 10-session courses are free for Veterans. Because of generous donors, The Highground is able to supply the instruction, instruments and basic supplies needed for the courses. **Major funding for the Fall Vets & Guitars and Ukuleles programs has come from Lawrence Kizewski and Kris Wrobel.** It takes \$150 to sponsor a veteran for the program. If you would like to help a Veteran attend the program, please contact Theresa at The Highground.

To register or for more information, email Theresa at museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.

The Highground will once again be a collection site for Toys for Tots. Collection dates will be published soon.



WIN A NEW ATV!

2023 ATV Raffle

**Honoring our
Veterans**

November 11, 2023
at The Highground



**\$20 each or 3 for \$50
Over \$11,000 in prizes!**

**Purchase tickets at The Highground Gift Shop,
call 715-743-4224 or email store@thehighground.us
We only have 1,000 tickets, so get yours today!**

1st Place: 2023 Polaris
Sportsman 570 (above)*
(value \$10,000)

2nd Place: \$1,000 Cash
3rd Place: \$500 Cash

*Note, winner is responsible for tax and title

The drawing will be held after the 3pm Veterans Day Ceremony.

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715-743-4224 • W7031 Ridge Road, Neillsville, WI 54456 • thehighground.us

Patriotic Quilt Raffle

**Tickets
\$5 ea/ 5 for \$20/
15 for \$40**

Drawing:

**Dec 9, 2023 at Noon
at The Highground Museum**

As many winners as there are quilts

1 Quilt per winner

Quilts can be mailed at winners' expense (\$15-\$20)

Special Fun Raffle for those present day of drawing



**Quilts will be displayed in
the museum & online from
Dec 1 to Dec 9.**



**Need not be present to win
However those present will
have 1st choice**

The Highground Rising Campaign Update (cont.)

The ever-changing landscape of resources and inflation has led to adjustments in our building plans. The rising costs of construction materials and resources have prompted us to reevaluate our approach, ensuring that we remain fiscally responsible while maintaining the integrity of our project. Despite these challenges, we are committed to our goal of creating a space that will stand as a beacon of hope and remembrance. That significant milestone is on the horizon. The Highground is set to break ground on the new building at the end of September, marking the beginning of a new chapter in our history. This momentous event symbolizes our collective determination and perseverance, as well as our commitment to creating a space that honors our past, educates our present, and inspires our future.

With the new building, we are expanding our capacity to serve our Veteran community and fulfill our mission. The possibilities that the new space offers are truly exciting. This facility will provide a venue for guest speakers and documentary screenings, allowing us to engage with thought-provoking discussions and events that inspire dialogue and understanding. The added room will allow us to host a variety of support groups and wellness workshops, cultivating healing and resilience, fostering a supportive environment where Veterans and their families can share experiences and find solace. The Highground has always been a place of connection, and this expansion will provide a central gathering space for Veterans reunions, allowing old comrades to reunite and share stories. The expanded museum space will house a comprehensive collection of artifacts, documents, and exhibits that honor the sacrifices and contributions of Veterans throughout history. Renovations to the current building will add a counseling room, Chapel and office spaces, enhancing our ability to manage operations and continue serving visitors effectively.

This creation isn't just about the structure itself; it's about the potential it unlocks. The new facility will free up another building on our park grounds, creating an opportunity for even greater expansion of our programs and services. This space offers a canvas on which we can paint a myriad of opportunities for growth and engagement. We can introduce new educational programs that inspire learning and understanding, enriching the lives of all who visit. As we prepare to break ground, we want to emphasize that your support continues to be invaluable to The Highground, our mission and those that we serve. Our capital campaign is an ongoing effort, and we invite you to consider contributing to our cause. Whether through financial contributions, donations of your time and expertise, or sharing our mission with others, your involvement is needed to bring our vision to life. Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to share our journey towards creating a stronger and more vibrant future for The Highground. Together, we are forging a legacy that will resonate for generations to come. **Will you join us?**



New Peer Support Group

Spouses & Loved Ones of Veterans Peer Support Group

As The Highground's Veteran & Family PTSD Peer Support Group met for its 14th month supporting Veterans and their families, another support group made its debut. On August 9, 2023, The Highground hosted its first Peer Support Group for Spouses and Loved Ones of Veterans.

The original support group began with the intention of supporting the family of Veterans and morphed into a collaborative group of Veterans and family. While this is tremendously educational and helpful to have the two different perspectives, at times the struggles of the veteran can become compounded on the family as they support their veteran through their mental health journey. Providing peer support for the spouses and loved ones has become paramount since, together with their veteran, they form the foundation of the veteran's post traumatic growth.

Hearing the call, The Highground answered. Join other spouses and loved ones in a safe, peer supportive environment where they are likely to have a common purpose and understand one another. Come share common experiences, similar feelings (the good, the bad and ugly), worries and the everyday challenges that supporting your Veteran experiencing post traumatic service related issues can cause for couples as well as the entire family. You are not alone.

