

NEWSLETTER

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

thehighground.us — 715.743.4224



Riders are welcomed by supporters as they arrive at the Park along flag-lined roads

The 39th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour Raised Over \$95,000

On Sunday, August 6, 122 bicyclists and SAG teams from across Wisconsin made their final push to conquer the last milestone of their three-day ride to The Highground.

Each route met challenges along the way and rallied together to overcome them to complete the 39th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour. And that seems to be the point. Like other events organized by The Highground, the Heroes Ride is a tribute to Veterans we have lost as well as those we honor and support who are still with us. As Veterans experience difficulties with their transition from active duty or with challenges due to post-traumatic stress, The Highground rallies around them and offers resources for their growth beyond their service. The Highground would not be able to embrace these challenges without the unwavering support of all the Heroes Ride participants.

The three-day ride began on August 4, but the riders journey began months ago as they trained for the ride and pursued sponsor funding for the event. August 6 turned out to be a picturesque day for their arrival. As each rider turned the corner from County Rd G onto Ridge Rd, the smiles on their faces said it all. **Read more on page 10**



First Military Couples Retreat

The Highground facilitated its first military couples retreat October 20-22, 2023. Operation Re-Connect invites Veterans and their spouses or partners to get away from their daily routines and enjoy a peaceful yet purposeful weekend at no cost to them. **Learn more on page 7**

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Honor Stones, Memorials & Honorariums

What a tremendous year! It has been an honest pleasure working with the many individuals in preparation for the placement of an Honor Stone for their special Veteran or service-hearted loved one and even their beloved patriot K9.

Providing a serene location for the honorees to always be remembered is mission critical! We feel privileged to have permanently placed a total of 228 Honor Stones this year: 17 Korean Stones; 13 Persian Gulf Stones; 195 Legacy Stones and three Military Working Dog One-liners/Stones. Since a lot of events that happened since the September newsletter need to be covered here, we are unable to list the honorees here. **However, the complete list of Honor Stones placed through October, 2023 can be found on our website at thehighground.us/honor-stones**

If you plan to visit The Highground this winter, please know that our groundskeeper works diligently all season to clear the snow and ice from the Honor Stones so you will always be able to find your honoree. **If you need assistance finding your stone, the Honor Stone location guide is located in the Gift Shop.**

We are truly humbled to be able to provide the opportunity for guests to share their appreciation for their Veteran or service-hearted loved one and to have inspired never-before-told-stories. **If you would like to honor your special Veteran or serviced-hearted loved one, please consider the purchase of an Honor Stone to be placed in 2024. Honor Stones bring together Veterans, families and friends. All 2024 Honor Stone placement dates are listed on the 2024 Calendar of Events to the right (page 3). *Please note: Korean Stones are not available at this time due to the lack of space.**



A group attending the July 2023 Honor Stone Placement Ceremony

Honor Stone applications are available on our website, on the "Honor Stone" page, at thehighground.us/honor-stones.

*Apply online or print the application and mail it to:
The Highground, PO Box 457, Neillsville, WI 54456*



IN MEMORY OF

Lamoine Anason
Jack Bittrich
Jim Brady
Vernon Buskirk
David Dresia
James Follen
Gerald Groth

Stan Hutter
Louie Kessler
David Kubatzki
Robert W. Mattison
Kaye Olson
Daniel J. Orlikowski
David P. Orlikowski
Alexander "Andy" Orlikowski

Charles Orlowski
Gene "Butch" Quicker
John Raine
Gaylord B. Rous
Thurston Trumbower
James A. Wilsmann
Paul Zvolena Jr.

IN HONOR OF

JoAnne Fredricson
Harlan's 90th Birthday
and Greta Hoffbeck
Timothy Knobloch
Gerard "Jerry" Orlikowski
Bob Schueller
Henry Smith
Norman H. Wittman

The Holiday Lights Program is an "illuminating" and special way to honor loved ones here throughout the winter months. Visit our website at thehighground.us to learn more about this unique program. A photo album showing the "Honor Stars" that have so far been purchased is available on Facebook. Follow us at facebook.com/TheHighgroundVeteransMemorial

Event Highlights



Winter Veterans Retreat 2024 February 2-4

The Highground Annual Winter Veterans Retreat is scheduled for February 2-4, 2024. The retreat includes activities such as ice fishing, art workshops, post-traumatic stress management presentations, snowshoeing, bonfires, great conversations and more! This retreat is open to male and female Veterans. Lodging will be at an area motel near The Highground.

Registration is required by January 19. Due to limited participant slots, a \$30 registration fee is required and will be fully refunded upon your arrival. All equipment needed for ice fishing, snowshoeing and workshops will be provided. Veterans will have to bring a valid Wisconsin fishing license with them to the retreat. Fishing licenses can be purchased online at <https://gowild.wi.gov/>.

For more information and to reserve your space at the retreat, please contact Theresa by email at museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.



