

THE JOURNEY

Vietnam Veterans of America Inc. Chapter 227

The Dean K. Phillips Memorial Chapter

"Just In Time"



"Never Again Shall One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"

January/February 2022



CHAPTER 227 TRULY SHINES IN 2021!

Jay Kalner
President, VVA Chapter 227



In coping with the pandemic's second year, VVA Chapter 227 didn't miss a beat in 2021, adding new members and significantly meeting the growing needs of veterans and their families. Our chapter membership grew 6% over the year from 329 to 349 members; in 2020 our membership grew 1.5%. We continue to use traditional, digital, and social media to spread the word about our charitable activities to recruit new members, and we've begun a new effort to recruit at-large VVA members in Virginia who might be interested in joining our chapter. A special thanks goes to Bill Lynch, our membership chairman, who does a great job in maintaining the roster and welcoming new members.

Our list of accomplishments continues to amaze many people, including our generous benefactors and recently a writer who is doing a spotlight article on the breadth of our chapter's activities in an upcoming national VVA newsletter.

- Thanks to our donations (e.g., this totaled over \$18,000 in December alone!), we were able to provide some \$28,000 to needy veterans, active-duty personnel, and their families. We are budgeting over \$35,000 for these needs in 2022. This aid ran the gamut of helping the recipients cover their rent/mortgage payments, utilities, car payments, medical expenses, etc. One example that touched our hearts was assisting on breast cancer medical expenses for the wife of an Army Ranger who also is the daughter of a retired Marine veteran. We donated \$1000, and soon afterwards a benefactor and a chapter member contributed another \$1300. About half of our yearly aid total helped families in the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (VASH) for back-to-school expenses and the December holiday gift season. We also gave a grant totaling some \$6000 to three Wounded Warrior families.
- In 2021, we continued to help various organizations who help needy veterans. We donated another \$500 to the Veterans Fishing Adventure, a therapeutic program that provides a day of fishing for mostly-disabled veterans, active military members and their families. In fact, in April, chapter members attended the 100th birthday of retired Navy Commander Edward Ettner, whose service dated back to World War II, at the program's site in Lorton; sadly, he passed away last month. We also provided \$1000 each to our brother VVA chapters in Louisiana and Kentucky in disaster relief for their members and families. We also continued our support of the Lamb Center, which helps homeless veterans, by providing backpacks and kitchen supplies at our December holiday party.
- This past year, several of our members continued to serve as mentors in the Fairfax Veterans Treatment Docket, which helps rehabilitate veterans suffering from addiction and substance abuse issues. Special kudos to Don Sutherland, a chapter director, for serving as the head of the mentor team, and to Tom Davis, another chapter director, who was Don's predecessor.
- We had wonderful speakers at our membership meetings this year including Diane Evans and Holly Rotondi, who respectively gave us tremendous insights into the building of the Vietnam Women's Memorial and the World War II Memorial. Certainly, a highlight was having Rick Weidman, the recently retired and longtime VVA Government Affairs Director, give us his perspective on VVA's history and future prospects at our 36th chapter anniversary party in October.
- In June, Bill Dumsick was elected as Treasurer of the VVA Virginia State Council. Congratulations!
- We now have a PayPal capability for donations on our chapter website and Facebook page. Fear not, check donations are still welcome.
- We have held a couple of actual membership meetings at the American Legion Post 177 and plan to resume them in March now that the Covid threat is easing.
- Six chapter members attended the national convention as delegates. The convention approved the resolution for VVA to remain a *Last Man Standing* organization. I fell short of being elected as an At-Large Director—maybe next time!
- Finally special thanks to our spouses and AVVA members who continually contribute to our success.

For 2022, we look forward to even more membership growth and increased support for our fellow veterans and their families. We have much to be proud of in Chapter 227!



VVA Chapter 1087 members and friends welcome Philip Dintruff and Jane Dore with a Tunnel of Veteran Love at the Glacier Park International Airport. Credit: VVA Chapter 1087.



Len Ignatowski, (R) Vice President of VVA Chapter 227, thanks John Burgess, President of VVA Chapter 1087, for the chapter's welcome and assistance to Philip Dintruff, wounded Iraq War veteran, transition from Northern Virginia to Whitefish, Mt. John Wise, VVA Chapter 1087 Treasurer, looks on. Credit: VVA Chapter 227

THIS IS WHY!

