

The Highground NEWSLETTER

HONOR, EDUCATE AND HEAL... A PLACE FOR ALL

December 2020



The Kokosz Sisters Raise Over \$3,000 for The Highground and Camp Victory

What started out five years ago, as 25 raffle baskets and a 50/50 raffle for a Chili Cook Off to support The Highground, has grown into 90+ raffle bundles and a whole lot of fun. Mary and Sue Kokosz come from a military family and found supporting The Highground's mission and our Veterans to be so rewarding that taking a break from their shopping excursions just isn't in their wheelhouse. The sisters start planning for their raffle a year in advance, taking advantage of sales in order to get as many items as possible. "We both have full time jobs that are very hectic. When my sister is out and about running errands and she sees something neat for a raffle, she'll text me a pic and I reply back with a thumbs up!!" Sue Kokosz says. The "Kokosz Sisters", as The Highground staff refers to them, have a knack for envisioning raffle bundles. They set out soliciting companies, stores and organizations for gift cards, donations and gifts in-kind. It doesn't stop there though as the sisters donate many of the items themselves.

ARTICLE CONT. PAGE 14



The Highground Rising

Expanding the Promise

HONOR, EDUCATE AND HEAL

See page 12 for full article

Contributors: Thank you for a gift to remember lost loved ones or to honor those still with us.

IN MEMORY OF

Norman Berget, WWII
Richard Caldwell
Albert Christensen
Ben Edinger
Ted Fetting

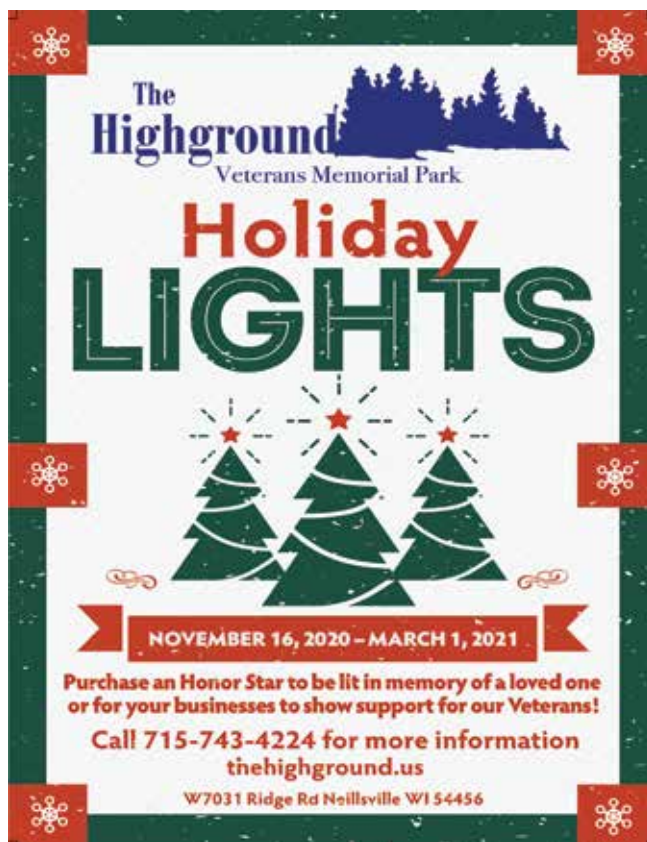
John Gillitzer
Lawrence Gradel
Bernard Havlik
Frederick Jastromski
Nancy Kedroski
Dennis Klimpke

Dick Lysy
R.J. Novak
Beth E Martin
Dolores Michalska
Rich Rennhack
Wilford Turner

Leo Wiesner
Chester Williams
IN HONOR OF
John Bittrich
Gordon Hansen
Moose (LeRoy) Meyer

VETERANS DAY, WINTER BOWL AND MORE

On Veterans Day, November 11, as our resident Eagles soared overhead, Veterans and their families, friends and supporters gathered on the plaza to honor our Veterans. In traditional fashion, the KIA/MIA and POW names were remembered using a recording due to COVID-19 restrictions and answered with an in-person tolling of The Highground Liberty Bell. With all present and accounted for, the Thorp VFW Post #9057 presented the Colors. Steve Maddox, Vietnam Veteran and Board Member at The Highground, led the Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem with the Invocation given by Skip Klabon, Vietnam Veteran. Betty Sitler, a public and private school educator for 56 years, and the surviving spouse of Korean War EX-POW, Harold "Red" Sitler, was scheduled to speak but was unable to attend. As her proxy, Bonnie Pettis, Events Coordinator with The Highground, shared Betty's thoughts on **Why** we were gathered today and **Why** it's important to "recognize our Veterans 365 days a year and not just on the chosen days of remembrance." Guests enjoyed hot coffee and conversation, at safe distances, and were able to explore the "We Were There: Korea" exhibit. Veteran support organizations, Patriot K9s of Wisconsin and the Vet Center were also onsite to offer information to Veterans and families.



Thank you to everyone who donated to our collection drive for homeless Veterans with pets! Several large bags of dog food, cat food and treats were donated by Prince Corp. and individuals. The items were donated to Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin in Racine with help from Carl Bogar Jr. This organization works one-on-one with Veterans who find themselves homeless and caring for a companion animal. This donation allows them to keep their animal buddy in good health and being able to care for his/her pet keeps the Veteran in good spirits.