Attendees snowshoeing during the 2023 Winter Retreat

The Highground



2024 Calendar of Events

NOTE: All Honor Stone Ceremony dates are firm; the Male & Female Veterans Retreats and Vets & Guitars dates are TBD; the PTSD Peer Support Group will meet monthly. All other event and exhibit dates are subject to change depending on construction.

- Jan 28** 11th Annual Winter Bowl (Eau Claire)
- Feb 2-4** Winter Veterans Retreat
- May 8-11** Spring Work Week
- May 11** Volunteer Appreciation Lunch
- May 14** Hmong-Lao Veterans Day Ceremony
- May 18** Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Spring Bake Sale
- May 27** 14th Annual Honor Ride; Memorial Day Ceremony
- June 15** Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- June 29** Freedom Celebration Fireworks at Dusk
- July 13** Persian Gulf and Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- Aug 2-4** 40th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour (Ceremony Aug 4)
- Aug 3** Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- Aug 4** Vietnam Veterans Reunion
- Aug 17** 24th Annual Ride to Remember® Motorcycle Ride & Rally
- Sept 21** Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Military Working Dog Ceremony
- Sept 21** Day of Peace Community Event
- Oct 1-4** Education Days
- Oct 5** Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Fall Bake Sale
- Oct 11-12** Fall Cleanup Days
- Oct 18-20** Couples Retreat
- Nov 11** Veterans Day Ceremony; Honor Our Veterans Raffle Drawing
- Nov 4-Mar 31, 2024** Holiday Lights "Honor Stars" on the Plaza
- Nov 28** Season of Giving - Pledge your support for The Highground
- Dec 3** Patriotic Quilt Raffle Drawing (quilts displayed prior to drawing)

Museum Exhibits

The Museum will be showing exhibits that reflect the "Human Cost of War" throughout 2024. Due to construction and potential closures, exhibit details are not available. We invite you to follow us on Facebook for current updates.

**Visit thehighground.us
for more information**

Male Veterans Retreat Recap

The 7th Annual Male Veterans Retreat was Held August 11-13

Veterans attending the retreat experienced a wide variety of workshops and helped honor a Veteran in a special ceremony. **Veterans were able to stay at the Moraine Motel, adjacent to The Highground, as part of their retreat, which is always a very comfortable and enjoyable stay! We thank Dawn and Kay for always going the extra mile to make the retreat Veterans feel at home. Veteran Scott Schultz, Executive Director at The Heartbeat Center for Writing, Literacy and the Arts and member of The Highground Board, led several Post-Traumatic Stress management workshops throughout the weekend.** This is Scott's seventh year of participation with leading PTSD workshops within our entire Veterans retreat program. Many of the workshops contain experiences in writing down thoughts, experiences and trying creative ways of looking at personal issues. Communication skills is also a topic that is many times covered throughout the retreat gatherings and talking circles.

The healing powers of nature and the importance of getting outdoors is always a key part of The Highground Veteran Retreats. **The second day of the retreat started out with a therapeutic "Forest Walk" led by Tina Wagner of Healing Oaks Nature Therapy.** A Forest Walk is in the healing custom of "shinrin-yoku", an ancient Japanese practice of strengthening our inner spirits and promoting mental peace by spending time in nature and mindfully focusing on specific aspects of the natural world that surrounds us. The Highground's wooded trail system is perfect for this practice.

Later in the day, Veteran Larry Luzinski gave an exciting and unique presentation on "Rendezvous" or "Mountain Man / Trapper" living history encampments. Larry, a long-time rendezvous participant, set up a mountain man camp area and gave a thorough presentation to the Veterans on how the rendezvous encampments are held, how to get started in the activity, and where to attend rendezvous in the Midwest. The presentation was complete with a lesson on cast iron cookery including a delicious taste test of a peach dessert made during the presentation in a cast iron Dutch oven. All retreat Veterans received new, seasoned cast iron Dutch ovens to take home with them.

A very special part of the retreat was when the Veterans presented the color guard at an honor stone ceremony for a Veteran that had passed away. His family was very thankful for this special note of honor and recognition. **During the final day of the retreat, the Veterans and retreat staff were able to attend a very interesting presentation by Jean Dowiasch of the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC).** Jean brought a large number of artifacts which dated from the Ice Age in Wisconsin as well as several reproduced artifacts that could be passed around for closer looks. During Jean's PowerPoint, she covered many fascinating historical facts about the land that surrounds us and the cultures that made their homes here thousands of years ago. She also let us know how we could become involved in amateur artifact hunting and how to keep informed on the latest discoveries and projects of the MVAC.

