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Retired nurse and veteran, Eileen Kupper-Grubbs was honored at the Oklahoma State Capitol this past May, during the opening week of National Nurses Month. She was recognized on by Oklahoma Sen. Lisa Standridge.

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# On the Cover: A Tribute to Service

## A Legacy of Nursing and Community Service

*This past May, as the profession celebrated National RN Recognition Day and the 130th anniversary of its national organization during the opening week of National Nurses Month, retired nurse Eileen Kupper-Grubbs was honored at the Oklahoma State Capitol.*

Serving on the front lines of healthcare advocacy, she was formally recognized on May 6 by Oklahoma Sen. Lisa Standridge, R-Norman, for her exceptional contributions to the legislative community. Honored through the Oklahoma Nurses Association's Nurse of the Day Program, her presence at the Capitol underscored the vital connection between clinical practice and state healthcare policy.

"Over my time in office, I have had the privilege of getting to know Eileen and witnessing firsthand the compassion, humility and servant leadership that define her life," Standridge said in a statement. "Her dedication to our nation's veterans is not something she turns on and off—it is who she is. She dedicated her professional nursing career to caring for veterans at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Even in retirement, she continues serving those who served us all through her work as 2nd Vice Commander of Norman American Legion Post 88."

Kupper-Grubbs has been a member of both The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary since 2020.

"I have watched Eileen tirelessly organize events, support veterans and their families and ensure that the sacrifices of our servicemen and women are never forgotten. She leads with a deep love of country and a profound respect for those willing to defend it."

When asked why she chose to become a VA nurse, Kupper-Grubbs said, "I am a Veteran, and my father, brother, and one sister were in the Army. Veterans are a precious few who would die for the United States. I wanted to be part of their care."

"Those words capture the heart of who she is, someone who answered the call to serve long after her uniform was put away," Standridge said.

"Today, I ask all Oklahomans to join me in recognizing and thanking Nurse Eileen Kupper-Grubbs for a lifetime of selfless service, compassion, and unwavering devotion to our veterans

and our community," Standridge said.

Kupper-Grubbs led a life steeped in military service and nursing. She was a military child whose father served in the Korean War. Her father's sister, Florence, went to nursing school, where she met Kupper-Grubbs' later-to-be mother. When her father returned from the war, his sister, Florence, introduced them.

Kupper-Grubbs' grandmother, Lois, was a private nurse to a family in Illinois. "My mother was a diploma nurse. I am the third of four generations of nurses in my family," Kupper-Grubbs said. "My sister is an advanced practice registered nurse. My niece, Christine, is an assistant professor and a coordinator in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at Oklahoma State University. Her doctoral degree is from the University of Oklahoma."

Kupper-Grubbs is a U.S. Army Veteran whose post-military career was highly focused on healthcare and now veteran advocacy in retirement. She served for three years as a Military Police (MP) officer. She also received written training in healthcare during her enlistment.

After her service, she graduated from Cameron University in Lawton with an associate's degree in nursing using the GI bill. She moved to Moore, Oklahoma and attended Central State University to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with a minor in psychology.

She then worked for seven years at Oklahoma City's major teaching hospital, Oklahoma Memorial Hospital. It has since been renamed OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center, which is now Oklahoma's primary teaching hospital.

Her first nursing job was as a medical/surgical nurse, and she became interested in transplantation.

She and her husband, Eric Grubbs, whom she married in June of 1979, moved to Ohio when he got a job near The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. Kupper-





From left, Eileen Kupper-Grubbs and Oklahoma Sen. Lisa Standridge, R-Norman, at the Oklahoma State Capitol.



Left: Eileen Kupper-Grubbs stands beside the seal of The American Legion at the Norman American Legion Post 88.

Grubbs served on the transplant floor there, did research and was published in the widely circulated RN magazine.

When Eric and Eileen Kupper-Grubbs moved back to Oklahoma, she became a certified transplant nurse. She transitioned from Oklahoma Memorial to Deaconess Hospital to continue her clinical experience in medical-surgical healthcare. Kupper-Grubbs provided dedicated service to the VA Oklahoma City Healthcare System for 13 years, beginning in October 2012. Board-Certified Medical-Surgical Registered Nurse Kupper-Grubbs served as a care manager within the healthcare system, coordinating complex treatment plans, managing resources, and advocating directly for patient needs. She specialized in acute care, patient stabilization, and post-surgical recovery, alongside fulfilling roles in palliative and ambulatory care settings.

She fulfilled her dedication to nursing as the final chapter of

her 41-year nursing career at the OKCVA, retiring in June 2024.

“I am now a volunteer advocate at LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma, Inc. and a donor family member. My nephew, Jeremy, was a kidney and liver donor,” Kupper-Grubbs said. “I have been a docent in the Natural Wonders Gallery at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History for 17 years. I also volunteer with the Cleveland County Election Board.”

Kupper-Grubbs said, “129 years after my grandfather was born, our family has been in service to others,” she said. “We have had four members in the US Army. My son graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2006 and is currently serving in

Korea. My niece Christine is teaching future nurses in Oklahoma.”

“Life does repeat itself, as you see,” Kupper-Grubbs said. “Nursing is an art, not a science; caring for others after caring for yourself is a calling.”

● Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

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From left, John Nash, Oklahoma's Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs, moderated a talk with Col. Greg Langford, Lt. Col. Jimmy Patterson, Master Sgt. Michael Joseph, and Col. Tom Bliss.

# Midwest City Remembers 35th Anniversary of Operation Desert Storm

Two well-attended commemorations of Operation Desert Storm's 35th anniversary occurred in Midwest City, providing informative speakers and a panel of veterans who discussed their deployment to Southwest Asia. The first event, March 27, was organized by Lee McCullum, Fundraising Chief and past Post Commander of VFW Post 7192. Col. (retired) Mark Tarpley and the Air & Space Force Association's Gerrity Chapter hosted a second commemoration at Rose State College on March 31.

McCullum said, "We wanted to hold it because there's a good number of Desert Storm veterans in our community. We felt they should be recognized."

More than 110 veterans, families, and Midwest City Mayor Matt Dukes and State Senator Adam Pugh attended. Guests enjoyed a free barbeque dinner organized by VFW Auxiliary members Sonya McVeigh, Denise Heginbotham, Janet Swenson and Fran Kinchebe.

"Strings of Valor," a seven-member veteran band, played music. Jay King, a musician, said, "This program has helped me cope with depression and addiction. I'm a better man now, able to help other veterans through music."

Dukes respects these events. "The value is just remembering the sacrifice that our veterans put forth."

