

THE PATRIOT

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Scott Sparks named 2023 Huron Co. Veteran of Year

‘His desire to give and help others has no boundaries’

BELLEVUE — U.S. Air Force veteran Scott Sparks has been named the 2023 Huron County Veteran of the Year by the Huron County Area Veterans Council.

U.S. Air Force veteran Scott Sparks is the 2023 Huron County Veteran of the Year. Standing with him are his wife Lisa and their daughter, Sarah.

“In the past year, not only has Scott continued to support the American Legion after 30 years (in the Air Force),

he works within his community where he puts in many hours volunteering. He is a member of VFW Post 2743, and the Huron County Area Veterans Council. He is currently the council secretary and has been a very important part of fundraising,” according to his nomination from the Blue Star Mothers.

“He has been an asset to his community, with introducing the Hometown Heroes banners, along with volunteering with the Volunteers of America, Becky’s House and the Huron County Humane Society. His desire to give and help others has no boundaries,” according to his nomination.

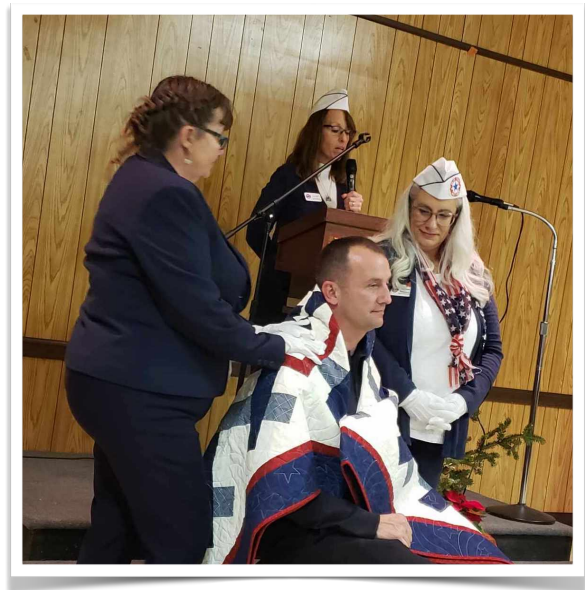
The Veteran of the Year banquet began with members of the Ohio Army National Guard in Norwalk posting the colors.

Sandy Mesenburg, U.S. Army Sergeant First-Class Retired, was the guest speaker. During her 30-year career in the Army, U.S. Army Reserves and Ohio Army National Guard, she served as a combat medic, worked in communications and was a National Guard recruiter.

John Cook, Huron County Area Veterans Council treasurer, discussed current projects of the council. He said EHOVE Career Center students are building handicapped-accessible picnic tables for the Veterans Pavilion at the Huron County Fairgrounds.

The Friends of Veterans award went to two local couples — Meg and Stu Corso, and Scott and Mary Tester.

The Quilt of Valor recipients were U.S. Marine Corps veteran Jim Ruffing and National Guardsman William Wallace.



Members of the Blue Star Mothers present William Wallace with his Quilt of Valor during the 2023 Veteran of the Year banquet.

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Huron Co. Veteran Service Office contact info

185 Shady Lane Drive, Suite C, Norwalk, Ohio 44857

Phone: (419) 668-4150; Fax: (419) 663-6215

Open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Calendar of events

Here are veteran-related events in Huron County during 2024. Look for more information as it becomes available in future issues of *The Patriot* or online in the calendar tab of the Huron County Veteran Service Office website, www.huroncountyvets.com.

- Saturday, Feb. 10 – Coffee Club at the Huron County Veteran Service Office; 9-11 a.m.
- Saturday, April 13 – Coffee Club at the Huron County Veteran Service Office; 9-11 a.m.
- Friday, May 24 – Memorial Day parade in Norwalk
- Friday, May 24 – 2024 Veterans Barbecue; 11 a.m.-1 p.m., location TBA
- June – Coffee Club at the Veterans Pavilion in the Huron County Fairgrounds; Specific date and time TBA
- Thursday, July 4 – Fourth of July parade in Norwalk
- Wednesday, Aug. 14 – Bean soup dinner for veterans and spouses during the 2024 Huron County Fair at the Veterans Pavilion in the Huron County Fairgrounds; 4 p.m.
- Friday, Aug. 16 through Saturday, Aug. 17 – D-Day trip; More details to follow
- Sunday, Sept. 22 – Silent Watch event, with lunch at the Norwalk VFW, time TBA
- Friday, Oct. 4 through Sunday, Oct. 6 – Huron County Honor Trip to Washington, D.C.