The retreat was well-attended and Veterans had a very enjoyable and insightful weekend in the company of other Veterans. Some comments from the Veterans at the close of the retreat were "These have been some of the highlights of each year!" and "I look forward to this whole heartedly!" **Sponsors that helped make this retreat possible are: Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) and The National Society of the Dames of the Court of Honor. We cannot wait to see everyone again here at The Highground!**



Veteran attendees helped honor a Veteran during a special Honor Stone Ceremony



Veteran Larry Luzinski displaying a Mountain Man Rendezvous Camp

Education Days Recap

Sixteen Area Schools Attended The Highground Education Days

Over 800 Central Wisconsin students from 16 schools came to the Park October 3-6 for The Highground Education Days. This annual event welcomes students and the public to learn more about the history and sacrifices of our military members and families, along with details about The Highground and its many tributes honoring those who served our country in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Highground Education Days required the dedication of many volunteer presenters and staff. During the October 3-4 “5th Grade Days” portion of Education Days, 5th grade students received a 10-minute presentation at each of The Highground tributes. The presenters gave these talks continuously throughout the day as groups of approximately 25 students rotated to each of the tributes. **Local presenters were: Mary Cichosz, Scott Schultz, Henry Smith, Gabe Yurkovich, Bonnie Pettis, Betty Nemitz, Rhonda Miller, Pete Kern, Jim Henchen, Skip Klabon, Gary Weirauch, Billy Buss, Sharon Tollefson, Julie Diesing, and Chris Pettis.** Fifth grade students attended from these schools: Loyal, Pittsville, Thorp, Stanley – Boyd, Maple Grove, Athens, Osseo-Fairchild, Colby, Red Creek (Black River Falls), Lincoln (Alma Center, Merrillan, Humbird), Auburndale, Neillsville, Greenwood, and Owen-Withee. There were also a number of home-schooled students that attended the 5th Grade Days portion of Education Days.

Many schools make The Highground Education Days an annual part of their calendar. One teacher stated, “Our students loved the field trip. They learned so much and were given a new perspective on sacrifice.” The Daughters of the American Revolution Ah-Da-Wah-Gam chapter were present both days of the 5th Grade Days to give a presentation on the history of the U.S. flag and perform a ceremonial flag retirement. On Friday, Oct 6th, The Highground welcomed Middle and High School students from Marathon Venture Academy, Auburndale and Neillsville. Presentations on this day were 30 minutes each. **Presenters were: Pete Kern with a presentation on the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including his personal experiences while serving in these conflicts; UW-Superior professor Dr Khalil Dokhanchi gave an interactive presentation on the international refugee experience; Skip Klabon presented a photographic lesson about his service in-country during the Vietnam War; Command Historian of the 88th Readiness Division at Fort Mc Coy, Ward Zischke gave hour-long presentations on the Korean War which included a great deal of artifacts; Billy Buss led students through The Highground Museum, explaining the current Vietnam War exhibit “Wisconsin Remembers – A Face For Every Name”; and Troy and Brad Buddenhagen gave a presentation on D-Day during WWII as a Living History, complete with a WWII Jeep!**

Although the weather took a turn for the worse during the last two hours of the Friday presentations, the students, teachers and outdoor presenters all persevered through the cold wind and rain to close out a very successful event. The Highground staff, volunteers and schools are all looking forward to the completion of The Highground Expansion project which will create year-round indoor meeting areas for Education Days, other educational offerings and Veteran support programs. More information about The Highground expansion can be found online at campaign.thehighground.us.

Education Days is made possible through the dedication of volunteers, presenters and financial support. This year’s event was sponsored by John & Donna Koutre and Virginia Stubblefield.



Students listen to a presentation about the Military Working Dog tribute on October 4



Fall Cleanup Days Recap

Thank you to everyone who pitched in mid-October to help get the Park ready for winter! We got all the benches and tables put away, inspected our outdoor flags and replaced damaged ones, and repaired the downspouts on the Admin building. We also moved filing cabinets, got some cleaning done in the basements and garages and much more. We appreciate you all so much.

Be a Fox—Not a Bear

Make a Plan to Take on Winter!

Things to Consider:

- **Start preparing for winter in October!** Many people start to experience winter-related mental health symptoms in the fall when obvious changes in our part of the world start, i.e., shorter days, cooler temps, leaf changes and bird migrations signaling the approach of winter...even ads for holidays, snow removal, etc.
- **Plan a vacation during the winter**
- **Take your medication as prescribed**
- **Stock up on necessities** to limit the stress of having to go out in the worst weather unexpectedly. Knowing that you are “all set” will decrease stress. You could learn a winter sport or activity.
- **Create a “to-do list” for your home** and check your list off as you complete each task. If you need help getting things accomplished, now is the time to reach out for assistance from friends, family or organizations.
- **Find ways to help other people** by volunteering your time, donating items or baking treats for others.
- **Prioritize Scheduled Activities.** When it's cold and dark, motivation can be challenging to find. With that in mind, set definitive times to do activities and try to include others, so it's harder to back out at the last minute. **REFUSE TO GO INTO HIBERNATION!**
- **Learn a new hobby** that you are interested in
- **Stay connected** with loved ones in person, by calls or virtually.
- **Get enough sunlight** every chance you can!
- **Light therapy** is another option to help you tolerate the winter months. The light from the therapy boxes is significantly brighter than that of regular light bulbs and is provided in different wavelengths. Typically, you'll sit in front of the light box for 20-30 minutes a day. This is believed to result in a chemical change in your brain that boosts your mood and alleviates symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Experts usually recommend using the light box within the first hour after you wake up in the morning. It is recommended that you discuss using a light therapy box with your primary care provider.
- **Be aware of other changes.** In addition to the changes in the weather, the fall can also bring new schedules. As a parent, getting back into the school rhythm can be challenging and wear you down. The same is true for most of us being suddenly inundated with holiday plans and prepping.
- **Make it a point to also see the POSITIVE things about winter.** It's sweater and flannel weather! Time to slow down and enjoy spending time with friends or even alone doing art, watching movies, reading the books you have been unable to get to, try aromatherapy in your home, focus on organized de-cluttering and