After dinner, Tarpley, an Air Force Vietnam War and Desert Shield/Storm veteran, provided an overview of America's participation. He acknowledged United States initially lacked a war plan to counter Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Stationed at the Pentagon, he explained how the Office of Warfighting Concepts (Checkmate) created an Instant Thunder war plan. It relied on a coordinated mix of fighter, reconnaissance, refueler, and E 3A air battle management aircraft. Tarpley said planners avoided Vietnam War problems with, "You hit them hard, you hit them early and you hit them with all you got." Ground, air, and naval forces from other Services joined in the buildup. The 43 day air campaign that began January 17, 1991, proved decisive, helping shorten the ground war to 100 hours and reducing casualties. Operation Desert Storm lasted from January 17 - February 28, 1991.

Post Commander Matt Martinez was pleased. "I'm feeling very blessed to have a group of individuals that care enough to know that when there's a need, or when there's a time to remember, that we're at the forefront."

Afterwards, veterans swapped stories. Air Force Master Sgt. (retired) Brian Wheel deployed near Qatar with the 552nd Air Control Wing from December 5, 1990 to June 16, 1991.

Wheel provided precision approach radar from the base's air control tower. He explained, "If something happened to the pilot or his plane and he needed to land, but he could not see outside of his plane, listen to my voice." Wheel would instruct them when to descend and once on the runway, give them directions. "And so many pilots were just so thankful and they were about ready to run out of fuel..." He also guided Bob Hope's entourage to land for a Christmas show.

Reflecting on his deployment, Wheel said, "It doesn't matter where you are. It's what you can make of it. And positive thinking and having buddies with you...helping you out, and you're helping them out

## Key Dates

Iraq invades Kuwait Aug. 2, 1990

Desert Shield Began Aug. 7, 1990

Desert Storm Began Jan 17, 1991

Desert Storm Ended Feb, 1991

(KUWAIT FREED)



all the time."

Four days later was Rose State College's 35th commemoration event. Sixty mostly Desert Storm veterans and Oklahoma State Senator Brenda Stanley attended. After honoring our national symbols, generous amounts of hors d'oeuvres were served.

Tarpley provided a timeline of Desert Shield and Storm. He was followed by Brig. (retired) Gen. Haub, USA, who was Commander, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery, during his unit's deployment in November 1990 and led offensive land operations into Kuwait, firing 906 rockets at Iraqis.

Col. James Combs, 552nd Air Control Wing Vice Commander, described the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System airplane's support to the 43-day air campaign. Brig. Gen. Lindsay Droz, Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex Commander, explained Tinker AFB's support.

A panel of Desert Storm veterans who deployed in theater provided insight into combat operations.

John Nash, Oklahoma's Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs, moderated a talk with Col. Greg Langford, USA, Lt. Col. Jimmy Patterson, USAF, Master Sgt. Michael Joseph, USAF, and Col. Tom Bliss, USAF. ● *Story for OK Veteran News Magazine by Lt. Col. Richard Stephens, Jr., USAFR, Ret. website: Rich Travel Niche*

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By Freddy Groves

## Abusing the Loan Program



It sounds like there was a lot of money to be made from Covid, at least according to investigation reports from the VA's Office of Inspector General. Unfortunately for certain thieves, however, the OIG was all over them when the scams were revealed. The head thief in one case was a part-time pastor who was nailed on four counts of wire fraud for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) scams. He devised a scheme to apply for loans that were supposed to be used for payroll and business expenses during the Covid downturns. Not only that, but he approached and then coached church members

(one of them a VA employee) on how to apply for the "free money" funds, including pretending they had actual businesses to run. He then taught them how to apply for loan forgiveness (which was a bonus of the program if funds were actually used to pay employees) so they wouldn't have to pay the money back. All they had to do, it seems, was to follow his instructions. It helped that he worked for a Small Business Administration-approved lender ... and split the money with him. Part of their downfall came from inflating income figures from a real tax return -- which did not indicate that there was any kind of business income at all, not realizing that it would be a simple matter for one government agency to speak to another agency to verify facts. Another mistake was leaving a paper trail of emails wherein he instructed one of his church members on the

steps to take to apply for the loans. When sentenced, the pastor could get 20 years for each count of wire fraud. One coconspirator (who did not own a business) could get 60 years -- 20 for each of three counts. The other (who also did not own a business but had a great paper trail of how-to instruction emails for applying for the fraudulent loans) is cooperating and likely won't see any jail time. ●

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# Oklahoma Veterans United Dedicated to Empowering Veterans

*Oklahoma Veterans United (OKVU) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting veterans across Oklahoma with housing services, suicide prevention resources, and employment opportunities. Built on an 80+ year legacy, OKVU officially transitioned from Community Service Council to Oklahoma Veterans United in 2024.*

*OKVU serves 56 (of the 77 statewide) counties across Northeastern, Central, Western, and Southwestern Oklahoma. Their goal is to empower veterans and honor their service and sacrifice through compassionate care, personalized support, and advocacy tailored to individual needs. While they cover an extensive range of initiatives, there are two primary areas of impact; the SSVF and SSG FOX SPGP programs.*

*Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) is a rapid re-housing program funded by a Department of Veterans Affairs grant.*

*Using the Housing First model, temporary intervention and short-term assistance is provided to low-income veterans and their families who are homeless or facing eviction.*

*SSVF Outreach staff conducted 1631 outreach engagements from October 1, 2025 to April 30, 2026. These engagements ranged from individual outreach to homeless veterans on the street, to large veteran focused events across the state. Nearly 40% of outreach engagements targeted rural veterans with limited access to resources.*

*797 (49%) of all engagements focused on identifying and screening veterans through visits to encampments, street outreach or local partners/drop-in centers. 719 veterans experiencing homelessness or facing eviction secured safe housing through the SSVF program.*

*The SSG FOX SPGP is a Department of Veterans Affairs funded grant connecting at-risk veterans to upstream suicide prevention tools. These tools include targeted outreach events, warm hand-offs to VA clinical and administrative staff, connection to local community resources, and individualized programs to help reduce the risk of veteran suicide.*

*While a smaller program, the SSG FOX SPGP initiative had equally impressive outreach efforts to connect to veterans who may be at risk or contemplating suicide. From October 2025 through March 2026 the program highlights include:*

- 487 veteran outreach engagements
- Collaboration with 13 organizations and partners in March 2026



*Keshawn, Army Veteran and former Supportive Services for Veteran Families Client.*

*alone in support of veterans needing assistance*

- 47 new veterans spoke with the team regarding personal concerns
- 52 people actively participated in case management
- 99 referrals were made to local partners including Veterans Health Administration providers and local community organizations based on specific interest and needs

*OKVU also has a veteran employer network that was established in 2019. The OKVU Veteran Employer Network proudly has 200+ members representing 100+ employers and distributes an annual state-wide survey to identify and recognize "Champions" who actively recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain veterans in the workplace. At its inception, a Veteran Employer Champion Survey was established to identify and recognize businesses in Oklahoma who showed their commitment to being a veteran-ready place of work by meeting specific benchmarks.*