The Season of Giving is here. Please keep us in your thoughts while making your contributions. If you are looking for ways to support our organization, visit the "donations" page on our website at thehighground.us/about-us/donate

EVENT UPDATES

For the most current information, be sure to visit our website at thehighground.us. The Park is open 24/7/365 and the Gift Shop and Museum are open 10am-4pm daily during the winter.

Friends of The Highground Dinner

The Friends of the Highground Dinner is held to say **thank you** to those generous donors who support The Highground through annual cumulative donations of \$1000 or more. The tally cutoff for 2020 donations is December 31, 2020. Invitations will be mailed for the 2020 recognition banquet at Castle Hill sometime after that date. If you are close and would like to support the park with one more donation to bring your annual amount to \$1000+, there is still time. For your convenience, you can make a donation on our website at thehighground.us. You can also pay with your credit card by calling 715-743-4224 or pay by mail by sending your check made payable to The Highground at PO Box 457, Neillsville, WI 54456.

*Thank you
to everyone who donated funds
or items The Highground was in need of!*

CODICIL TO A WILL

During these uncertain times, people are considering their last wishes. We may not know what the future holds; one thing is inevitable though—our own passing. Do you have a plan for your estate? Have you considered supporting a mission that is near and dear to many hearts? These past few months, The Highground has been reminded of the need to remind Veteran supporters to consider including The Highground in their final wishes. Lately, with changing rulings about the “Required Minimum Distributions” (RMD), The Highground has been blessed to receive some of these funds from our supporters to ensure The Highground continues its mission to Honor, Educate and Heal. We are a long way from being self-sustaining, but it’s a start. For all the RMD checks and notices The Highground has been gifted as part of many final wishes—**Thank you**. Are you able to support The Highground in this way? We hope you too will consider this beautiful gift.

2021 Calendar of Events

- JAN 31** 8th Annual Winter Bowl
- APR or MAY** Maggie Mae Benefit Concert **TENTATIVE**
- MAY 12–15** Spring Work Week
- MAY 22** Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Vietnam Reunion; Spring Bake Sale
- MAY 31** The Honor Ride; Memorial Day Ceremony; “Lost 74” Dedication
- JUNE 5** Volunteer Appreciation Lunch
- JUNE 12** Korean and Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Korean War Reunion
- JUNE 26** Freedom Celebration Fireworks at Dusk
- JULY 9–11** 5th Annual Men’s Veterans Retreat
- JULY 17** Persian Gulf and Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- JULY 30–Aug 1** 37th Annual Heroes Ride Bike Tour (ceremony Aug 1)
- JULY 31** Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- AUG 20–21** Veterans Freedom Fest **TENTATIVE**
- AUG 21** 21st Annual Ride to Remember™ Motorcycle Ride & Rally
- SEPT 10–12** 3rd Annual Women’s Veterans Retreat
- SEPT 18** Military Working Dog and Legacy Stone Ceremonies
- OCT 2** Legacy Stone Ceremonies; Fall Bake Sale
- OCT 5–8** The Highground Education Days
- OCT 9** Bowling for The Highground
- OCT 15–16** Fall Cleanup Days
- NOV 11** Veterans Day Ceremony; Honoring Our Veterans Raffle Drawing
- NOV 15, 2021–MAR 1, 2022** The Highground Holiday Lights
- NOV 30** Season of Giving – Pledge your support for The Highground
- DEC 4** The Highground Christmas Concert **TENTATIVE**
- DEC 18** Patriotic Quilt Raffle Drawing

Museum Exhibits

- FEB 6** Opening of “WWI” Museum Exhibit (exhibit: 2/6–3/29)
- APR 3** Opening of “POW/MIA & Memorial Day” Exhibit (exhibit: 4/3–7/15)
- JUL 24** Opening of “PTSD” Exhibit (7/24–9/28)
- OCT 2** Opening of “Women in the Military” Exhibit (10/2–11/30)
- DEC 4** Opening of “Pacific Theater WWII” Exhibit (12/4–2/1/22)
- DEC 1–31** Patriotic Quilt Display

Note: All events, dates and times are subject to change

Stay tuned for additional events at The Museum and Camp Victory. For timely updates, visit our website and sign up for our email newsletter!

For information about events and sponsorship opportunities, please call Bonnie at 715-743-4224 or send an email to events@thehighground.us

To volunteer, visit thehighground.us/about-us/get-involved

2020 FEMALE VETERANS WEEKEND RETREAT

The Highground hosted their second Female Veterans Weekend Retreat September 11-13. Several Veterans from around the state took part in the retreat with the goal of learning something new to help bring more fulfillment to their lives and make new connections with fellow female Veterans.

Although not continuous counseling events, the Veterans Weekend Retreats are geared toward providing the tools and experiences that many Veterans find helpful in managing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These retreats offer Veterans an opportunity to get first-hand experience with several activities as well as a chance to find new friendships, information, services and hobbies that they can carry forward with them on their journey towards the life they desire.