HCVSO provides rides to medical appointments



NORWALK — The Huron County Veteran Service Office provides transportation services to any medical appointment.

At least 48 hours before your appointment, call 419-668-4150. You also may request transportation online at huroncountyvets.com. Under the “services” tab, click on “transportation.”

Provide all of your information: Full name; phone number; the date, time and location of your appointment; and the last four numbers of

your Social Security number.

You will receive a confirmation call the day before your appointment from Cary Ashby, Transportation Manager.

Veterans honored by Enrichment Centers, Stein Hospice



NORWALK — The Enrichment Centers for Huron County and Stein Hospice honored 14 local veterans during the Veterans Day program at the Norwalk senior center.

Angie Fontana, activities coordinator at the Enrichment Centers, was asked about the importance of honoring veterans.

“This is important to do for veterans because if you look around, I do believe that we have what you would call the Greatest Generation here and they’re the ones who have served our country from the start of all the (worldwide) turmoil. ... Throughout the generations, I can guarantee that a lot of their family went on to do the

same (thing) and I think recognition is huge.”

The veterans and their guests sang “The Star Spangled Banner.” A patriotic medley featuring the songs of each branch of the military became a sing-along, with the veterans standing as their song was played. The program also included a pinning ceremony and military mail call.



“The Department of Veteran Affairs and the Hospice Palliative Care organization created the National Hospice Veteran Partnership program in 2001 to meet the unique needs of seriously ill veterans and their families. Stein Hospice proudly holds the highest level of achievement in the We Honor Veterans program, so we feel that it is very important to honor these veterans in our communities and just show the appreciation that they truly deserve,” said Katherine Snode, a provider relations manager at Stein Hospice.

Norwalk Elks donate \$1K to DAV Chapter 62

NORWALK – Officers with Norwalk Elks Lodge #730 presented a \$1,000 check to Chapter 62 of the Disabled American Veterans in late October.

The Norwalk Elks received a Freedom Grant from the Elks National Foundation.

“There are several grants that they offer to any lodge across the country every year. You just have to apply for it and let them know what you’re using the money for and (they) make sure you’re meeting all the expectations for that particular grant,” said Scott Whitehurst, Norwalk Elks grant coordinator.



The DAV used the donated money to purchase groceries and food for its annual Thanksgiving boxes, which went to local veterans in need.

Pictured from left are: Norwalk Elks officers Darrin Hildebrand, Bill Terry, DAV Chapter 62 Commander Jerry Huffman, Elks officer Laura Wheeler, and DAV Adjutant/Treasurer Bill Fey, Norwalk Elks officers John Evans, Mel Hoida, Rob Sommers, Becky Parcher, Kathy Smith, and Ralph Roesch.

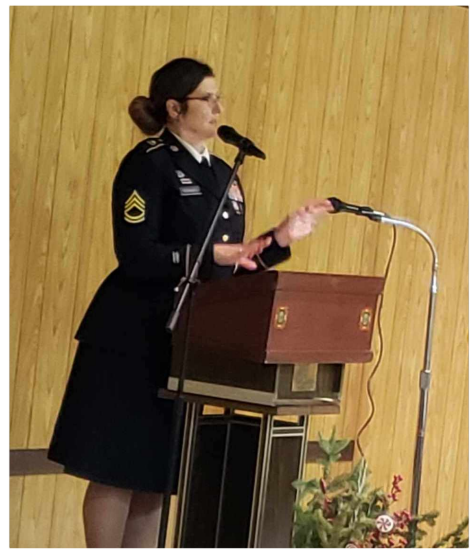
HCVSO print in Bellevue railroad museum



BELLEVUE — Jim Hager, Huron County Veteran Service Commissioner, presented a framed print to Steve LaConte (left) and his brother Mike LaConte (right), who volunteer with the Mad River & NKP Railroad Museum in Bellevue.

The print, which features the HCVSO contact information, was hung by museum volunteers in a World War II troop sleeper car. A story about the sleeper car appeared in the October 2023 issue of *The Patriot*.

2023 Photo Gallery



Sandy Mesenburg, U.S. Army retired, was the guest speaker at the 2023 Veteran of the Year banquet. A story appears on Pages 1 and 2.



Jim Ruffing, Marine Corps League representative, collected donated toys from the Huron County Veteran Service Office before Christmas. Ruffing, a co-coordinator for the area Toys for Tots, loaded toys from more than 40 locations in Norwalk, Monroeville, Collins, Wakeman, Huron and Vermilion.



Huron County veterans and their spouses pose outside of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton. Thirty-one people attended the overnight trip in mid-September.