*In 2025, nineteen new employers joined the network and nineteen were awarded the employer championship badge and recognized by the mayors of Tulsa and Oklahoma City.*

*Veterans most often connect with OKVU by calling the Tulsa and Oklahoma City offices. However, the outreach team meets veterans where they are by connecting with them directly at encampments, veteran events or through referral partners.*

*OKVU is dedicated to empowering veterans as they navigate the transition to civilian life. By recognizing the strengths and experiences individuals bring, they provide the tools, resources, and opportunities needed to build lasting self-sufficiency and independence - all grounded in empathy, compassion, respect, and dignity.*

*Per the US Department of Veterans Affairs the following numbers reflect the need for veteran support in the state of Oklahoma:*

- 278,538 veterans (as of 2024)
- 18,500 veterans earning below the poverty level (as of 2024)
- 304 homeless veterans (as of 2024)
- 126 veteran deaths by suicide (as of 2022)

*OKVU has earned a Platinum Seal of Transparency through*

Candid (formerly GuideStar), which reflects their commitment to transparency and accountability. They stand ready to help as many of Oklahoma's veterans as possible. With many of their staff being veterans themselves, they will do whatever it takes to help a fellow veteran in need.

Federal grants help sustain many of the initiatives OKVU is able to provide, however there are still gaps and barriers that need to be bridged. Private donations help strengthen OKVU's ability to plan ahead, discern where needs are greatest and to respond to urgent situations.

If you are a veteran in need or know a veteran in need, you can reach OKVU by using the contact form on their website, calling them at 918-588-8401, 405-724-3360, 580-557-0755 or by sending an email to [Info@okvetunited.org](mailto:Info@okvetunited.org).

Tax deductible donations can also be made by following the donation prompts on the website: [www.okvetunited.org](http://www.okvetunited.org).

A full list of available services and resources can be found on the website. ● Story and photos by Jill Stephenson, Tulsa area staff writer

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# Honoring the Fallen - PFC, Albert E. Schwab

## 1920 - 1945 Tulsa Medal of Honor Recipient

### By Jill Stephenson

The story of Albert Earnest Schwab is one of courage forged through hardship and a legacy sustained by family devotion and community honor.

Born on July 17, 1920, in Washington, D.C., Schwab was the oldest of five children in a troubled household. While his father was often absent due to work, his mother, a Chippewa woman, struggled in ways that deeply affected the family. They moved to Tulsa when he was six weeks old and his parents eventually divorced. Despite the challenges of his youth, Schwab found joy and excelled in sports, graduated from Tulsa High School in 1937 and briefly attended the University of Tulsa. He then went to work in the oil industry.

When military deferments were lifted during World War II, Schwab and his brother-in-law enlisted in the Marine Corps. Schwab quickly proved himself to be intelligent and driven and earned a reputation as an overachiever.

PFC Schwab served as a flamethrower operator in Okinawa, Japan. On May 7, 1945, during intense fighting in Okinawa, his unit became pinned down in a valley by machine gun fire coming from a ridge ahead. Facing relentless enemy fire, Schwab climbed the steep cliff toward the gun position. Fully exposed, he reached the emplacement and used his flamethrower to destroy the weapon and its crew. His actions allowed his company to move forward and take control of the ridge. Shortly afterward, a second machine gun opened fire, causing additional casualties and stopping the advance. Before he could refill his fuel supply, he moved forward to confront the new threat. Despite his limited resources, he successfully eliminated the second position.

As Schwab completed the attack, the enemy fired one final burst, causing fatal wounds. His fellow Marines recognized the extraordinary nature of his bravery and gathered witness accounts that would support the highest recognition of valor.

For his gallantry, Schwab was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. In a ceremony in Tulsa on Memorial Day 1946, his medal was presented to his three-year-old son. His sacrifice would continue to be honored in the years that followed, including the naming of Camp Schwab on Okinawa in 1959 and a statue and designated reception area at Tulsa International Airport. His story also reached a wider audience through the writings of famed World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle.

Initially buried in Okinawa, Schwab's remains were later returned to the United States at the request of his father. He was laid to rest with full military honors at Memorial Park Cemetery in Tulsa in 1949. According to his niece Judy Bryant, given the magnitude of his heroism, the plainness of his grave has long felt inadequate to the family. Bryant has dedicated years to ensuring her uncle receives a more fitting tribute. Inspired by her mother JoAnn, Albert's sister, she has worked with veterans' organizations and community supporters to redesign his gravesite so that it more aesthetically reflects his brave and gallant sacrifice. Reflecting what a Marine of his era would have carried, the proposed design includes a Soldier's Cross and a granite slab engraved with the full wording of his Medal of Honor citation.

Working with Tulsa's Memorial Cemetery, the effort has taken more than a decade to gain approval and momentum. With support from individuals like John Camp of the Marine Detachment unit, plans are moving forward. The project is



*Albert E. Schwab, USMC, posthumous recipient of the Medal of Honor for actions during Battle of Okinawa; photo from official Marine Corps.*

expected to cost approximately \$120,000. A foundation has been established to raise the necessary funds. For Bryant, the work is deeply personal but rooted in humility. She has never sought to claim any part of her uncle's heroism, only to ensure that it is properly remembered. The journey has connected her with veterans and supporters whose shared respect for service has been both humbling and inspiring. Citing it as a tangible way to preserve Schwab's story for future generations, completing the gravestone project remains a central goal on her life's bucket list.



Albert E. Schwab's life was shaped by adversity, but defined by heroism and valor. Today, his legacy endures not only in history books, but will be preserved by the efforts of those who refuse to let his sacrifice fade and will assure he is given the recognition he deserves in his final resting place.

Donations to help with the cost can be made by going to the Albert E. Schwab Detachment of the 857 Marine Corp League website [www.mcl857.org](http://www.mcl857.org) and following the DONATE button prompts. Once the page is reached to finalize the donation, there will be a box to add an additional note. Please include "Medal of Honor Fund" to ensure it is applied accordingly.

Any contributions received over and above what is needed will be directed toward local veteran causes. ●



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# “Run to Remember” Sparks

Tinker Air Force Base and its “Tinker Strong” philosophy were capably represented by Col. Tamilyn S. Dismukes, Deputy Commander, 72d Air Base Wing, at the 2026 Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon’s three events on Saturday, April 25, in downtown OKC. She draped finishing medals over participants in the 5K run and the Senior and Kids cumulative-mile finishes of their marathons.