The three-day retreat was open to any female Veteran of any age and service history and free for Veterans because of our generous sponsors and supporters: Central WI Broadcasting, Cougar Ent/Hardee's, Fred and Kim Berg, Skip and Debbie Klabon, Nicolet National Bank, Simplicity Credit Union, The Vet Center, The Moraine Motel, Festival Foods, CART Center, Thrivent Financial, Loyal American Legion Post #175, CHIPS Restaurant, Michele Benson, Larry and Kay Anason, Liz Hamilton, UpThere LLC, Christie's Country Quilts, Patriot K9s, K & P Orchard, Hiram Cutting family, Linda Imler AKF Martial Arts, Spring Street Sports, Healing Oak Nature Therapy LLC, Julie Diesing, Loopy's Grill & Saloon, Abby Bank, Gary Karczewski, and John Snape.



COLLECTION DRIVE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

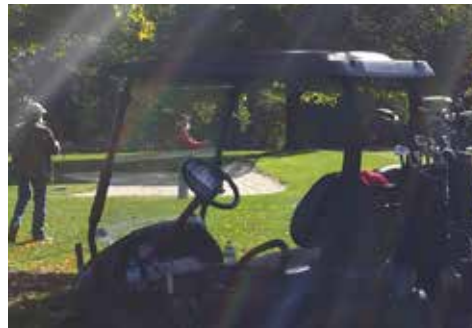
Clothing and Non-Perishable Drive for Homeless Veterans The Highground will be collecting items for homeless Veterans and needy families through February 1, 2021. The items most needed are disposable hand warmer and foot warmer packets, new socks, hats and gloves. We are also collecting new or gently used, cleaned winter coats, boots and mittens, plus sleeping bags and non-perishable food and toiletry items. The items will be distributed to homeless Veterans locally, in the Chippewa Falls area and in the Twin Cities. Items also go to support homeless Veterans and Veterans in need in the Tomah area. The Highground collects and distributes items to homeless Veterans year-round; however, the need is significantly more acute in the cold weather season. The collection site is the lower level of The Highground Museum, open daily from 10am – 4pm. For more information, email Theresa at museum@thehighground.us, call 715-743-4224 or visit our website at thehighground.us. The Highground is located at W7031 Ridge Rd, Neillsville WI 54456.

2020 MALE VETERANS WEEKEND RETREAT

The Highground was recently the base of operations for its annual Veterans Weekend Retreat for male combat and noncombat Veterans from any era. From September 18–20, eleven Veterans, primarily Vietnam Veterans, were able to take part in exciting experiences and healing activities provided by the retreat. With assistance from The Vet Center and several local supporters, the retreat offered many opportunities to begin new hobbies, make new friendships and create the framework for increased enjoyment in everyday life. Tools and information for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) management were available. The Highground Veterans Weekend Retreats are not specific PTSD counseling retreats; they are, however, guided in programming with the assistance of professional counselors and geared toward providing activities and seminars which have proven to be helpful to Veterans living with PTSD.



This three-day event was free for Veterans because of our generous sponsors and supporters: Neillsville Country Club, Central WI Broadcasting, Cougar Ent/Hardee's, Fred and Kim Berg, Skip and Debbie Klabon, Nicolet National Bank, Simplicity Credit Union, The Vet Center, The Moraine Motel, Festival Foods, CART Center, Thrivent Financial, Loyal American Legion Post #175, CHIPS Restaurant, Michele Benson, Larry and Kay Anason, Liz Hamilton, Henry Smith, Linda Imler AKF Martial Arts, Healing Oak Nature Therapy LLC, The Heartbeat Center for Writing, Literacy and the Arts, Julie Diesing, Loopy's Grill & Saloon, Abby Bank, Gary Karczewski, Betty Nemitz and John Snape.



Planning is already underway for The Highground's 2021 Veterans Weekend Retreats. A male Veterans weekend retreat will be held July 9-11, 2021. A female Veterans weekend retreat will be held September 10-12, 2021. For more information on attending, volunteering and/or sponsoring the retreats, send an email to museum@thehighground.us or call 715-743-4224.

FALL CLEANUP DAYS

The Highground 2020 Fall Cleanup Days got off to a great start on Thursday morning, October 15. Approximately 30 volunteers worked throughout the 2.5 day event to get The Highground ready for the winter months. The weather ranged from sunny to snowy, reminding everyone of the need to prepare for the changing seasons! Some of the tasks that were tackled included landscape clearing and raking, trail work, picnic table and bench storage and general cleaning. Everyone was taken care of during the work days with homemade meals and a continuous flow of hot beverages and snacks. Thank you to all the volunteers and supporters for a job well done. Local businesses that contributed services or items to the Fall Clean-Up were: **Schmitty's on Main, Ag Country Farm Credit Services and BP / Drescher Oil.**

THE HOME FRONT & HOLIDAYS

December 5–February 1, 2021

How the U.S. civilians supported the troops from the beginning days of our country to present day and how troops “celebrated” holidays while serving through our U.S. history.

Visitors will learn how the home front support changed throughout the decades; the realities of at home hardships and how the recognition of holidays actually changed to support wartime morale; among other interesting chapters in our nation’s history with several local

stories, as well, in the exhibit! The Museum will also offer visitors an interactive experience to create Civil War era Christmas ornaments and to write letters to our troops currently serving.

Other community programs currently going on at the Museum include: The Highground Homeless Veteran Clothing and Non-perishable Drive and The Highground Military Care Package Collection Drive.