In late August 2021, Ms. Raisa Velez, a Veteran Case Manager with Brain Injury Services, contacted the Chapter for rent assistance for Philip H. Dintruff, a post-Vietnam War Navy veteran. His military-related medical condition was causing financial and family issues. As the chapter evaluated the financial request, Ms. Velez resolved the rent issue. A few days later, she requested the Chapter to purchase airfare to Whitefish, Montana where he would live in an assisted living facility. The living relocation was because his sister, Jane Dore, agreeing to become his legal guardian after his divorce left no family caretakers in Northern Virginia. Chapter 227 promptly approved the airline ticket purchase.

On a momentary thought, Len Ignatowski, Chapter Vice President, contacted John Burgess, President of VVA Chapter 1087 in Somers, Mt. for assistance in relocating the veteran to his new residence. Despite the short notice of the veteran's arrival at Glacier Park International Airport, Mt., a welcome tunnel of chapter and AVVA members with American flags greeted the veteran as he and his sister exited the aircraft. He was totally overwhelmed by the surprise welcome. He and his sister both burst into tears. The veteran asked if his fellow veterans would join him in a prayer of appreciation and thankfulness, and they did. The chapter's assistance did not end at the airport. John contacted the North West Montana Veterans Food Pantry for assistance. The organization provided furniture and an initial grocery supply for Philip's apartment. Jane Dore selected the furniture. John and Phil Anderson delivered the furniture and groceries. At the same time, John worked to expedite Philip into the Montana's VA-medical system to ensure a smooth transition for Philip's VA provided medications. A chapter member, who lives in the assisted living facility, agreed to serve as a Big Brother to orient the veteran to his new surroundings and provide a backup to the veteran's sister, who lived just across the border in Canada. Finally, the chapter planned on inviting Philip to chapter and local veteran events.

Ms. Velez expressed her emotional appreciation for VVA's assistance with these words, *"Thank you SO MUCH for thinking of this and coordinating it. I would've never thought something like this was possible. Sincerely, thank you so much Vietnam Veterans of America Have I said thank you enough times? I don't think I will ever be able to do so! THANK YOU!"*

Unbelievably, Chapter 227 provided a personal thank you to Chapter 1087, when a planned fishing trip to Columbia Falls allowed Len Ignatowski to have dinner with John Burgess and John Wise, Chapter 1087 Treasurer, in late September. Len was fishing with a fellow Army buddy, who served with Len in Vietnam. The dinner conversation revealed the great work that Chapter 1087 is performing for local veterans in need and establishing VVA Chapter 1087 as the Veteran Service Organization leader in the area. More remarkable is that an anonymous restaurant patron seeing the four Vietnam veterans with their VVA attire paid the dinner bill. This veteran combine team outreach fulfills the VVA founding principle, "Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another."

HOLIDAY PARTY

The Holiday Party was a smashing success. The buffet dinner included many feasting on seconds. Stan and Merrie Rose introduced a new party tradition, the White Elephant Gift Exchange. The gifts ranged from gift cards to gag gifts that brought many laughs. The audience included members, spouses, and guests. One Vietnamese woman guest gave a very emotional thank you for our service for her fallen home. The party's Holiday Spirit Sharing included the donation of 9 backpacks, 1 duffel bag, and over 900 13-gallon plastic bags for the Lamb Center, a local daytime homeless shelter. The Center provides time and space for VA staff to help homeless veterans to receive their benefits.

Special thanks to Tom Davis who managed the event, while Diane Ignatowski and Melissa Kalner, AVVA members, decorated the tables with ornaments to add to the holiday spirit. Lastly, special thanks to the American Legion Post 177 for its hospitality and exceptional catering staff. The only disappointment was that there was plenty of empty space in the banquet room.



KEEP A CANDLE BURNING

February marks the 14th Anniversary of the chapter's "Keep A Candle Burning" campaign to keep a single candle lit in your home window to remind our fellow citizens of the sacrifices of our military personnel and their families who are serving in "harm's way" around the world. Today's war on terror has no front lines, faces, and geographical boundaries. You are asked to place one electric candle in a window to be lit every night until our troops are safely home. If your neighbors or a guest asks, "What is the significance of the lone candle?", you can explain it. Invite them to join the campaign.

Let the "Stars and Stripes" fly boldly during the day, and light a single candle at night to show the world that we stand with our brave warriors and their families to remind everyone that the daily sunset does not mark the end of the work day for our troops.