**Above:** Some of Spanish Cove Retirement Village’s 75 participants at the finish of the event.

“Handing out medals at the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon finish line was a humbling reminder of Oklahoma’s incredible dedication and passion for community,” Col. Dismukes said. “Witnessing thousands of participants—including our service members, veterans, retirees, and their families—vividly illustrates the enduring resilience of Oklahomans. This profound shared experience reinforces the unbreakable, supportive partnership between our military and the local community.”

Spanish Cove Retirement Village and Vietnam Veterans were also well represented on April 25. The 75-strong contingent from Spanish Cove in Yukon, Oklahoma, won a \$500 cash prize for having the most participants in the Senior Marathon. The prize money is directly designated to fund and enhance the winning group’s community wellness programs.

The Senior Marathon and Kids Marathon use a “couch-to-marathon” remote compilation structure. Participants aged 60 and older walk or run a total of 25 miles incrementally starting in January (averaging roughly 1.5 miles per week).

On Saturday, April 25, at 8 a.m., the Spanish Cove team, all wearing team T-shirts, started from outside the Oklahoma

City National Memorial & Museum to complete their final 1.2 miles together in downtown OKC.

The course guided the seniors through the streets of downtown Oklahoma City, concluding with celebratory finish medals at Scissortail Park.

The team’s efforts were spearheaded by their Wellness Director, Debbie Miller, who coordinated the training schedules, group registration, and race logistics to foster active aging.

Miller has also assembled many Dragon Boat crews since 2012 to race on the Oklahoma River downtown in RIVERSPORT’s Dragon Boat League. Spanish Cove now fields multiple specialized crews, including the Golden Dragons, Silver Dragons, and even specialized co-ed and all-women’s rosters.

In a heartwarming display of resilience, Vietnam Veteran retired Marine Capt. John Bisbee, who recently gained 100% disabled Veteran status for his Agent Orange exposure at 76, walked for the second year in the Senior Marathon with his wife Peggy.

Bisbee said he saw the event as a way to support the nonprofit Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum that opened in 2001. It

**Right:** Retired Marine Capt. John Bisbee and his wife, Peggy, pose at the starting line before their Senior event.



has been serving the community for 25 years in honor of the victims, survivors, rescuers, and all those affected by the devastating April 19, 1995, bombing.

Just by walking its unique cumulative 25-mile training regimen before the race weekend, by completing 1.5 miles each week starting in January, they were ready. On the day of the race, they completed their marathon by walking the final 1.2 miles at the “Run to Remember.”

Bisbee said participating in the Memorial Marathon weekend holds a profound significance. “My wife and I enjoy being a part of all that the Memorial Marathon represents—our community coming together to remember those killed, those who survived, and those permanently changed by the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.”

Their unwavering commitment to the event serves to inspire others, showing that with perseverance and the right mindset, anyone can achieve their goals and positively impact their

# Community



**Left:** US Air Force Col. Tamilyn S. Dismukes drapes a Senior Marathon finishing medal on a woman runner.

community.

The Senior Marathon is an untimed event, allowing runners to savor the experience without pressure or competition. In addition to the race, the Senior Marathoners had the opportunity to participate in the Health and Fitness Expo at the Oklahoma City Convention Center on Saturday. The Expo, presented by the OKC Convention and Visitors Bureau and OU Health, was located adjacent to the finish line. It offered a platform for Senior Marathoners to interact, show their support, and gain insights into health and fitness.

The Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon is the largest fundraiser for the privately owned and operated Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum, a National Park Service-affiliated site. Runners received free admission to tour the Museum that day.

Over two days, the event welcomed more than 20,000 runners and walkers from across the United States and several foreign countries. In addition to the Senior Marathon, a 5K and a kids' marathon, the event featured a half-marathon, a marathon relay (comprising five-member teams) and a wheelchair division.

The Senior Marathon was presented by Mercy, a nonprofit Catholic health system serving Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, as the event's presenting sponsor.

The fourth year of the Senior Marathon was an outstanding testament to the indomitable spirit of seniors supporting their community and promoting a healthy, active lifestyle. ● *story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor*



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# Navy Couple Enjoy Married Life of 55 Years and Counting

Hank Kuhlman came from a military family while his wife of 55 years Jeanne did not. Yet, the Edmond couple ended up serving in the United States Navy together in Washington D.C. and Florida.

Hank Kuhlman came from a military family while his wife of 55 years Jeanne did not.

Yet, the Edmond couple ended up serving in the United States Navy together in Washington D.C. and Florida.

“My grandfather was a Prussian army officer. My father was in the Army Air Corps, and then after that, Air Force when it changed over,” Kuhlman said. “As a matter of fact, when I graduated from high school, the first thing I got was a telegram from him (father). He was in Sondrestrom Greenland and said, “When are you enlisting?”

Jeanne Kuhlman said after graduating from college in 1969, she had limited career paths to choose from.

“In 1969 I had two choices as far as employment. I could become a schoolteacher, and I didn’t want to do that, or I could become an airline stewardess. I didn’t want to do that either, but I needed a job,” she said. “A friend of mine was talking about it and thinking about going into the Navy. So, she and I investigated, and I decided that wasn’t such a bad deal. So, it was a job, and it was something I wanted to try.”

Mrs. Kuhlman was hoping she could utilize her modern language degree in the Navy,

“I graduated from college with a modern language degree. I could speak French quite fluently, and I was studying Russia and making some progress,” she said. “So, I was hopeful that maybe there would be something in the Navy where I could use my skills. But of course, they didn’t do that. I was administrative, which is fine. That’s what women did in those days because that was still the days of the old Auxiliary, and we were just beginning to change over starting in the ‘70s. And even so, there were limitations there too. But it was interesting.”

Kuhlman said he and his wife both started as ensigns which is the same thing as a Second Lieutenant.

“She got her commission ahead of me and later on she was a Lieutenant Junior Grade, which was senior to me,” he said.

Kuhlman served in uniform from August 1970 to September 1978, while his wife served from 1969 to 1972.

Kuhlman said he met Jeanne at the request of his Division Commander.

“We met because my Division Commander wanted me to go see this person who was giving him a hard time about a fleet program,” he said. “I made an appointment with her office, and I walked in and that’s how we met. We were both at Naval Air Systems Command in Washington, DC. We met early in October 1970. We got engaged in January, and we were married in



*Hank and Jeanne Kuhlman have been married for 55 years and both served in the United States Navy. The couple are pictured in their Navy uniforms on their wedding day.*



April of 1971.”

The couple later moved to Pensacola, Florida where he was taking flight training. He was later transferred to Naval Air Station Lemoore Attack Squadron 146 in California and ended up serving in Vietnam.

After returning from Vietnam, Kuhlman returned to Pensacola and was part of Helicopter Training Squadron 18.