WWI: MIDWEST EXPERIENCE IN THE GREAT WAR

February 6, 2021–March 29, 2021



This exhibition will focus on how the Midwest U.S. was involved and affected by WWI, “The Great War”. There will be several special exhibits focusing on local personal stories; the banner exhibit “WWI: Beyond the Trenches” on loan from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison; the involvement of women during this time; how the Spanish Influenza epidemic was spread and the public response to this great disease during WWI; and many more interesting aspects of how this war changed our everyday lives. The advent of Victory Gardens was in WWI. This Museum exhibit will have information and items available to help you plan your own Victory Garden in 2021.

The public is welcome to participate in building the WWI exhibit by creating “WWI Shoebox Dioramas” which will be displayed! This is a great opportunity for creative history buffs, students and parents to work on a fun project that will be displayed at the Museum and shared virtually. There are many available resources online to learn the basics of how to make a shoebox diorama, including https://www.michtoy.com/michtoy/StaticPages/school_project_WWI_Trench.html and <https://www.pinterest.ch/pin/28358672638649060/?d=t&mt=login>

This is a great way for artists of all skill levels and ages to do a fun, winter project and learn a bit more about the conditions in which our WWI troops served. Many tutorials, craft items and plastic toy military figures can be found online at sites like Amazon (If you’re shopping on Amazon.com, remember to select **The Highground** as your charity on Amazon Smile!). The dioramas can be of any aspect of WWI and can portray your choice of scene, U.S., British, and/or German troops, etc.

WE WERE THERE: KOREA EXHIBIT

The Highground hosted a well-received Grand Opening for the “We Were There: Korea” exhibit on September 19, 2020 outside The Highground Museum, following the late morning Korean Stone Placement. The Highground was honored to have the family members of Medal of Honor Recipients Einar Ingman Jr. and Mitchell Red Cloud Jr. in attendance. The families and Einar’s medals were escorted into The Highground prior to the opening ceremony.

Einar’s daughters, Mary and Karen, along with Mitchell’s daughter, Annita, shared the stories of their fathers’ heroic service during the Korean War which earned them the Medal of Honor. Korean Veterans and their families enjoyed the exhibit and sharing their service stories with each other. It was touching to see how much the exhibit meant to the Veterans and their families. The excitement of the children present over seeing their grandpa’s/papa’s photos and learning about their service was priceless and what these exhibits are all about—ensuring that future generations never forget our Veterans and their history. “We Were There: Korea” offers an unforgettable visit and wonderful learning experience for Veterans, families, history buffs and school-age children alike. This exhibit was on display until November 29 with plans to make it available for loan to other venues interested in hosting it. “We Were There: Korea” is made possible in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council and other generous donors.

VIETNAM VETERANS REUNION HELD AT THE HIGHGROUND

A Vietnam Veterans Reunion was held at The Highground Veterans Memorial Park near Neillsville on Saturday, October 3. Vietnam Veterans and spouses were invited to join the informal gathering, which included lunch, helicopters and more!

BJ Prior, author of “Behind My Wings”, spoke to the Veterans during the lunch. She worked for 40 years as a flight attendant with Continental Airlines, flying Military Airlift Command (MAC) Operations, transporting troops during the Vietnam War. She shared stories of the men she met and many Veterans expressed their thanks for her compassion and service during those stressful and emotional times. Thank you to Subway of Neillsville for donating the sandwiches for the Veterans reunion lunch.

Two helicopters were present at The Highground during this event. The Veterans and all visitors were able to enjoy the unique experience of watching a Vietnam War UH-1H Huey helicopter land at The Highground. The crew joined the Veterans Reunion and also spoke with visitors who were interested in seeing and learning more about the helicopter. VVA #331 brought their UH-1H trailered helicopter to The Highground as well which gave visitors the opportunity for a real hands-on helicopter experience.

The 2021 Highground Vietnam Veterans Reunion is scheduled for Saturday, May 22. For the most up-to-date news and event information, visit thehighground.us and subscribe to our email newsletter.

\$40
gift is all it takes

The Highground Newsletter is sent to over 18,000 households four times a year. If half of all households would donate \$40, we would be able to fund every one of the park improvement projects that were identified for 2020! Will you help us continue the mission by pledging \$40?

2020 HONOR STONE PLACEMENTS

Honor Stones at The Highground had a tremendous 2020 even with the pandemic. Stone dedications continued with social distancing and safety precautions as family and friends wanted to honor loved ones. Honor Stones were placed honoring recipients from California, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin. Even with the COVID-19 restrictions, The Highground was still able to honor these recipients. Some have passed, some are still with us, but **all** were remembered and honored during the ceremonies. Thank you for supporting these honorees and The Highground by purchasing stones. As a reminder, the Registry holds the stories behind these honor stones and can be found in the Museum library. Please continue to send information, stories and pictures of your loved one to be included in these books. 2021 applications are available on our website at thehighground.us. You can also send an email to donations@thehighground.us or call Kay at 715-743-4224 to request a printed copy. Below is the complete list of all those honored in 2020 and the state they are from if it is not Wisconsin. Thank you for supporting The Highground and its mission to Honor, Educate and Heal.