making your home how you want it. (Don't do it all at once – break it into small steps and have fun checking off each item as you accomplish it.) Winter can also be a stunning time of year—get out and take photos & share them!

- **Dawn simulators** can help some people with SAD. These devices are alarm clocks, but rather than waking you abruptly with beeping or loud music, they produce light that gradually increases in intensity, just like the sun. Different models of dawn simulators are available, but the best ones use full-spectrum light, which is closest to natural sunlight. Researchers found that dawn simulators were as effective as light therapy for people with mild SAD, according to a study published in 2015.
- **Avoid scrolling social media** (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) on your phone when it is close to bedtime. The blue light from this will activate your mind and body to stay awake!
- **Exercise** of any kind, from walking, snowshoeing, indoor exercise to housework, is a great benefit to feeling better mentally and physically.
- **Writing down your thoughts** can have a positive effect on your mood. It can help you get some of your negative feelings out of your system. How can journaling help you cope with depression? It works by helping you prioritize life's problems and identifying your depression triggers, as well as what helps lift your mood. Include your thoughts, feelings, and concerns when you journal.
- **Vitamin D deficiency** may be a risk factor for depressive symptoms. Low levels of vitamin D — caused by low dietary intake of this vitamin or not enough sunlight exposure — have been found in people with SAD, according to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. It is recommended that you discuss using a Vitamin D supplement with your primary care provider.
- **Good, solid nutrition** at this time of year is very important. Not only do we need an assortment of vitamins, minerals and hydration, but this is the time of year when we will be tempted with an overload of sugar and artificial colors in our daily lives! Many of us also do not drink as much water now that the temps are cool as we do in the summer. Don't forget to drink water – being dehydrated will severely affect mood and energy.

Couples Retreat Recap

Cont. from page 1

“Military couples face unique challenges whether they were together during active duty and deployments or if they met each other afterward,” shares Chris Pettis, Executive Director of The Highground. “We want to help them develop and hone new skills to strengthen their relationships.” For the Veteran’s partner who experienced active duty and their Veteran’s deployments, they were a part of the process and saw the changes as they happened. For the couple who met after active duty or the deployments, the partner is sometimes oblivious to the process and the effects until the day their Veteran is triggered and their whole world changes in a minute.

The availability of free Veteran couple retreats are on the rise, but still many people shy away from them because they are worried about self-disclosure or embarrassment in a group setting. Operation Re-Connect is structured to provide a calm and supportive environment where the couples feel safe to share their experiences and not feel alone in the challenges they face.

Cathleen Holm, a licensed Psychotherapist experienced with military couples counseling, guided two of the couple’s relationship-enhancing exercises. With her incredibly supportive, light-hearted, and yet, no nonsense style, Cathleen validated struggles, provided antidotes to relationship saboteurs, allowing the couples to tackle serious discussions from a different perspective. “I felt empowered instead of deflated,” said one individual of their experience. The Highground retreat staff facilitated fun, interactive and insightful activities that helped to strengthen the couple’s connections with each other providing a “home front” supportive approach.

With overwhelmingly positive reviews from the retreat participants, The Highground looks forward to next year's retreat scheduled for October 18-20, 2024. **For more information regarding The Highground Veterans Programs, contact Bonnie or Theresa at 715-743-4224 or send an email events@thehighground.us or museum@thehighground.us.**

The Highground is grateful to the Marshfield Elks Lodge 665 for their generous sponsorship which helped make Operation Re-Connect a success.



Members of the Marshfield Elks Lodge 665 present their sponsor check to Chris Pettis, The Highground Executive Director

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 _____

Museum News

The Highground History Project Update

The Highground History Project is continuing its progress! Currently, the Museum is working on archiving and preserving all of the photographs, documents, magazines, newsletters and news clippings from before the 1988 dedication through present day. Thirty-four VHS tapes of dedications and events at The Highground are being digitized at the time of this writing. These historical videos will be saved on several media formats to be able to preserve them while having them also available for viewing.