Kuhlman, who was no longer serving in uniform due to a reduction-in-force, was sent by the Navy in 1995 as a civilian employee to Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, which was home to two Navy squadrons.

“A lot of people were dismissed due to budget cuts,” he said. “The parent command was Naval Air Depot Jacksonville, and they needed somebody out here to be the senior airframe engineer for these squadrons out here. And that’s how we got here.

Jeanne Kuhlman said initially her husband thought the job transfer was a joke.

“He thought it was a joke when they first called him, because he didn’t remember any large bodies of water in Oklahoma,” she said.

Kuhlman worked at Tinker for 10 years before retiring in 2006.

After retiring the couple moved to Edmond to reside at Villagio of Bradford Village Independent Living.

“We really enjoy it here,” Jeanne Kuhlman said. “One thing about living in a community like this, if they don’t see you or hear from you in a day or two, they come knock on the door and check on you.”

The Kuhlman’s stay busy in retirement traveling and are active in their Quail Springs Baptist Church in north Oklahoma City.

Kuhlman also spends one day



*Hank and Jeanne Kuhlman are residents at Villagio of Bradford Village Independent Living in Edmond.*

a week volunteering as a baby cuddler at Children’s Hospital in OKC.

“In 1995 I was watching a news program on Channel 3 in Pensacola, and they were doing one of their little reports about baby rockers at the hospital. And the last thing the lady said was, “We never have enough men. So, when I retired, I called up Children’s and said, “You need a male volunteer to hold babies?” And they jumped right on it,” he said.

Kuhlman continued, “My primary responsibility is to comfort and calm down babies who are agitated or upset or hungry so that they don’t burn calories. They

don’t burn calories, they grow. That’s the primary responsibility. We have some other responsibilities, like we’re supposed to talk to them and read to them and all to help their mental development also. It’s my ministry.”

● by Van Mitchell, staff writer

**Note:** Veterans can visit the Villagio of Bradford Village Independent Living of Edmond by scanning this QR CODE or visiting [www.villagioliving.com/bradford-village](http://www.villagioliving.com/bradford-village)



# Dispelling the Myths of Women Veterans Recognition Day

Women Veterans Recognition Day is not a separate Veterans Day for women. The day, celebrated yearly on June 12, recognizes, honors and remembers the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (pub.L. 80-625, 62 Stat. 356), allowing women the right to permanently serve in the regular armed forces.

Women have served in America's wars and conflicts throughout our history. They played vital roles in the Revolutionary War, serving as soldiers, raising morale and spying on the enemy. It is known that some even disguised themselves as men to be able to serve.

More than 400 women fought in the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War. During World War I, about 35,000 women officially served. Women served in lifesaving roles such as nurses, and critical support staff roles such as the Hello Girls, formally known as the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit. In World War II, 350,000 women served in the U.S. military in occupations such as nursing, military intelligence, cryptography and parachute rigging.

In August 1943, the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) and the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) merged into a single unit for all women pilots and formed the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). They flew more than 60 million miles in two years. During this time, the 6888th Battalion was formed as the first and only all-Black Women Army Corps (WAC) unit to deploy overseas during WWII. Their nickname was "Six-Triple Eight" and their motto was "No Mail, Low Morale."

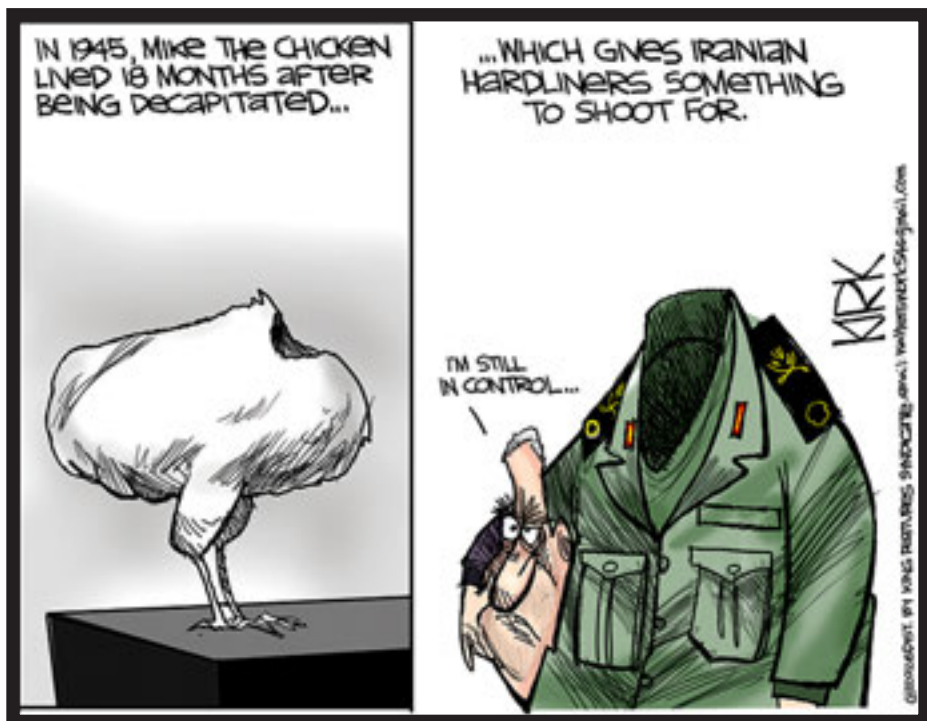
**Breaking barriers on June Day 1948** - Before the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act on June 12, 1948, only women nurses could serve in the regular and reserve forces during peacetime. All other women were sent home after each conflict. The signing of the Act deemed women essential to the war efforts and allowed them to serve in the regular armed forces full time. The Women's Armed Services Integration Act, coupled with President Truman's decision to desegregate the military, also permitted African American women to officially serve in the military, five years after the 6888th Battalion accomplished its mission of cleaning two years of mail backlog in three months, twice. When women can, they do.

**A day worth recognizing** - June 12 proclamations and events around the U.S. each year commemorate the signing of the Women's Armed Service Integration Act by President Truman in 1948. The date was first recognized as a commemorative date when the New York State Assembly declared June 12, 2008, to be Women Veterans' Recognition Day.

**Women served, women belong** - Today, women serve in all military occupational specialties, including logistics, munitions, intelligence, and many combat. Women contribute to the most professional, educated, agile and strongest military the U.S. has ever seen.

Despite their longstanding service, many women Veterans struggle to be recognized, respected and valued as Veterans in civilian life. After all they have done and continue to do, women Veterans deserve the support and respect they have earned through their service. They should feel like they belong at VA.

VA understands that women Veterans face specific challenges and have unique health care needs. Beginning in 1992 with the Veterans Health Care Act, VA has been providing gender-specific care to eligible women Veterans. Since then, we have been expanding those gender-specific services and launching initiatives to make women Veterans aware of their well-deserved benefits. We also continue to support our facilities across the country in fostering a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere for the women Veterans who come through our doors.