United in Service (a new area around the Wisconsin map in the center walkway, designated for veteran organizations):

American Legion Post #356
Badger State Chapter 82nd Airborne Assoc
Mike Voth Memorial VVA Chapter 5
Neenah Menasha Veterans Honor
Guard AL33 AL152 VFW2123
WI Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1

Persian Gulf Tribute (in "the bootprint" for all Veterans from Desert Storm to the present-GWOT) Barrier:

Kokosz & Ferron Families (IL)

Stones:

Dagdagan, Jay
Dewitz, Mark E
Nelson, Rocky J
Ryba, Kyle B
Stuczynski, Timothy F
Ward, Jacob M
Waite, Mitchell R

Korean Honor Stones (around the Korean Tribute and now on the third phase)

Abegglen, Alvin
Bachinski, Fredrick
Bittrich, John H
Bohman, Joseph Anthony
Buettner, William Max
Folz, Jerome M
Meyers, Edwin R
Roeder, Elroy
Seichter, Norbert J
Swenson, Wallace R
Walker, Robert Earl
Werthman, Tom

Wilson Jr, Lewis H (NY)

Meditation Stones in the Garden's shelter
Henke, Taylor Jay

Military Working Dog

(listing honoring our canine heroes)

Slotter, Harlen (King)

Towne, Marlin (Prince)

Legacy stones (on the Plaza walkways)

7 Hodag Boys of 1974

Adamczewski, Ronald D

Adrian, George E

Allen, John Glen

American Legion Post 156

Asher, George J

Babl, Aaron

Babl, David

Baehr, Walter

Ballard, Carl E

Ballweg Brothers

Balza, Firman J

Barth, Conrad W

Bauer, James G

Bauer, Leonard E

Bautch, Adalbert

Bautch, Anselm

Bautch, Edmund

Beck, Rick

Beilfuss, Bonnie

Beilfuss, Bruce F

Bennett, Chuck

Bennett, James N

Blume, Alfred Ludwig

Blume, Arden Ludwig

Blume, Neil Alfred

Borkowski Jr., Edward

Legacy stones, cont.

Borkowski Sr., Edward	Habeck, Lance J	Musil, James Joseph (IL)
Bowe, Jeffry M	Hausser, John F (IL)	Ouimet, Charles A
Brand, G Shooter	Heiting, Richard F	Perko Sr, Edward A
Breese, Earl, Russell, Jerome	Heiting, Tom	Petrowski, Ted, IL
Briskie, Basil	Howard, Joseph W	Poull, Robert W (MI)
Brown, Jack D	Hughes, Bruce L	Pudlo, Thomas
Brown, James D (MI)	Isherwood, Thomas	Rajchel, Michael C
Brown, Jeffrey Louis	Keller, Robert J	Rast, Robert
Brown, Mary J	Kennedy, Jack S	Sanderfoot, George
Brown, Robert L	Klemm, Ernest	Schmidt, Roy R
Buehring, Larry D "Gomer"	Klemm, Phil	Schoengarth MD, L Don
Buss, Roy Louis	Klemm, Robert	Schoengarth, Lowell E
Cardelli, Aldo E (IL)	Kokemueller, Kenneth	Schoengarth, Travis C (MO)
Chagnon, Donald R	Kolbo, Gene L	Schreiner, Paul A
Chagnon, Louis A	Koshollek, Joe C	Schueller, Bob
Chagnon, Robert B	Kowal, Joseph	Seffens, Paul Jim
Chagnon, Ronald L	Kowalski, Henry	Seidl, Bob
Charkowski, Henry P (IL)	Kremsreiter, Dale	Sessler, Patrick & Michael
Collinson, Mark W	Kugel, Marie & Ron	Setterlund, Brett M
Collinson, Marliss J	Launspach, WM	Setterlund, Chester W
Cornelius, Lori (MN)	Lavicka, Ronald J	Setterlund, Kermit G
Cudahy, Brian L	Lewellyn, Wm Lynn	Setterlund, Ralph D
Cyr, Charles	Lietz, Dahrald E	Shea, Melvin C
Dassel, Bruce C (MI)	Lobacz, George	Simonar, Gerald
Dassel, Paul M (MI)	Lobacz, Richard J	Siok, Walter C
Debilzen, Joseph	Lobacz, Walter	Smalley, Patrick
Dettmann, Garland	Longworth, Larry	Smith, Henry
Dobson, Raymond L (PA)	Loomis, Kenneth	Speich, David
Droste, Robert (WI)	Luchterhand, Robert A	Speich, Robert G
Duffenbach, Steven	Lulloff, Michael R	Steinke, Dean
Ehlert, Richard	Lulloff, Robert F	Stelter, Melvin
Ellison, Roger J	Lulloff, Thomas	Stevens Sr, Ricky D
Farnsworth, Michael	Martin, Beth E	Strunk, Jerome M
Feneli, Raymond (IL)	McIntyre, Ralph D (NY)	Thompson, Delores
Fink, Dennis C	McKearn, Richard (CA & WI)	Thompson, Duane
Fox, Thomas D (RI)	McVicker, Dorwin Earl	Tormoen, Jerome C
Frye, Leonard W	Meyers, Curt	Totzke, John
Gaffney, Kenneth H	Meyers, Dean W	Treweek, Charles J
Gentine, Larry	Meyers, Jerry	Turner, Larry L
Georgeson, Greg A	Meyers, Ron	Tylka, Dale W
Gilbert, Don T	Meyers, Roy E	Vershowske, Edward J
Gorski, Larry	Meyers, Virgil	VFW Neenah Valley Post #6003
Graham, Gerald C	Meyers, Wayne	VFW Post #8527 Andrew J Sutter Jr
Groth, James S	Mezera, Francis J	VVA WI Chapter #479
Gunka, John & Evangeline	Michiels, Patrick	Wienke, Macie L
Habeck, Ervin E	Miller, Wilbert	Wright, Donald
	Musil, James Edward	Zuch, William H

2021 Honor Stone applications are available on our website, on the "Honor Stone" page, at thehighground.us/honor-stones. We are looking forward to an exciting and busy year!

