

# Ashtabula County Veteran's Services Commission

Quarterly Newsletter | ISSUE 1 | MARCH 2023 | [www.ashtabulaveterans.com](http://www.ashtabulaveterans.com) | 

1212 Lake Avenue | Ashtabula, Ohio 44004 | (440) 964-8324



Richard Arndt



Mark Baker



Roger Lynch



Anna Allhouse



Edward Somppi



Benjamin Schwartfigure



Libby Jenkins



Thomas Lucas Jr.



Aimee Borcicky



Guy Korvig



Carol Hoyt

### VSC Board of Commissioners

Richard Arndt - American Legion  
 Mark Baker - Veterans of Foreign Wars  
 Roger Lynch - Disabled American Veterans  
 Anna Allhouse - American Veterans  
 Edward Somppi - Vietnam Veterans of America

### VSC Staff

Benjamin Schwartfigure - Director  
 Libby Jenkins - Senior County Veterans Service Officer  
 Thomas Lucas Jr. - Senior County Veterans Service Officer  
 Aimee Borcicky - County Veterans Service Officer  
 Guy Korvig - Transportation Supervisor/County Veterans Service Officer  
 Carol Hoyt - Senior Office Manager

REMEMBER, we are a free resource to the veteran community and we have all of the knowledge and resources at our disposal to provide you with the best possible outcomes!

The VSC continues to hold monthly raffles in an effort to entice our veteran community to stop by and allow a Service Officer to complete a benefits well-check.

If you, or your organization would be interested in donating gift cards or tangible gift items to this program, please reach out via phone or email. Thank you in advance for your considerations!

## MONTHLY RAFFLES

December Winner: James Green of Jefferson is the winner of the December 2022 Raffle Giveaway. James served in the U.S. Navy from March of 1962 to December of 1975 and again from August of 1982 to June of 1984. During his service he was a member of both, the USS Constellation and the USS Decatur as a Boilerman. James enjoys woodworking and woodcarving as hobbies. He also enjoys spending time with his lovely bride of 44 years and his grandchild, whom will be graduating high school this year. James received a Gift Basket from North Coast Candy Co, a \$20 gift certificate from Martell Cleaners, and a coupon for \$50 off of a new tire purchase from Bob Sumerel Tire Company in Ashtabula!

January 2023 Winner: Bruce Hook of Geneva is the winner of the January 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Bruce served in the U.S. Air Force from August of 1976 to February of 1978 and then he switched over to the Air Force Reserves working as civil engineer technician. He retired as a Senior Master Sergeant in 1998. Bruce enjoys building replica models of light houses and other structures in his spare time. He also enjoys camping and traveling in a motor home with his wife. Bruce received two, \$25 gift cards for Becker's Restaurant, a \$20 gift certificate from Sports & Sports, a \$50 Shell Gas Card from Raisian Family Funeral Home, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

February Winner: Rich Mongell of Austinburg is the winner of the February 2023 Raffle Giveaway. Rich served in the Marine Corps from 1971-1972. Currently, he resides in Austinburg with his wife of 49 years. Rich has a rich history as a servant of his community, having served 47 years in law enforcement and as an investigator for the Coroner's office. From 1976-1978, he served as a police officer in Willoughby Hills and as a detective in Madison, ultimately transitioning to detective in 1984 until his retirement in 2000. It was at this time, that he would become an investigator for the Ashtabula County Coroner's Office, retiring again in 2021. During this time, he also worked as a consultant for North Kingsville Police Department. He now spends his time being a taxi driver for his 9 grandchildren. Rich received three, \$25 gift cards for Becker's Restaurant, a \$30 gift card from Biscotti's Restaurant, a \$50 Shell Gas Card from Raisian Family Funeral Home, and a \$36 subscription to the Gazette Newspapers/Great Lakes Printing!

March Winner - The March winner will be identified at our April 5, 2023 Board Meeting.

## The VSC from January 2023 – June 2023

In 2022, our office processed 1,056 claims, which generated \$2,197,323.28 in retroactive dollars being awarded to local veterans. So far, in 2023, our Service Officers have submitted 285 claims and have already generated \$366,178.10 in retroactive awards. These Service Officers are top-notch and will work hard to help you obtain your earned benefits! The best thing you can do to support your local veteran population is to refer them to us so that we can perform a benefits well-check and see what we can do to assist them. You never know, the impacts could quite literally, be life changing! Remember that we are a free service and will never receive any part of your VA awards!

**Volunteer Driver Program. WE NEED VOLUNTEER DRIVERS!** The VSC continues to actively search for new Volunteer Drivers for our Transportation Program. There is no requirement to be a veteran to perform this task and there is a small monetary benefit associated with being a driver. For information and an application, please contact our office by phone or email.