Creating the Earthen Dove Effigy Mound Tribute

Are You Thinking About Donating to the Museum

The Museum has been blessed with many wonderful donations of historical artifacts and personal military items this summer, along with the stories of the person who once wore or used those items. We are busy archiving and getting items ready for exhibit. Great care is taken to handle these items properly as these are treasured pieces of history and of great personal importance. We respect and honor the stories of those who have served. Creating an exhibit that combines personal stories with history of their service allows us to keep their memories alive and ensure the stories are not forgotten. **If you have military or “home front” items of countries affected by war that you are considering donating to the Museum, please email Theresa to set up an appointment at museum@thehighground.us or call 15-743-4224.**



"Good Soldier, Bad Soldier" Vietnam Photographic Exhibit by Peter Finnegan

Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name

The Highground was founded to remember those lost and the sacrifices of those who served in the Vietnam War. We continue this mission this summer in a very special way by offering visitors the chance to see the photos and read the names of the men from Wisconsin who never returned from their service in the Vietnam War with “Wisconsin Remembers: A Face For Every Name”. This exhibit will be on continuous display at The Highground throughout the winter months. This has been one of the most highly-visited exhibits that The Highground has presented. Ann Bissen-Clark, a volunteer at The Highground, is currently creating a guide to this exhibit which will help visitors more easily find specific names.



A section of the "Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name" Exhibit



Larry Williams adding the casket flag to his brother Jack Williams's display

Museum News

“We Were There: The Vietnam War” Project Information

Over 50 Vietnam Veterans and families are already part of the “We Were There: The Vietnam War” project and we welcome more to join! This project is a collection that shows how the Vietnam War affected both those that served in the military during this time and also how the lives of their families back home were affected. These experiences are being collected and documented in many ways. 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. There are many ways to be a part of the project in a manner that is most comfortable for you. You do not have to be a combat Veteran to be a part of We Were There: The 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 who served by supporting those in the midst of combat as well as 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 that 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. 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 (contact information is included below).

Even though the deadline to submit information to be a part of the banner exhibition has passed, Veterans and families who wish to submit photos and stories can still join. **Please contact Theresa at The Highground ASAP 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.

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 on becoming a sponsor and about the “We Were There: Vietnam War” project in general, please contact Theresa by email at museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.



We Were There: Vietnam War Project Update

Currently, we are reviewing banner designs and organizing the Veterans and family submissions to the project that will be part of the banner portion of the exhibit. We are still keeping the opportunity “open” for Vietnam Veterans and their families to join and be included in the banners as we go through this stage. We have received images and videos on a wide variety of formats which were available during the last 50 years! One of our next steps will be to have these images transferred or digitized into formats which will be best for the banner creation and for the virtual exhibit.



Jim Wachtendonk and Sam 755A in Danang, Vietnam

Event News

Hereos Ride Recap (cont. from page 1)

They were so glad they made it another year and to see that their fellow riders made it too. The riders of the Southern Route were the first to arrive. After many hugs and pats on the back, they, in turn, welcomed and cheered for the Eastern Route followed by the Western, Northern and Southwestern Routes. *For every five years of participation, riders are awarded a certificate of achievement. This year, The Highground acknowledged Southern Route participants Beth Berger, Jerome Berger, Lori Hebbe, Scott Church and Shannon Wachuta for their five years of dedication and Joyce Jansen for riding and supporting the Heroes Ride for 35 years. The Highground welcomed Daniel Anderson for his 10th year and Laura Plata-Nelson for her 15th year of riding and supporting the Eastern Route. Kathy Gleisner with the Northern Route has ridden for 25 years and has led the route with her husband, Mike, for the majority of that time. And, Tom Frank joined the Northern route for his 5th year.*

As their yearly journey came to a close, what each rider accomplished will carry The Highground into 2024. This fundraiser is The Highground's longest-running and largest annual event. Having raised \$92,000 in 2022, many of the riders shared their determination to "beat that amount" this year. Congratulations! **The 39th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour raised over \$95,000.**

The Highground extends its congratulations and gratitude for a job well done to the route leaders: Jerry Simon and Cole Peterson from the Western Route; Curt and Oran Braatz from the Eastern Route; Kathy Heit and Mary Boortz from the Southern Route; Terri Stott from the Southwestern Route; and Kathy and Mike Gleisner from the Northern Route; all the riders and support personnel; and every individual rider supporter.

The Highground staff and all the riders are grateful for all the event and route sponsors: American Legion Auxiliary Post 301; American Legion Post 118; American Legion Post 218; American Legion Post 268; American Legion Post 301; American Legion Post 353; American Legion Post 425; American Legion Trier-Puddy Post #75; Benck Mechanical Inc.; Bernards Northtown Chrysler/Dodge/Ram; Blue Hills Kiwanis; Chambers & Owen, Inc.; Custom Heating & Cooling; Cutz on Kutz; Design Electric of Madison; Fort Healthcare; Gibby's Lanes; Gross Auto Group; Groundswell; J & L Auto Service; JBC Screenprinting & Embroidery; Krueger Jewelry & Manufacturing, Inc.; Marine Corps League Detachment 552; Mark the Plumber; Marshfield Firefighters Association Local 1021; Marshfield Professional Police Association; Navy Club Ship 75; NEI Electric, Inc.; NextHome Success; Our Lady of Sorrows; Ready Randy's Sports Bar & Grill; Teamsters Local Union No. 662; The Sports Den; Thomas Technical Services Inc.; TVL Trucking, Inc.; VFW Post #1904; VFW Post 1039; VFW Post 305; VFW Post 6550; VFW Post 8514; VFW Post 9464; W & A Distribution Services; Wipfli.