**Recognize outstanding women** - There is so much history about women Veterans to be told, and it's important that women continue to be recognized for their service and sacrifice. On March 12, 2022, Public Law 117-97 was passed to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Women's Army Corps who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight."

This June 12, to all women Veterans out there – Happy Women Veterans Recognition Day from VA and Oklahoma's Veteran News.  
 ● by Missina Schallus, Navy Veteran and communications manager for the VA's Center for Women Veterans.





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# Heartland Militaria Show Arrives at OKC Fairgrounds June 20-21

## Buy and Swap Military Artifacts

Many of us like to see, touch and hold military artifacts - they help us understand conflicts that occurred that we, friends and family members were part of as well as those from decades and centuries ago.



*Military uniforms and thousands of other collectables are displayed at Heartland Military Show. Photo by Heartland Military Show.*

### **Like a military museum**

You can do that at the Heartland Militaria Show at the Oklahoma City Fairground's pavilion on Father's Day weekend, June 20-21. It's like walking into a huge military museum, except the collectables can be bought or swapped with yours. Matt Hindi, a retired U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer, hosts the exposition.

Hindi explained, "A militaria collector show...is anything that's military artifacts in nature. It could be Civil War, it could be Roman, German...So, it could be documents, awards, letters, medals, swords, helmets, firearms, anything and everything that a world military would've used in the past or going into the future." He



*Reenactors or history interpreters wear uniforms at the Heartland Militaria Show. Photo by Heartland Militaria Show*

added, "And it's also an Old West collector show, so old Colt Single Actions, Winchester rifles, anything that was used in the Old West, as well as Native American artifacts."

Pricing varies. Hindi said items range from \$5 to \$25,000. "There's something for everybody at the show. You don't have to have a lot of money to buy a military artifact."

### **Show times and fees**

The Pavilion Center is open on Saturday, June 20, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Sunday, June 21, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. General admission is \$15. Veterans, law enforcement, and firefighters get a \$2 discount, so the cost is \$13 for them. Children 12 and under are free.

Vendors wanting to rent a table sign up at [www.heartlandmilitariashow.com](http://www.heartlandmilitariashow.com) and pay \$100 to rent a table for the weekend. Vendor set-up is Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, 7:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

Hindi expects more than 500 tables to be filled with uniforms, old guns, and documents and 2,000 people or more to attend. "It's the largest military and Old West show of its kind west of the Mississippi...We have dealers from all over the country as well as the world that are attending this show, as well as the public to come and buy, trade, and sell."

"Early birds" can start viewing collections on Friday and throughout the weekend by buying a weekend pass for \$100. "If they want to be an advanced shopper and they want to get there when the dealers are setting up, they can just come in and buy an early bird pass" Hindi said. Lots of people do that.

### **Unusual items**



WWII items are very popular with attendees. Here, German military uniforms and other collectables are displayed at Heartland Military Show. Photo by Heartland Military Show.

Hindi's speech quickened as he described items that might show up. "You're thinking you've seen everything, and then all of a sudden, you see a World War I hot air balloon basket that was used on the observer lines of the trench warfare in World War I...I've seen documents signed by George Washington in the show...Civil War documents and German World War II documents and paratrooper stuff from the D-Day invasion...It's just incredible what you will see in these shows."

#### Other sights

Be on the lookout for Roman, Prussian or Civil War soldiers in uniform. Hindi said, "Sometimes, re-enactors will walk into these military shows. Sometimes they're dressed like Japanese soldiers or serviceman or World War II, 45th Infantry Division re-enactors."

And don't be surprised if you hear other languages. It draws an international crowd; in 2025, Russian, French and Belgium collectors attended. Sometimes military vehicles are on display, like World War II ambulances or motorcycles with side-cars.

#### The Host

Chief Petty Officer (retired) Matthew Hindi served on active duty in the U.S. Navy for 22 years. He became stationed at Tinker AFB in 1999 and flew with the Strategic Communication Wing One's (SCWO) E-6B Mercury airplanes. He retired in 2010. He's a contractor with SCWO.

● story for OK Veteran News Magazine by Lt. Col. Richard Stephens, Jr., USAFR, Ret. website: Rich Travel Niche

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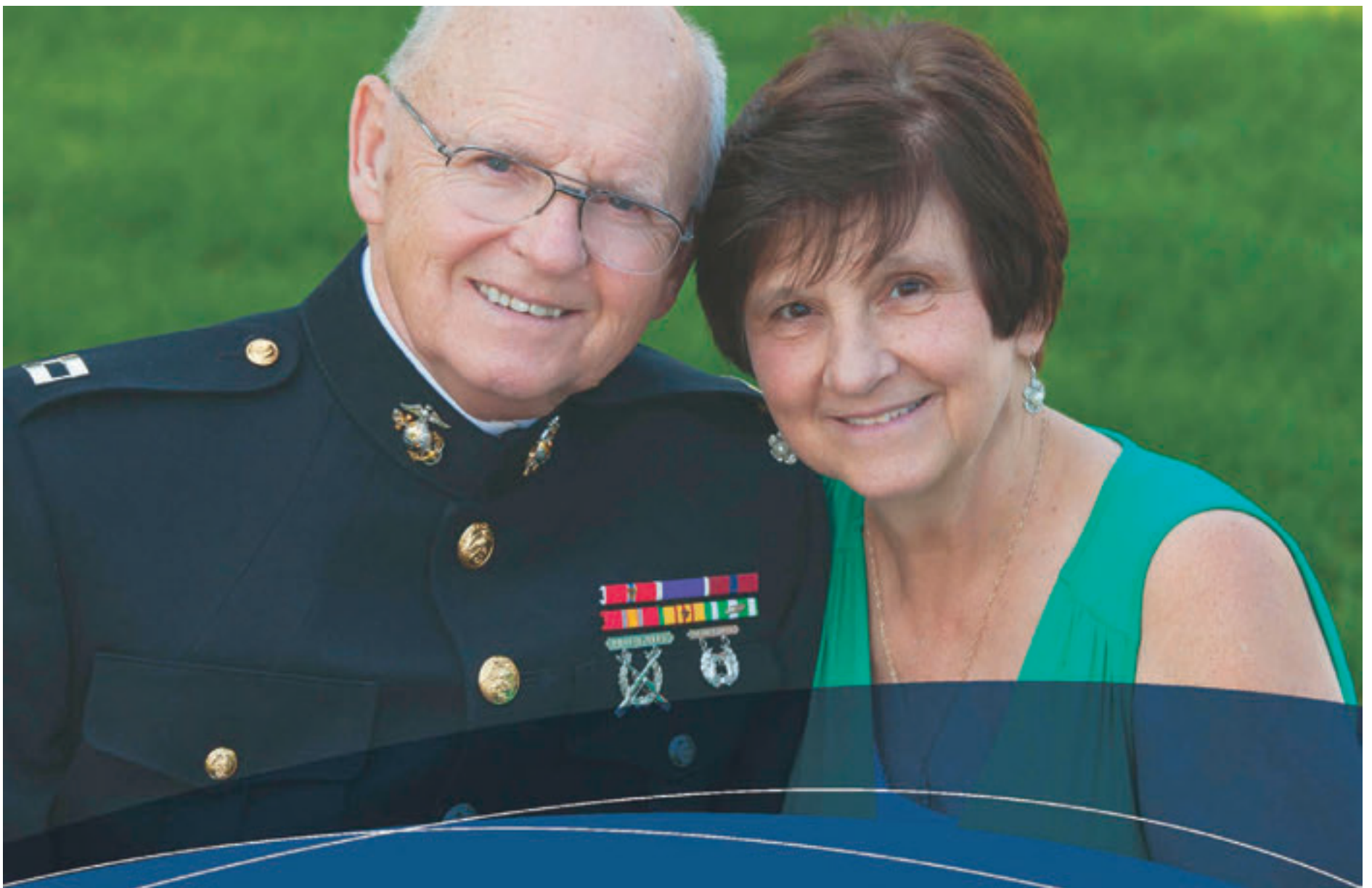
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# The Wall That Heals Visits Mitch Park