Benefits of participating include:

- talking openly and honestly about your feelings and struggles.
- learning new and improving existing coping skills for the challenges you face.
- feeling less lonely, isolated or judged.
- learning about new resources for you, your family and your Veteran.
- gaining a sense of empowerment, control and hope.
- improving your understanding of your Veteran's experiences during service.
- staying motivated in your support of your Veteran without losing yourself.

The Spouses and Loved Ones of Veterans Peer Support Group will meet at The Highground every second Wednesday of the month from 5-6pm.



Vet Center – Green Bay
1600 South Ashland Avenue
Green Bay, WI 54304
Direct line
920-435-5650

Vet Center – Madison
1291 North Sherman Ave
Madison, WI 53704
Direct line
608-264-5342

Vet Center – La Crosse
20 Copeland Avenue
La Crosse, WI 54603
Direct line
608-782-4403

Vet Center – Milwaukee
7910 North 76th Street, Suite 100
Milwaukee, WI 53223-3916
Direct line
414-902-5561

Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net) or text to **838255**

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ARE YOU A NEW CUSTOMER? GET 15% OFF YOUR FIRST ONLINE ORDER!

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We carry a variety of products for all, designed with those you love in mind. Check out our t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, jewelry, home decor and more in store and online.

THEHIGHGROUND.SHOP

The store that supports the mission



SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2023



Eagle Hoodie 1135
\$40.95

Hoodie with flying eagle and mission statement. Available in Heather Royal, Heather Navy and Sand.



Black Tie Dye Poncho 1089
\$43.95

Uniquely-cut poncho can be worn with a triangle or straight front or wrapped as a scarf. Features a timeless ombre-style print.



Metal Gray Horned Owl 4142
\$27.95

Beautiful metal craftsmanship and paint detail. Perfect for the garden, porch or deck.



Potbelly Mug 830
\$25.95

Handmade 12 oz. mug crafter right here in Wisconsin. Perfect for coffee, hot chocolate or soup. Available in three colors.



Coaster - Sugar Skull 3002
\$12.95

Set of four coasters, two each of: Sugar skull rose and sugar skull cross. Made from absorbent stoneware and natural cork back. Perfect for hot and cold drinks. Coasters measure 4" square.



HG Gift Card
The perfect gift for anyone and any occasion. Available in any amount.

Call us 715-743-4224

Email: store@thehighground.us
thehighground.shop
W7031 Ridge Rd, Neillsville, WI 54456

Wish List

Sponsor a Veteran for \$500

The Highground is looking for sponsors for the 2024 Winter Veterans Retreat in February 2024 (limit of 10 Veterans).

We are in need of funding for the following:

- \$170 for a 20 gallon 6.5 HP Wet/Dry Vacuum
- \$100 for acrylic sign holders for outreach booth

Thank you for the generous donations that covered landscaping costs for this year's Spring Work Week and for the sponsorship we received for this year's Vietnam Veterans Reunion Lunch.

Gifting opportunities to consider:

- Honor a lost loved one with a Memorial gift
- Honor a loved one with an Honorarium
- Contribute to The Highground Endowment Fund
- Sponsor one of four Persian Gulf Tribute barriers for \$4K (together with family community, employer, etc.)
- Veterans service organizations can honor the families and communities of our Veterans with a United in Service Stone

To support any of these initiatives, you can send a check to the address included below or submit your donation online at: thehighgroundpark.givingfuel.com/general-donation-page. Please email donations@thehighground.us or give us a call at 715-743-4224 if you have any questions.

Send donations to:

The Highground Veterans Memorial Park
W7031 Ridge Rd
PO Box 457
Neillsville, WI 54456



For More Information, Contact 715-743-4224

W7031 Ridge Rd, P.O. Box 457, Neillsville, WI 54456

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What you can do to help us... If you would like to receive the Email Newsletter to help reduce printing and postage costs, please contact us and we can make that happen. There is also an email signup form at the bottom of our website homepage. If you receive more than one issue of each newsletter, please let us know. If you would like to continue receiving a hard copy newsletter, a small monetary assistance of \$25 per year would help cover the printing and mailing costs. Want to make sure you don't miss an issue? Cut off the form to the right, fill it out and send it with your donation in the included envelope. Please rest assured that The Highground does not sell its lists or your information to anyone.

Request Information

The Highground is a grassroots, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The private facility, which receives no ongoing federal or state funding, is supported by private donations and grants. It has a very small operating budget and exists because volunteers and contributors have given The Highground their time, talents and personal/financial resources.

Please accept my donation of \$ _____

I would like the gift to be used for:

_____ and/or the printed newsletter subscription \$25

Please mail to:

The Highground

P.O. Box 457 Neillsville, WI 54456

or call 715-743-4224 to make a donation.

I would like more information about:

- _____ Upcoming events and the fundraising calendar
- _____ Honor Stones
- _____ Adding someone to the mailing list
(please include the name and address of the person you want to send a gift subscription to)
- _____ Capital Campaign
- _____ Endowment Fund
- _____ Booking details for "We Were There: Korean War" exhibit

I would also like to volunteer for the following events and activities. Please reach out to me!