FEBRUARY MEETING AND BEYOND

The February 17th membership meeting will be conducted on a virtual format due to the current virus condition. Login directions will be provided via email a few days before the meeting. The login time is 7:30 PM. The good news is that the March 17th meeting will be held at the American Legion Post 177, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax, Va. Details will be in the March newsletter. The speaker is

The February meeting speaker is Chris Jones, President of the newly-established Veterans Chapter of the George Mason University Alumni Association. George is a Vietnam-era veteran and graduated from GMU after his military service. He will discuss how the association is helping veteran students at the university through mentoring students and providing scholarships and internships.

THE NEED CONTINUES:

All requests are properly verified. The chapter does not accept appeals directly from the public or individuals.

- \$ 270: Partnered with other VSOs to provide a rent payment due to emergency personal expenses.
- \$ 300: Partnered with other VSOs to pay for a veteran's home electric bill due to loss of income.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING TIME CHANGE SURVEY

The membership survey indicates a strong preference to change the meeting to a lunch or mid-afternoon time with a speaker and optional meal. At the February 3rd board meeting, a decision was made to consider changing the meeting time later in the year. The meetings will continue at the American Legion Post due to its central location.

JANUARY MEETING SPEAKER by Bruce Waxman:

Our January speaker was Greta Neimanas, an Outreach Specialist at the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). She shared some of her journey from being a world champion para-cyclist, including as a member of the U.S. Paralympic Team and as a professional cyclist, to her present position helping veterans. Greta explained that as a teenager she went directly from living at home with her parents to becoming an elite athlete, including training at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado and traveling the world to compete. Her laser sharp focus on athletics meant that she missed some life activities experienced by her peers, such as college or working a regular job. So, when head injuries forced her retirement from cycling at age 28, she faced a difficult transition to ordinary life. She said that she had not planned for this major change and that she felt unprepared. Eventually, she decided to work with veterans who are facing a similar transition from the military. This includes being part of a team at the WWP who help veterans who are involved in the criminal justice system.



WE WANT YOU

**A NEW YEAR
OF
OPPORTUNITIES
AWAIT US
BE PART OF OUR LEGACY**

*Stand Ready to provide
your time, expertise, effort, and financial support*

Vietnam Veterans of America

Send to: Bill Lynch, Attn: VVA Chapter 227, 5328 Taney Ave., Alexandria, Va. 22304-2039

Name _____ ☐ Male ☐ Female

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

H () _____ C () _____ Email _____

Chapter No. **227**

• Eligibility: Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. military (for other than training purposes) between February 28, 1961 - May 7, 1975 (in-country Vietnam), or between August 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975, for Vietnam-era veterans. Return this application along with a copy of your DD Form-214.

Special Life Membership: \$50

• Payment Option: ☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ Credit Card (Amex, Discover, MasterCard, Visa)

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date ____/____/____ ☐ I am a spouse/family member or friend of a Vietnam Vet and would like to join Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA).

Signature: _____ Date: _____



WE WANT YOU

QUESTIONS

CONTACT

BILL LYNCH

703-474-4891

SPEAKER'S PANEL NEEDS HOSTS

The Speaker's Panel, a chapter hallmark, needs group or classroom engagements. The retirement of Vietnam-era student teachers has created a void in sharing our Tour of Duty with current students and groups. The format is two veterans sharing their Tour of Duty followed by a Q&A period. Students of all ages and civic groups are acceptable. For information, contact Tom Stryer, the Program Director, at 703-201-7611 or stryertom@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY:

17: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM Virtual Format: Guest Speaker: Chris Jones, Veterans Chapter of the George Mason University Alumni Association

MARCH:

03: Board Meeting 7:30 PM: Virtual meeting format

17: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM, Buffet Dinner 6:30 PM: Guest Speaker: Ambassador Joseph DeTrani, "U.S. and China Relations"

26: Virginia State Council Meeting Richmond, Virginia: Meeting opened to members

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ® INC.

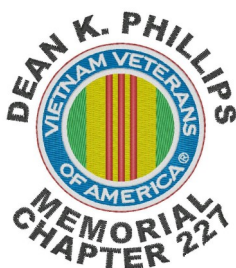
CHAPTER 227

DEAN K. PHILLIPS MEMORIAL CHAPTER

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Address Service Requested



OUR MISSION

*To "Serve Military Veterans, Their Families,
Our Community and Our Country"
Since October 11, 1985*