Oklahomans and visitors from surrounding states joined thousands of Veterans May 14-17 at the Mitch Park Display in Edmond to experience The Wall That Heals. The three-quarter-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., patriotically honors the men and women who gave their lives in Vietnam or later died as a result of their service.

At Mitch Park viewing the Wall installation, the highly decorated Vietnam Veteran and motivational speaker, Eddie R. Beesley, 80, explained he was also an author. The Oklahoman from near Beggs handed this writer a book filled with his harrowing experiences in the Vietnam War. The book details his journey of resilience, which inspired his powerful memoir, "Lucky Enough," published in 2005.

Corporal Beesley enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1963 at just 17 years old. In May 1965, he was deployed to Vietnam with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, 1st Brigade.

In August 1965, while serving as the point man on a patrol near Chu Lai, Beesley's platoon discovered an enemy minefield under construction. While maneuvering to assess the situation, a squad leader stepped past him; as Beesley stepped back, he triggered a hidden landmine. The blast killed two Marines and severely wounded four others.

The explosion resulted in the traumatic amputation of both of Beesley's legs, making him one of the first above-the-knee double amputees of the war.

Beesley wrote "Lucky Enough" to recount his life journey, his first emotional visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and his resilience in the face of tragedy.

"I am attracted to attend every offering of the Wall as I write about my visits often in my book," Beesley said. "I pay solemn reverence to the men and women whose names are etched on the walls while paying particular attention to those I served with early in the war."

Today, he lives with his wife Connie in Edmond, Oklahoma. He is active in the veteran community, serving as the Native American Chairman for the Department of Oklahoma Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in organizing tribal recognition ceremonies for fellow Veterans.

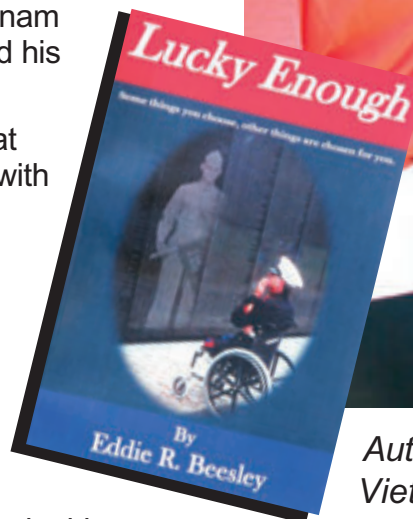
Community members and visitors engaged with the The Wall That Heals over its four-day run at specific times for the exhibit's major events. This included the opening Native American Vietnam Service Recognition Ceremony, a heavily attended Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Ceremony, and the poignant "Light Up the Night" Oklahoma County MIA Tribute.

That powerful evening tribute honored the more than 100 Missing in Action service members from Oklahoma County during the Vietnam War. The special illumination of the Wall offered a moment of solemn remembrance for those still missing.

A HMONG SGU Recognition Ceremony honored the Hmong Special Guerrilla Units who served alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam War.

Busloads of public-school students, local youth groups, and civic organizations toured the site during daylight hours. They found the accompanying Mobile Education Center on-site informative in learning about the history of the Vietnam War.

The 375-foot-long synthetic granite structure was equipped with LED lighting, allowing round-the-clock viewing. This meant many Veterans, families, and residents could visit during late-night and early-morning hours for private, quiet reflection away from the daytime crowds.



*Author Eddie R. Beesley, 80, a Marine Vietnam Veteran, right, asked The Wall That Heals installation supervisor and program manager Cathy Miller to point out the name of a friend on the Wall just after it was built for viewing at Mitch Park in Edmond.*

The Wall That Heals' 140 panels contain the names of more than 58,000 Vietnam service members, 990 of whom are Oklahomans, ensuring accuracy and consistency with the original Memorial.

Edmond was chosen as one of only 31 host communities nationwide for the 2026 tour. The Mitch Park Display served visitors who otherwise would not be able to travel to the permanent memorial in Washington, D.C. Its mission was Honoring Service. Remembering Sacrifice. Healing Together.

The Edmond VFW Post 4938 coordinated the display with the help of the City of Edmond Parks and Recreation Department. The post recruited volunteers to assemble and dismantle it. They offered a six-day community partnership of public engagement, inviting everyone to take part in this shared act of patriotic remembrance.

Volunteers assisted the steady flow of people with finding specific names among the 58,000 etched into the The Wall That Heals. A large contingent of community volunteers worked around the clock, facilitating name rubbings and guiding visitors through the mobile museum.

Vietnam Veterans have been the focus of a groundswell of recognition over the past 14 years as the U.S. government has executed a sustained, multi-administration effort to provide "overdue recognition" to Vietnam-era Veterans.

● *story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor*



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# PowWow to Bring Tribal Vets Together

The drums sounded across the Comanche County Fairgrounds in Lawton

The beat in honor of Native Americans who served this country with pride.

And if Kris Killsfirst, Sr., has any say in it they will keep beating for years to come as a reminder of generations of Native American U.S. Service Members past, present and future.

The seventh annual KCA Veterans Powwow was held in conjunction with the Ft. Sill Armed Forces Parade.