**PACT Act Update.** The PACT Act was signed into law on August 8, 2022. The VA is working quickly to determine what claims will take priority in the adjudication process. Their guidance to us is to simply PROCESS THE CLAIMS! If you or a loved one has suffered from any of the issues described within the guidelines provided by the VA (<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>), please reach out to our office so that a Service Officer can assist you in the claims process.

**2ND ANNUAL RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY** The Rite of Passage Ceremony is an event dedicated to the graduating seniors in Ashtabula County that will be heading into the military following graduation. During the event, all veterans in attendance will stand and provide these young men and women with their first salute! The ceremony is open to the public and all are strongly encouraged to come and support our future war fighters!



## RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY

*Honoring the commitment to service the youth in our community has chosen to make.*

Ashtabula County's 2nd Annual  
 Rite of Passage Ceremony  
 May 11, 2023 • 7-8 p.m.  
 Pymatuning Valley Veterans Memorial  
 Performing Arts Center  
 5571 US-6 • Andover, OH 44003

*"Veterans helping veterans"* Presented by the Ashtabula County Veterans Service Commission in Collaboration with the Blue Star Mothers of Ashtabula








# VETERANS' TASK FORCE

On February 23, we held the first meeting of 2023. The Task Force has helped more than a dozen veterans in need in its first year. We continue to work together for the betterment of our veteran community. If you would like to attend one of these meetings on behalf of your organization or company, please feel free to reach out to our commission for details. The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for April 27 at 6 p.m. in the downstairs of the VFW Post #943, located at 4102 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004.

# VETERAN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Veteran Mentorship Program still needs applicants. The VSC is the administrator of this program and will provide applications to any interested, honorably discharged veterans in Ashtabula County. This is a great program that is meant to help veterans in lieu of jail time.

# PLANNED EVENTS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2023

There are no scheduled events for the month of April. In May, the VSC will host the second annual, Rite of Passage Ceremony, and there are no scheduled events for the month of June. We are also advertising and pushing ticket sales for the Heroes & Legends Concert that will take place in the third quarter. This is an event hosted by the Department of Defense and is tied to the 50 year commemoration of Vietnam. Information on this event can be found pinned to the top of our Facebook page! Please remember that the VSC has five available service officers to support your veteran centric event during any time of the year. We are available to speak, or simply provide ourselves as resources to your events. Submit your request to the VSC Director at [ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us](mailto:ACVSC@ashtabulacounty.us) and we will do our best to support!

## HEROES & LEGENDS CONCERT

**SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2023**  
**YANKIES OUTDOOR PAVILION**



**Starring**  
**LEE GREENWOOD**

**With Special Guest**  
**GARY LEWIS AND THE PLAYBOYS**

**Tickets at [Ticketweb.com](https://www.ticketweb.com) \$35 in advance, \$40 Day of Show**

Sponsored by Yankees in Cooperation with **MONTROSE AUTO GROUP**  
[GoMontrose.com](https://www.GoMontrose.com)



THIS IS AN OFFICIAL EVENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR. THE OFFICIAL VIETNAM COMMEMORATION PIN WILL BE PRESENTED TO ALL VIETNAM ERA VETERANS (November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975) IN ATTENDANCE.



VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION  
ASHTABULA COUNTY



Doors open at 1pm      Vietnam Veteran Pin Presentation at 4pm  
Gary Lewis and the Playboys at 5pm      Lee Greenwood at 6pm



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION



### WELCOME HOME!

~ A Nation Honors our Vietnam veterans and their Families ~

The National Mall, Washington, D.C.  
May 11-13, 2023

Featuring

May 11



**Opening Ceremony**  
JFK Hockey Fields

A formal Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony opening Camp Legacy!

May 11-13



**Camp Legacy**  
JFK Hockey Fields/West Potomac Park

Interactive experiences, static displays, exhibits, Veteran Services Hub and more!

May 13



**Multimedia Celebration**  
West Potomac Park

A program with live music, video montages and multimedia elements!

### A Legacy of Service and Sacrifice

During this 3-day event, Vietnam veterans and their families will be recognized through pinnings, daily entertainment on the grounds, nightly sundown concerts, Rally Points and much more!

All events are free and open to the public

Join the Nation ... thank a Vietnam veteran!

[vietnamwar50th.com](https://vietnamwar50th.com)

Share on social media, tag us, and use #WelcomeHome2023

**THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) WILL HOST A THREE-DAY WELCOME HOME EVENT, MAY 11-13,** near the National Mall to honor Vietnam Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices.