You can apply online or print the application and mail it to:

The Highground, PO Box 457, Neillsville, WI 54456.

CAMP VICTORY NEWS

Fall Archery Hunts and Donation *Thank You's*



With all that's been going on in 2020, the fall archery hunts were greatly anticipated by the Veterans. The focus of the fall hunts aligns with The Highground and Camp Victory goal of bringing healing to our Veterans. We had four groups participating in the fall hunt this year. The groups included Purple Heart Veterans, Northern Wisconsin Combat Veterans, Vietnam Veterans, and Persian Gulf Veterans. The Purple Heart group was treated to a fish fry, donated and cooked by Jeff Bauer and Dave Mayenshein. Chris Pettis, The Highground Executive Director, was on hand to share in the camaraderie and converse with Veterans. Thank you to all our guides, cooks and helpers for your time and dedication in support of Camp Victory.



Vietnam Veteran hunters relaxing at the Camp



Purple Heart hunters



Phil Wilder with the Trackchair he donated to Camp Victory

Camp Victory allows Veterans to experience nature and spend time with other Veterans in a safe environment. The healing process takes place during the events by Veterans networking with each other and sharing each others experiences, during and after service. One Veteran this year was able to connect with another Veteran and work through an issue with disability compensation. Information was provided to assist him in receiving compensation he deserved.

Camp Victory received a Trackchair donation by Phil Wilder to facilitate physically challenged Veterans. This was donated in time to allow a Veteran the ability to attend a hunt at camp this year. The generous donation of the Trackchair and trailer is valued at \$25,000 and was orchestrated by Congressman Tom Tiffany. The camp also received a defibrillator from Mike Voth Chapter 5 Vietnam Veterans Association of Eau Claire which will be available in case of emergency.

Electrical upgrades were installed expanding the campground to 14 electrical sites. We would like to thank Alger Electric for the labor and materials donated for this expansion. A special thank you to Bob Faber with Faber Electric for installing lights and additional outlets in our equipment building. We were also able to deepen our pond this fall allowing our fish population to thrive. This would not have been possible without the assistance of Dave Mayenshein and John Stroinski from Thorp.

FROM THE CHAIR Gary Weirauch



As we close the 2020 year, it would be remiss of me not to thank all the donors and volunteers that supported The Highground in this very difficult time. If you were a volunteer that tended flowers, gave tours, maintained the grounds, supplied meals, parked cars or were a porch greeter, it mattered not what you did, it mattered that you did it! Without those who may have risked their personal health to help our meager staff, we would not be able to properly present a memorial worthy of the Veterans we choose to honor. Certain maintenance items scheduled for this fall have been shifted to next spring due to limited labor and an early onset of cold weather. As the health crisis subsides and next May approaches, please put The Highground on your volunteer calendar, as we will need you as much as ever.

To those donors who once again reached deeply into their pockets, thank you for any amount, large or small, that you gave. As I have said before, we have thousands of small donors with large hearts. Many charities felt the impact of COVID-19 and experienced reduced donations. We continued to receive donations sufficient to pay all the operating bills of the Park and along with a \$46,000 payroll protection loan from the government, now forgiven, we are financially on an even keel. So, **thank you**, and please keep us in your philanthropy plans for next year. You, along with our volunteers, are truly the lifeblood of The Highground.

Lastly, we need to thank our employees, from the Executive Director to the Gift Shop Clerk, for managing through this health crisis and for doing their jobs, not for the pay, but for the love of the organization and those for whom we serve. This extends to all the volunteer directors and staff at Camp Victory who have stood by to serve campers and disabled hunters even as COVID-19 forced us to change plans. Let this labor of love continue as we expand on our promise to Honor, Educate and Heal.

FROM THE DIRECTOR Chris Pettis



As we transition from fall's tranquil colors to the white snow of winter, many of us feel like bears preparing for hibernation after filling our bellies with Thanksgiving dinner. Thanksgiving is also a time for giving thanks for what is important in our lives in the company of people who care. However, there are some among us who may have different feelings regarding the holidays or may not be able to be present with those who care. There are also some who may not believe there is anyone in their lives who truly does care. Holidays can be an extremely lonely and depressing time—coupled with COVID-19 fears and restrictions, political and social confusion, layoffs, losses of many kinds, and families being pushed into academia so our children can continue to learn. The normal challenges at this time seem to have increased ten-fold.

Prioritizing our health in life's transitions means not being afraid to ask for help when we need it. We are human, and being human comes with the experiences of grief and loss, happiness and joy. Sometimes it really hurts to be human. We are social creatures by nature, so we weren't built to withstand every sudden event in life without the support of others. Talk to family and friends who are experiencing similar changes or consider finding a support group in your community. Don't be afraid to talk to a counselor or other mental health professional about building resilience. You can't avoid change, but you can live a life of resilience. We can embrace transitions and see challenges as opportunities to not only survive -- but thrive. I challenge you to reach out to 22 friends, family members and Veterans and ask them how they are doing today... and then **listen**.