For information about the 40th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour, supporters are invited to keep an eye on the Heroes Ride website at thehighgroundheroesride.com.

The Fall Bake Sale Raised \$1,727 for the 2024 Winter Veterans Retreat

The Highground's "Sweet Platoon" provided temptations for everyone's sweet tooth with baked goods ranging from miniature pies to the traditional chocolate chip cookies.

The Highground is truly grateful for the fabulous guests, volunteer bakers and volunteers who worked the bake sale. **Sue and Mary Kokosz, known to The Highground staff as the "Basket Babes", enjoyed themselves as they mixed up hot turtle mochas for guests to make the cooler temperatures bearable. Thanks to a generous donation by the Marshfield Elks Lodge #665 for The Highground's first Couples Retreat (October 20-22), the \$1,727 raised during this year's Fall Bake Sale will support the 2024 Winter Veterans Retreat scheduled for the first weekend in February.**



Volunteer Peg Ottum helps out during The Highground's Annual Fall Bake Sale held on October 7, 2023

Event News

The 23rd Annual Ride to Remember Raised over \$7,400

With support from Bill Fernald and Doug Mauritz of the VFW Riders District 7, Chad Garcia with the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® 45 riders, the Neillsville Police Department and Clark County Sheriff's Department, riders were able to choose from three scheduled rides taking them on scenic roads through Clark County. While waiting for a ride to begin, patrons were able to enjoy great music from the local band Uncle Ron and take their chances at over 60 amazing raffle baskets. Also set up were Patriot Beads and Brass offering an assortment of recycled bullet and steampunk jewelry and MK's Creations & Alterations providing patch and rocker sewing.

The Kokosz sisters, Sue and Mary, known to The Highground as the "Basket Babes", didn't disappoint as they made their comeback this year. The "Basket Babes" and their many sponsors put together a wide range of themed raffle baskets, attracting the attendees to raise over \$1,800 for the event. Sue and Mary have such passion and love to set out such a display stating, "We do it for the Veterans. It's all about the Veterans." They plan to join forces with The Highground again for the Ride To Remember in 2024 and knowing them they have already started shopping.

Celebrating the honor and valor of past and present military service men and women is the main goal of this annual event with fundraising for The Highground and its Veterans programming being a wonderful benefit.

The Highground is grateful for this year's supporters that helped raise over \$7,400: American Legion Post 73; Mary and Sue Kokosz; Bonnie Henchen; BP Drescher Oil; Central Wisconsin Broadcasting; WWIS Radio; Chippewa Falls Harley-Davidson; Conrad's Harley-Davidson; Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association 45-6; Dairyland Originals Women On Wheels; H & S Manufacturing Co., Inc.; Hansen's IGA; Lumberyard Bar & Grill; Marshfield Country Club; Patriot Beads and Brass; Rolling Thunder Inc. Wisconsin Chapter 2; VFW Riders District 7; and Woodfield Inn & Suites.



Riders lining up at the American Legion for one of the rides

The Highground's Day of Peace Event Revealed Challenges that Refugees Face



Dr. Khalil Dokhanchi shows attendees a box of what refugees receive from international organizations during his presentation at The Highground's 2023 Day of Peace event

"If you were forced to leave your country, what would you bring?" This was one of the many questions UW-Superior Professor Dr. Dokhanchi posed to the audience during his speech about International Refugees. Dr. Dokhanchi's presentation was part of The Highground's International Day of Peace event held in The Highground Museum on September 21.

Dr. Dokhanchi discussed the definition of "refugee" and how a refugee is fleeing or being forced to leave a country due to persecution and many times a threat of death. A refugee is different than a migrant. A migrant is someone who travels voluntarily to seek a better way of life through improved employment, increased opportunities, family reunification or other non-life threatening reasons. A visual exhibit of what international organizations give to refugees showed the audience that refugees receive very little in the way of physical goods. The refugee's survival and success rests mainly in the refugee's own hands, i.e., their choices, determination, and in some cases, fate.

From Executive Director Chris Pettis

Year-End Review 2023: Honoring Sacrifice and Inspiring Unity

As 2023 comes to a close, it is only fitting to reflect upon the past year at the Highground, a place where the sacrifices of our brave men and women in uniform are honored, and the spirit of unity and healing is celebrated. The Highground continues to be a symbol of remembrance, reflection, and reverence throughout the year.