The event, hosted by DoD's Vietnam War Commemoration Office, will feature three days of interactive experiences, military flyovers, music, multimedia displays, and a wide range of exhibits to extend long overdue gratitude to the approximately 7 million living Americans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

## DAYS TO OBSERVE IN THE COMING MONTHS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| March is Women's History Month.              | May 29 is Memorial Day.                       |
| March 25 is Medal of Honor Day.              | April 9 - National Former POW Recognition Day |
| March 29 is National Vietnam Veterans Day.   | April 14 - Air Force Reserve Birthday         |
| April 5 is Gold Star Spouses Day.            | April 23 - Army Reserve Birthday              |
| May is National Military Appreciation Month. | May 13-21 - Armed Forces Week                 |

## HOLIDAY VOUCHER PROGRAM

Between November and December, we provided 1,613 \$20 Holiday Vouchers to our veteran community to assist with the holidays and help us to identify new veterans to our office. In total, we were able to identify 80 new veterans, which will contribute to our ability to assist with future VA claims for benefits.

For Easter 2023, the VSC will once again provide vouchers to the veteran community. Due to the prices of groceries increasing, the vouchers will be \$30 and will be distributed from Monday, April 3 through Friday, April 7. Please bring some new veterans with you to get your voucher! The goal of this program is to capture veterans that have never used our office for assistance!

Veterans must provide DD214 showing a character of discharge that is Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions to receive this voucher. The program is open to widows of veterans as well. If your service has been previously verified, or you have an ID Card from the VSC, you are eligible for this program.

# VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS IN ASHTABULA COUNTY

**There are many organizations throughout our county that support both, our local veterans and our community at large. Many of these organizations are looking to increase their numbers. If you are a veteran or the dependent of a veteran, you could potentially become a member and join their missions. Here are a few. This list will grow over time.**

## **ASHTABULA, OH**

### **AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS**

POC – Ken Draper

(440) 228-3528 • Email – [roadkingcop@gmail.com](mailto:roadkingcop@gmail.com)

The purpose of the American Legion Riders is to participate in community services and other ceremonies that is in keeping with the Aims and Purposes of the American Legion. To promote motorcycle safety programs and to provide a social atmosphere for American Legion members who share the same interest. To use our Association to promote and support programs of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, community services and Veteran's Organizations. The Legion Riders also provide assistance to Veterans in the local area who are in need of financial, services or any other type of assistance that the membership can provide.

### **ARMY NAVY UNION 411**

POC - Paul Anderson

(440) 650-2562 • Email - [pwjander@roadrunner.com](mailto:pwjander@roadrunner.com)

The Army Navy Union 411 is home to 103 regular members and nearly 75 Auxiliary members located within Ashtabula. Join us today!

### **DAV BOB SWANSON CHAPTER #39 OF ASHTABULA COUNTY**

Email - [davch39@gmail.com](mailto:davch39@gmail.com)

Mailing Address - PO Box 574, Andover, OH 44003

DAV Meetings are held the SECOND WEDNESDAY of each month at 6:30 p.m. at American Legion Post 103, 1804 W 19th St., Ashtabula, Ohio 44004 and VA claims assistance is available. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a Veterans Service Organization for those who served our country's armed forces and were wounded or injured during that service and were Honorably Discharged or Under Honorable Conditions. The motto of Disabled American Veterans is: "Fulfilling Our Promises to the Men and Women Who Served." We are closed for Winter from December – February.

### **FEED OUR VETS**

POC - Tracy Bidwell • (440) 813-5131

Feed Our Vets is a once-a-month food pantry for Veterans, spouses and family. We are open every third Saturday from 8 to 11 a.m.

### **GUARDIANS USA VETS BLUE CHAPTER**

POC - Crystal Mathes

(440) 789-8129 • Email - [crystalmathes2020@gmail.com](mailto:crystalmathes2020@gmail.com)

Guardians is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization that has helped Veterans for 25 years with emergency needs. We also help with Appliances, Furniture, mobility items, household needs, groceries and clothes.

### **MARINE CORPS LEAGUE**

Email - [lukej68@gmail.com](mailto:lukej68@gmail.com)

Mailing Address - c/o Tom Lucas, Jr.

Adjutant; 3105 Jefferson Rd., Ashtabula, OH 44004

Veteran's Service Organization for Honorably Discharged Marine's and FMF Corpsman and Chaplains. Other Armed Forces Veterans are welcome as Associate Members. Meetings for Pvt. Henry Kalinowski Marine Corps League Detachment #782 of Ashtabula County, Ohio are usually held the FIRST SATURDAY of each month at 10:30 a.m. at the American Legion Post #103 located at 1804 W. 19th St., Ashtabula, OH 44004.