THE HIGHGROUND RISING *cont. from page 1*

The much anticipated capital campaign to expand The Highground's mission has moved into what is called it's "quiet solicitation stage" thanks to efforts of five committees and more than 60 dedicated volunteers. The newly launched campaign, "The Highground Rising", aims to provide Veterans and families with mental health support, expand building space to accommodate visitors, expand our museum experience, host year round veterans and student events, improved parking and ADA accessibility and payoff the long term debt. We also aim to finalize long term finances by adding to the endowment fund.

With 1.8 million Veterans across the upper Midwest and twenty-two service members a day nationwide committing suicide, while others fall victim to alcohol and drugs, it is imperative that we streamline our programming in an effort to reach struggling Veterans with on-target support services. We have the opportunity to expand our mental health support programming to reach an additional 10,000 veterans and family members annually.

According to Campaign Chair Gary Weirauch, our volunteer committee members have been working hard since last spring to identify our expanded mission and how best to accomplish this task. With a larger and exceptionally functional building design now in place, we look forward to demonstrating to everyone the benefit of this building and how it will better serve Veterans and their families. Below are external views of the proposed 12,000 square foot Welcome and Visitor Center which has larger space for events, programs, Veterans meetings, student education and mental health services.

Weirauch notes some individuals may wish to donate prior to year-end to take advantage of the \$300 donation deduction for 2020. You are not required to itemize deductions to take advantage of this deduction to income.

People wishing to give through their IRA's may direct their required minimum distribution directly to The Highground. You may direct up to \$100,000 in distributions annually from your IRA and not subject these distributions to federal or state tax. It is best to contact your IRA servicer or tax advisor prior to electing this option to donate as funds must be sent directly from your account to The Highground. Also, distributions must be in our charitable legal name which is the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project, Inc. and not our doing business as name (The Highground).

"Campaign plans will include a formal public campaign launch approximately March 18th", adds Weirauch. Watch for more information in newsletters as the campaign proceeds. When the timing suits you, please consider a gift or multi-year pledge to help expand and secure the future of The Highground.





Featured Products

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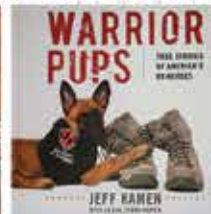


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DEC 2020 - FEB 2021

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The Kokosz Sisters article *cont. from page 1*

Mary and Sue live in Illinois and make several trips to Neillsville throughout the year to organize the bundles. They spend hours putting them together with decorative grass and wrapping them up in clear bags and colorful ribbon. They also label each bundle with the contents so the potential winner knows exactly what they are dropping their ticket into the bucket for.

The sisters aren't the only ones who get involved in the planning. The whole family, including Mom, Dad, brothers and a daughter, helps bundle up the amazing raffle items.

This year, Mary and Sue organized over 90 bundles for the 20th Annual Ride to Remember™ raffle, raising over \$3,000. The sisters requested that all proceeds be donated directly to Camp Victory. We are eternally thankful for Mary, Sue and the Kokosz family for their dedication, love and support, and we look forward to seeing what they come up with next!

MEDITATION GARDEN

The Meditation Garden has a great new look and feel, sponsored in part by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and Cummins Filtration. Thanks to a crew of “Jims” and volunteers from Cummins Filtration, the walkway was leveled and compacted, and bullet pavers were adjusted in preparation for the new and improved walkway. Rubber Designs, a Georgia-based company, arrived to install the new surface, completing the installation in 3.5 days. If you have not been to the Park, please come and enjoy it.

For More Information, Contact 715-743-4224

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

Find us somewhere on Social Media!



Newsletter Subscription Request

We continue to update our records and need your help! The newsletter is a big project to organize and we want to make sure people continue to receive it as well as other important updates. Please visit our website and look for the “I support The Highground” box located on the home page. Click on it and then update your information by completing the form. We can mail you a printed newsletter or send a digital copy; we just need to know what you prefer. If you provide us with your information, we can also send you our email newsletter which will include updates as they happen. Or, 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.

DAY OF PEACE EVENT

The Highground recognized the International Day of Peace on Monday, September 21 with an “open community” event at the Dove Mound tribute. Poetry, messages of Peace and songs sung by Deb Esselman were included in the program. There was also a special remembrance of Gerald Filippi, KIA in Vietnam September 21, 1970. A display of origami cranes, a symbol of peace, was placed near the Dove Mound. We continue to make and collect origami cranes, made with 6” origami or craft paper, with the goal of having 1,000 cranes displayed in December 2021 as part of an exhibit on remembering the cost of war. For more information, call 715-743-4224 or contact Theresa at museum@thehighground.us.

Friends of The Highground

The Highground is a grass-roots, non-profit 501(c)3 organization that does not receive any ongoing federal or state funding. We have a very small operating budget and only exist because of the hearts and hands of thousands of volunteers and contributors who continue to give generously of their time, talents and personal/financial resources.