- _____ Porch Greeter
- _____ Work Week
- _____ Heroes Ride Annual Bike Tour
- _____ Honor Ride/Memorial Day
- _____ Ride to Remember®
- _____ The Highground Museum
- _____ Honor Stone Ceremonies

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Questions or Comments _____



The World War II Globe represents the broad reach of the war that touched every continent in some way. Stained glass campaign ribbons are mounted in locations to represent the various theaters of action. The stainless steel globe is five feet in diameter and illuminated from the inside at night. The granite base includes the “Kilroy was here” imagery and story on one side. Another side has the “Ruptured Duck” emblem emblazoned on it and the other two sides list the major battles fought in the Pacific and European Theatres.

Let Them Not Go In Silence

The Highground Veterans Memorial Park staff, visitors and supporters remember and honor all who have served; in times of combat and in times of peace. All Veterans of any era have, at one point in their life, written a blank check made payable to “The United States of America”, for an amount up to and including their life. We recognize that they and their families have in many different ways been affected by their service. Many positive qualities and sometimes hardships result from signing that blank check. [Over 26,000 Wisconsin men and women gave their lives during combat \(KIA\) service to our country. As a tangible reminder for us all, a different selection of KIA names will be printed for each future ceremony and newsletter. Again, this is not the complete list but a selection of names from each war who gave their lives in combat areas.](#)

Let us remember and honor all those who perished during their service and let them not go in silence. We ring our replica Liberty Bell in their honor at each ceremony. We hope you will ring it whenever you are here.

Korean War

Henry L. Ford
Robert M. Ford
Robert F. Fox
Louis M. Frank
Vernon F. Frankenberg
Jack L. Frater
Aloysius Joseph Freund
John W. Freymiller
Jerold Fronzowiak
Vern Harris Fuller
Robert Raymond Funke
Robert H. Gaedeke
Joseph E. Gallitz
Valentine R. Gannon
Ralph E. Garbisch
Arvil R. Garner
Bert John Gaspord
Eugene A. Gawlik
Robert F. Geiger
Morris C. Gensch
Robert A. Gerlach
Donald L. Gerrits
John P. Gershewski, Jr.
Francis Gilbertson
William A. Gilson
Charles J. Gitzlaff
Edwin Goede, Jr.
Rueben. J. Goerl
William O. Goetz
Wallace E. Goff
Donald A. Goggins
James E. Goldsworthy
Harry J. Gonia
Robert J. Gora

Harold L. Gorman
Kenneth J. Gorman
Norbert J. Gorman
Paul A. Graber
Rodney F. Graff
Wilbur L. Grass
Ronald J. Grassold
Gerald Clifford Graveen

Vietnam War

Gerald Arden Robinson
Lance Allen Robinson
Raymond Douglas Robinson
Timothy Francis Robson
Jose Marie Rocha
John Marshall Roe
Royce Evert Roe
William John Roeglin
Elwood John Roehl
Richard Alfred Roesler
Douglas Ray Roest
Paul Frank Rogalske
William James Rohan
John W. Rohr
John Charles Romanshek
Robert James Rosenow
Thomas Arthur Rosenow
Ronals Alan Ross
Gerald John Rossov
Steven Jerome Roum
Jerome Michael Rouse
Alan Michael Royston
Mark Phillip Rudolf
Carl Dennis Ruenger
John Leonard Rueth

Robert Paul Ruminski
Franklin James Runge
John Ronald Ruoho
Charles G. Rush Jr.
Jack Raymond Rush
Dennis David Rutowski
Edward Kenneth Ryan
John Michael Rydlewicz
John Weldon Sadler
Thomas Alvin Sagen
James Albert Salamone
Francis Mark Samz
Roberto Sanchez
Ronald S. Sandel
Johnnie D. Sanderson
John Victor Sartor
James Aloysius Schachtner
David Roy Schaefer
Kenneth Lee Schaefer
Roy Anthony Schaefer Jr.
Gerold Schaeffer
Dale Allen Schepp
David Leroy Schettl
Gerald Raymond Schiesl

Gulf Wars—GWOT—Present Day

Andrew L. Bossert
Rachel K. Bosveld
Paul R. Bartz
Joshua C. Brennan
Justin J. Cain
Ryan J. Cantafio
Stephen Castner
Steven J. Christofferson

Eric D. Clark
Chad D. Coleman
Jeremiah Collins, Jr.
Robert J. Cook
Todd R. Cornell
Kenneth M. Cross
Grant Allen Dampier
Nick A. Dewhirst
Trevor J. Diesing
Derek A. Dobogai
Steven T. Drees
Donald W. Eacho
Benjamin C. Edinger
Garrick L. Eppinger, Jr.
Christopher S. Frost
Nichole M. Frye
Dan H. Gabrielson
Jacob A. Gassen
Louis A. Griese
Matthew T. Grimm
Jesse J. Grindey
Anthony Alexander “Alex” Gaunky
Warren S. Hansen
Timothy R. Hanson

Kyle M. Hemauer
Matthew D. Hermanson
Daren M. Hidalgo
Merideth Howard
Alun R. Howells
Bert Edward Hoyer
Rachael L. Hugo
Isaiah R. Hunt
Jamie Jaenke
Ben D. Jansky