A Place of Tribute: The Highground has long been a place of tribute and healing for Veterans and their families. In 2023, it continued to serve as a sanctuary for those who have given so much for our nation.



Educational Initiatives: Education has always been a central focus of The Highground, and 2023 was no exception. The year saw an expansion of educational programs and resources aimed at fostering a deeper awareness of not only Veteran suicide, but suicide in our communities. The Highground hosted several events, workshops and guest speakers, allowing visitors to gain insights into the prevention of suicide across the board.

Community Engagement: One of the most remarkable aspects of The Highground is its ability to bring people together. In 2023, the park continued to be a hub for community engagement, drawing people from all walks of life to participate in various events and activities. The annual events and fundraisers brought the community together in support of Veterans and their families, reinforcing the idea that we are all in this together.

Healing and Support: The Highground also continued its mission to provide healing and support to Veterans who have experienced physical or emotional wounds from their service. Support groups like “Veterans & Family” and “Spouse and Partner of Veterans” offered a safe and welcoming environment for Veterans and their loved ones to connect with their peers,

share stories, and find the support they need. The Veterans retreats and the couples retreat, “Operation Re-Connect” continue to provide a holistic approach tapping into resources for improved relationships and mental well-being. The “Vets & Guitars” and Ukuleles courses carry on with beginner lessons and providing the opportunity for camaraderie and musical expression.

2023 Highlights: Besides the mission-related events and programs, it’s worth noting some of the highlights that made 2023 a memorable year at the Highground:

Enhanced Accessibility: The Highground continued its efforts to increase accessibility for all visitors, including those with disabilities.

A new rubber path was installed for the transition from the plaza to the Gold Star road to ensure that everyone could fully enjoy the park.

Completion of the “Gold Star Project”: We were able to complete the process of infusing glue with the gold sand to the entire tribute to ensure the integrity of the tribute into the future.

Record Attendance: 2023 saw record attendance, with more people than ever before coming to The Highground to pay their respects, participate in events and learn about the sacrifices of Veterans. This growing interest signifies the enduring importance of The Highground’s mission and the purpose behind the Welcome Center Expansion Project.

As we move into 2024, The Highground will remain a pillar of respect, education, and unity within the community and continue to serve as a place of healing, remembrance and celebration of our Veterans. As we bid farewell to this year, we look forward to the park’s future endeavors and the promise of continuing its vital mission of honoring, educating and healing sacrifice and inspiring unity.



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

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

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

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

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

Veterans Programs

Veteran & Family PTSD Peer Support Group

Meets the 3rd Sunday of every month
at 2pm:

December 17, 2023
January 21, 2023
February 18, 2024
March 17, 2024

For info, email museum@thehighground.us

Spouses & Partners of Veterans Support Group

Meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month
from 5-6pm
in person and virtually

AND

Meets every 4th Wednesday of the month
from 5-6pm
virtually only

For info, email events@thehighground.us

*The
Season
Giving of*

The Season of Giving is upon us. 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



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Neillsville, WI

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FEATURED ITEMS

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

GIFT SHOP HOURS: SUMMER 10-5 M-F; 9-5 SAT & SUN • WINTER: 10-4

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



DECEMBER 2023 - FEBRUARY 2024



Vietnam Veteran Shirt 1154 **\$25.95**

Shirt with "United States of American" and "Vietnam Proud Veteran"



Panoramic Lantern 3331 **\$38.95**

BLED candle lantern with built-in timer with "Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound" message. High-quality powder-coated metal finish. Requires 3 AAA batteries (not Included)



LED Candle 3315 **\$19.95**

LED candle with a flickering LED flame in a ceramic holder. Includes a built-in timer that requires 2 AA batteries (not included). Vanilla scented Ceramic holder is white with waving flag and black lettering.



Crewneck Sweatshirt 1153 **\$39.95**

The Highground long-sleeve sweatshirt with flag and "1984"



Military Gnomes 4130 **\$39.95**

Each gnome is made from a poly resin and stands 13.25" high on a 5" diameter base.



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

We are in need of the following specific items:

- Tour guide volunteers that can give tours during the week and on weekends during the “on-season.”
- New and exciting raffle baskets or raffle items for Winter Bowl
- Volunteers for events and porch greeting

We are in need of funding for the following:

- \$600 for a new cab enclosure for the mule
- \$25,000 for construction of Korean Tribute Rice Paddies for future Korean Honor Stones
- \$500 for specific Museum archiving containers
- \$100 for Winter Bowl Lane Sponsorship – There are 12 lanes available and your name will be displayed at the event
- \$600 for six new pairs of snowshoes for use on the Park trails
- \$400 for a pallet of snow melt salt
- \$500 for sponsoring a Veteran for the 2024 Winter Retreat

Thank you for the donations that covered the purchase of a wet/dry vacuum and acrylic sign holders for outreach events.