Please accept my donation of \$ _____
I would like the gift to be used for:

_____ and/or the 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 Fundraising Calendar
- _____ Honor Stones
- _____ Add someone to the mailing list
(please include the name and address of the person you want to send a gift subscription to)
- _____ Endowment Fund
- _____ Booking information for the “My War” and “We Were There” exhibits

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
- _____ Camp Victory
- _____ Legacy Honor Stone Ceremonies
- _____ Military Working Dog Honor Stone Ceremonies
- _____ Korean War Honor Stone Ceremonies
- _____ Persian Gulf Honor Stone Ceremonies

The Highground Veterans Memorial Park Challenge Coin Program!

Sign up for a yearly contribution and get the Welcome Coin and the latest minted coin!

Take the Pledge

Show your support with a monthly donation of \$20 or a yearly contribution of \$240!

The Highground Challenge Coin Program is a way to show your support for our continuing mission to Honor, Educate and Heal our Veterans, their families and all who visit. Coins are released that reflect our history as an organization, and they feature significant items that have helped make The Highground what it is today; examples include tributes, exhibits, events and other programs. Take the pledge and you will receive a coin each time a new one is minted as long as your program membership is active. The Highground is much more than just a park, it is a place where Veterans can come together, where our dedicated staff can help when needed, and where programming for Veterans causes is at the forefront. Take the challenge today!

Sign up online at thehighground.us. For more information, call 715-743-4224 or email store@thehighground.us

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Questions or Comments _____

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The Earthen Dove Effigy Mound, dedicated in 1989, pays tribute to POWs and MIAs. This “living memorial” is a replica of a Native American effigy mound. It was designed by David Giffey and constructed by volunteers from throughout Wisconsin. It contains soil from much of the U.S. as well as from locations all over the world.

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.

WWII

Otho M Shank
 Kenneth T Slattery
 Roy T Sloat
 Bernard A Spielvogel
 Richard W Stone
 Joseph M Sungaila
 Lloyd C Tatroe
 Francis J Teehan
 John A Weissenflunh
 Joseph C Werle
 Albert J Wilsey Jr
 Ralph W Wittenmyer
 Lewis A Wolf
 Shigeo Yoshioka
 Phil P Yuson
 John W Zinck

James Thomas Fiedler
 George H Finstad
 James R Fisher
 John Joseph Fitzgerald
 Thomas L Flaherty
 Ervin Joe Flauger
 David Roger Flood
 Michael E Foley
 Walter A Fonder
 Henry L Ford
 Robert M Ford
 Robert F Fox
 Louis M Frank
 Vernon F Frankenberg
 Jack L Frater
 Aloysius Joseph Freund
 John W Freymüller
 Jerrold Fronzowiak

Gilbert Ronald Nickerson
 Russell Chester Nicolai
 Michael Charles Nielsen
 Ronald Robert Niles
 Donald William Noel
 George E Norbut
 Timothy John Norman
 John Alex North
 Wayne Louis Noth
 George D Novakovic
 Duane Andrew Novobielski
 Leonard Michael Nowak
 Glenn Edward Nowakowski
 Larry Hugh Oertel
 Paul Anthony Oestreicher
 Richard James O'Hare
 Carl Everett Oldfield
 Jerome Edwin Olmsted
 Gregory Jon Olsen
 Craig Seimon Olson
 Duane Virgil Olson
 Gary Wayne Olson
 Rodney James Olson
 Thomas P Olson
 Daniel John Orlikowski
 Charles Francis Orlowski
 Robert Eugene Osuski
 Steven Robert Ott
 Thomas William Otte
 Philip Morey Overbeck
 Harlan T Pache
 James Henry Page

Desert Storm, OIF, OEF – To Present Day

Ryan C Adams
 Joseph J Altmann
 Nicholas R Anderson
 Paul J Atim
 Andrew L Bossert
 Rachel K Bosveld
 Paul R Bartz
 Jeremy Bird
 Joshua C Brennan
 Daniel Busch
 Justin J Cain
 Chad D Coleman
 Jeremiah Collins Jr
 Nick A Dewhirst
 Steven T Drees
 Garrick L Eppinger Jr
 Nichole M Frye
 Dan H Gabrielson
 Jacob A Gassen
 Jesse J Grindey
 Andrew Halverson
 Warren S Hansen
 Kyle M Hemauer
 Daren M Hidalgo
 Carson Holmquist
 Merideth Howard
 Bert Edward Hoyer

Ryan M Jerabek
 Daniel J Johnson
 David A Johnson
 Quinn Johnson-Harris
 Richard J Kemp
 Charles A Kiser
 Tyler R Kreinz
 John F “Hans” Kurth
 Amy Krueger
 Ryan J Larson
 Matthew I Leggett
 Luke J Zimmerman
 Matthew R Zindars

Korean War

Kenneth C Eirich
 Vernon C Eliason
 Tellus H Elkins
 Theodore Clarence E Ellis
 Lawrence W Erdman
 Daniel G Erste
 William G Ewing
 Donald P Faldet
 Leo F Falvey
 Harold O Fay
 Marvin J Fenske
 Lawrence J Ferkovich

Vietnam War

Vernon Lee Nelson
 John Laurence Nesovanovic
 Bruce Paul Nettesheim
 Earl Jeffrey Netzow
 James R Neubauer
 Mark Willard Neumann
 Terry James Neumeier
 Gregory Eugene Newman
 Michael C Newman
 Jerry Allen Nichols
 Larry James Nicholson