The event started in 2019 as a result of the Smithsonian Institute asking three Oklahoma tribes to help with the unveiling of the National Native American Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"We came together and said 'what can we do,'" Killsfirst said. "They said 'have a celebration and honor our veterans.' That's how we came together and started this KCA Powwow."

Turnout was good for the first event and a partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Veteran's Affairs office in Muskogee helped veterans in southwest Oklahoma put in 156 benefit claims.

Killsfirst said there were an astounding 86 first-time claimants.

"It was one of the largest events they had ever had," Killsfirst said. "We reached a lot of rural veterans in Southwest Oklahoma. A lot of them came out because their families said they were dancing for them.

"A lot of our veterans come home and integrate back into society and don't really claim and get the benefits they rightfully deserve. That's how we kept going with this."

Killsfirst said the event brings some broken families together for the first time in decades.

"Pretty soon they couldn't even remember they were mad at each other," Killsfirst laughed. "It's a celebration. There's no agenda."

There's traditional food, dancing and family.

"We answer a lot of questions. We educate people about who we are and what we do," Killsfirst said. "Even to our community and neighbors, the folks we went to school with they've always heard our drums. They've always seen our regalia but they never understood exactly what it meant."

Killsfirst laments his father's generation never received the recognition they deserved coming back from Vietnam. He was able to bring his father out to the initial Pow Wows.

"Those ones didn't get this welcome so that's why it's so important," Killsfirst said.

Earlier this year, Killsfirst was inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Honor.

Other honorees included Matthew Dukes, Dr., Sergeant, US Marine Corps, Mark Baker, Captain, US Army, Peter Plank, Lieutenant Colonel, OK State Guard and Brandi Rector, Sergeant, US Marine Corps.

Killsfirst served from September 1992 to March 2012.

He completed basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He served in Iraq from March 2003 to April 2004, November 2005 to November 2006 and June 2008 to June 2009 with HQs & A Company, 1-4 Attack Reconnaissance Battalion and the 4th Infantry Division.

He served as the team chief for the forward arming refill point.

During his career he also served in Fort Drum, New York with the 10th Mountain Division, Camp Mobile, Korea with 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Sill, Oklahoma with 214th Field Artillery Brigade and K-16 (Seoul Airbase), Korea with the 17th Aviation Brigade.





He retired at Fort Carson, Colorado with the 555th Engineer Brigade.

Now his mission is to help educate.

“One of the biggest things I think is important is we help educate our younger people of where they come from,” Killfirst said. “They get to hear stories about their grandpas and their grandmas about our history.”

He points out Native Americans were not granted citizenship prior to 1924.

“Yet we deserved in defense of this country for decades before that,” he said. “We’ve only been citizens for 103 years. People don’t know that. It’s allowing our older folks to tell there story once again.” ● *story by Bobby Anderson, contributing writer*

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## HEALTH

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Sat. Aug. 15  
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Southern Hills United Methodist  
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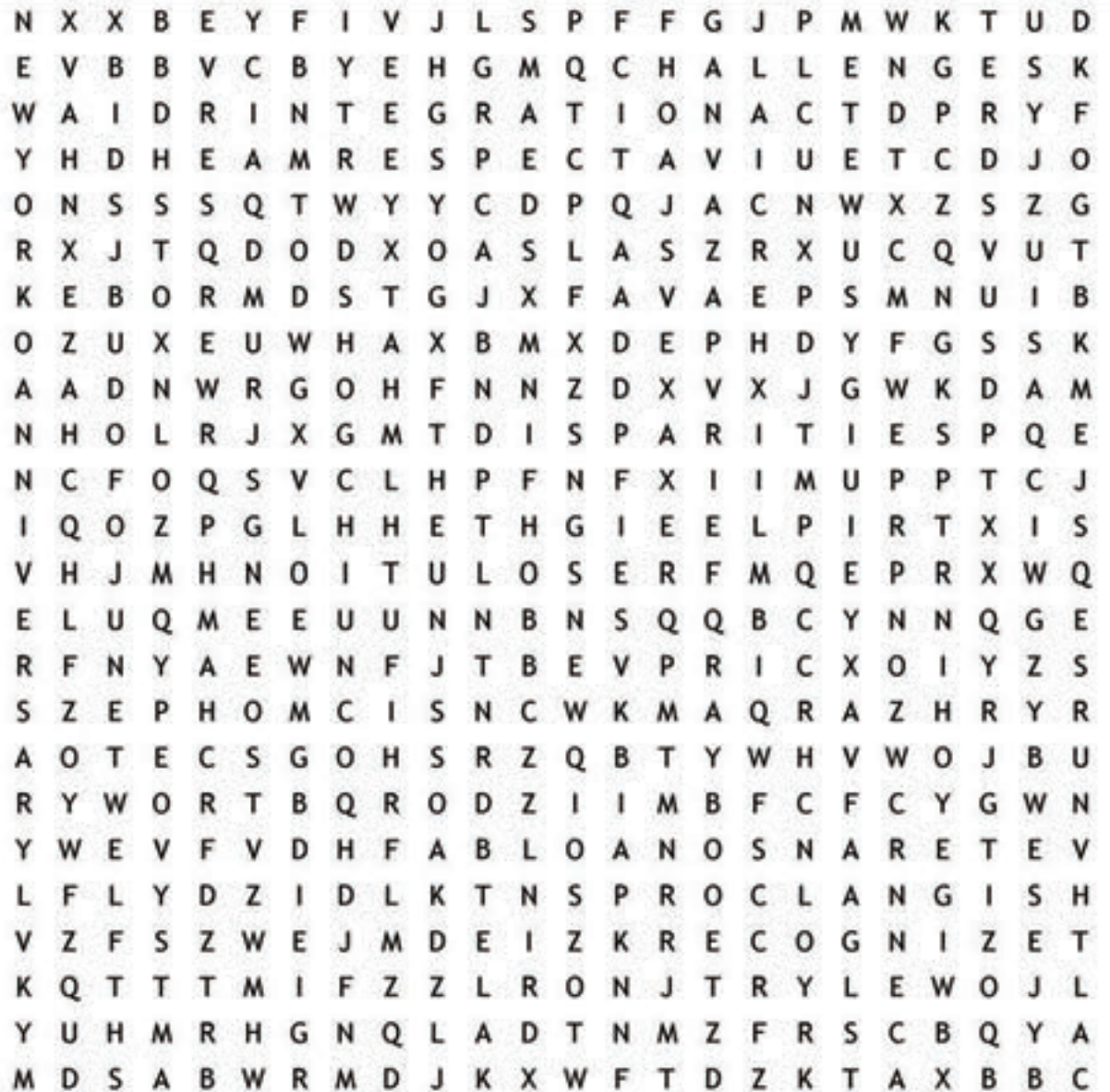
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