Gift opportunities to consider:

Qualified Charitable Distributions: If you are 70.5 or older, consider contributing your 2023 IRA Required Minimum Distribution-RMD to The Highground, it can reduce your 2023 Adjusted Gross Income. Please contact your IRA administrator to assist you in making a QCD directly to The Highground before December 31, 2023. You may contact the Donations Coordinator (donations@thehighground.us) if you would like your contribution used for a specific purpose.

Employee Matching Gift Program: Some employers offer gift matching programs for qualified 501(c)3 nonprofits such as The Highground. This means your employer will match the amount of your donation or volunteer hours up to a certain amount, increasing your direct gift. Refer to your Human Resource Dept. or search charitynavigator.org to see if your employer has such a program. If not, consider making the suggestion to your employer.

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

Find us somewhere on Social Media!



Newsletter Subscription

To help reduce the cost of our printed newsletter, please consider receiving the email newsletter. The signup form is located at the bottom of our website homepage (thehighground.us). Please know that The Highground does not sell its lists or your information to anyone. If you would like to continue receiving a printed newsletter, a small donation of \$25 per year would help us cover the printing and mailing costs.

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
W7031 Ridge Rd
PO Box 457
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.



Are you following our expansion plan updates? The new building will help us increase our capacity to serve our Veteran community and fulfill our mission. One of the many things the new facility will do is free up another building on the grounds, creating an opportunity for even greater expansion of our products and services. Together, we are forging a legacy that will resonate for generations to come. Will you join us? Visit our campaign website at campaign.thehighground.us for details.

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

Robert L. Mervicker
Frederick R. Meyer
Joseph William Mick
Robert C. Mielke
Hugh J. Mikkelsen
Arthur K. Mikulik
Wilhelm F. Milbrandt
John G. Miles
Gerold M. Miller
Robert F. Miller
Norbert Joseph Misorski
Jerome A. Misuraco
John H. Mitchell
Truman O. Moen
August A. Molina
Jack D. Monnot
Rondo J. Monroe
Thomas P. Moore
Austine Morgan
Edward M. Morrison
Durlin J. Morse
Robert C. Morse
Murel R. Mott
Donald E. Mrotek
David Dwain Mueller
Edward J. Mueller, Jr.
Edwin H. Meuller
Robert G. Naatz
J+A457:A472oseph J. Neitzer
James Walter Nelson
Thomas Edward Nelson
Dion L. Neman
Alvin M. Nemitz

Edward D. Nethery
Rhinold Neumiller
Harlan R. Nevel
Charles W. Newberry
Tommy Newell
Myron E. Newman
Russel H. Nielsen
Gerald D. Norder
Deane Wilfred Noringseth

Vietnam War

James Calvin Ward
Richard John Warden
Walter Raymond Waschick
James Williams Washkuhn
Steven Edward Wasson
Albert Clay Watson Jr.
David James Watson
Donald David Watson
Hayden Edward Weaver
Johnny Lee Webb
James Thomas Webber
Karl Edwin Weber
Robert Lee Weeden
Dennis Duane Wehrs
Douglas Richard Weiher
Dennis Edward Weinberg
Thomas Ray Weiss
Larry Michael Welsh
Daniel Lee Westlie
Gary Lee Westphal
Scott Brian Westphal
Stephen John Westphal
Michael Lawrence White

Rickey Jackson Whitehead
Randall J. Wicklace
David John Wick Widder
Anthony Joseph Wieckowicz
Lloyd George Wiegel
David John Wilcox
Robert Frederick Wilke
Gordon Waldemar Will
John Gustave Willems
Terry Joe Williams
Larry Allen Williamson
Michael Jay Wilson
Scott Thomas Wimmer
Robert James Wisch
Lawrence J. Wissel
Edward Witek
Ralph Michael Wixson
Arthur Edward Wojahn
Jeremy Robert Wojtkiewicz
Robert Clarence Wolf
Aaron Lee Wood
Dennis Melvin Wood

Gulf Wars—GWOT—Present Day

Ryan J. Nass
Benjamin H. Neal
Rocky Nelson
Richard J. Nelson
Michael C. Nolen
Shaun A. Novak
Adam J. Novak
Shane K. O'Donnell

Todd D. Olson
Dean D. Opicka
Eric A. Palmisano
Matthew I. Pionk
Eric J. Poelman
Brian P. Prening
Robert M. Rieckhoff
Nickolas E. Riehl
Jakob Roelli
Justin D. Ross
Heidi Ruh
Rhett W. Schiller
Joshua M. Schmitz
Sean M. Schneider
Matthew E. Schram
Scott Schroeder
Brian Scott
Joshua Michael Scott
Russell Seager
Adam P. Servais
Chad J. Simon
Benjamin A. Smith
Adrian V. Soltau
Christopher J. Splinter

Jon B. St. John II
Andy A. Stevens
Kirk Allen Straseskie
William Strehlow
Paul J. Sturino
Jesse L. Thiry
Daniel J. Thompson
Matthew Thompson
Jesse D. Tillery
Harry H. Timberman
John O. Tollefson