### **MARINE CORPS LEAGUE AUXILIARY**

POC - Lisa Dibble

(440) 344-1822 • Email - [pvthentrykalinowskimcla@gmail.com](mailto:pvthentrykalinowskimcla@gmail.com)

The purpose of the Marine Corps League Auxiliary is to band together in comradeship the members of the Auxiliary, and to create a bond of comradeship between this Auxiliary and the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps League. We are seeking the Mothers, Wives, Sisters, Daughters, Nieces, Granddaughters and Cousins of Active Duty, Reserve and Honorably Discharged U.S. Marines to serve and aid those Marines who are or have served us. We usually meet the SECOND Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Ashtabula Township Hall, located at the southeast corner of Route 20 and Route 11, 2718 NRE. Ashtabula, OH 44004.

### **U.S. VETERANS MC ASHTABULA**

POC - Josh Honaker

(216) 408-2837

Email - [usvmc.ashtabula@gmail.com](mailto:usvmc.ashtabula@gmail.com)

U.S. Veterans MC Ashtabula is a motorcycle club comprised of 100% all veterans from all branches of service. We are a registered non-profit 501C (19). Our mission is to aid and assist veterans and active duty military. Truly "veterans helping veterans"

### **VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #943**

POC - Ernie Anderson (Quartermaster)

Email - [vfwpost943@gmail.com](mailto:vfwpost943@gmail.com)

Facebook - @VFWPost#943

Website - [vfwpost943.com](http://vfwpost943.com)

The VFW Regulars meet the first Monday of the month, unless it's a holiday at 7 p.m. at our post. The VFW Auxiliary meets the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. We currently have bingo every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. and Karaoke every Friday at 7 p.m. Both events are open to the public.

### **YOUNG MARINES**

POC - Amy Piotrowski

(440) 812-0126 • Email: [amymariepio@gmail.com](mailto:amymariepio@gmail.com)

Facebook: Ashtabula County Young Marines

Website: [youngmarines.org/unit/ashtabulacounty/page](http://youngmarines.org/unit/ashtabulacounty/page)

The Young Marines is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) youth education and service program for boys and girls, age eight through the completion of high school. The Young Marines promotes the mental, moral, and physical development of its members. The program focuses on teaching the values of leadership, teamwork and self-discipline, so its members can live and promote a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. The Young Marines organization began in 1959 with one unit, and has grown to over 270 units with over 9,000 youth and almost 3,000 adult volunteers in 41 states, and affiliates in other countries. The Young Marines focus on Leadership, Honoring Veterans, and Drug Demand Reduction. They participate in many events throughout the county annually including parades, Toys 4 Tots, volunteering with Blue Star Mothers and Feed the Vets, camp-outs and historic trips.

See ORGANIZATIONS on page 4



**OhioMeansJobs - ASHTABULA COUNTY**

A group of public, private and non-profit agencies and partner organizations that have joined forces to create a coordinated system to provide workforce services to job seekers.

A resource room is located in the center which offers free use of computers, phones, and printers for use by job seekers. Career counseling and employment assistance are offered. All veterans are given Priority of Service. Veterans' employment representative, Michele Stowe-Caya (US Navy veteran) is available by appointment. Please register in OhioMeansJobs.com by creating a job seeker profile, or call (440) 350-2490.

**CONNEAUT, OH**

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #2836**

POC - Catherine Glosser • cagcatherine@aol.com

The VFW meets at 6 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Optimist Club, located at 514 Harbor Street in Conneaut. Join our team and help the veterans of Conneaut!

**GENEVA, OH**

**THE AMERICAN LEGION POST #124**

Physical Address - 115 Park St., Geneva, OH

Mailing Address - P.O. Box 150, Geneva, OH

Legion Phone Number - (440) 361-8076

POC - Don Branford - (440) 223-2247

Email - legionpost124@outlook.com

**THE BLUE STAR MOTHERS**

POC - Amy Hutchinson

(440) 812-1150 • Email - president.oh57@bluestarmother.us

The Blue Star Mothers of America are a non-profit, nationwide organization consisting of local chapters of mothers, and other family members of military men and women. The oath sworn to protect our nation taken by our sons and daughters has led us to serve as well. Our organization works to provide support for veterans at home and active military and families in any way we can. We also welcome mothers who have never had a child serve but are committed to supporting our Military and Veterans. We meet the 3rd Monday of the month in the Geneva VFW at 6:30 p.m.

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #6846**

POC - Ron Stettler (Commander)

(440) 466-3127 • Email - vfw6846@outlook.com

The VFW meets at 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at 76 Depot St. Geneva, OH.

**KINGSVILLE, OH**

**AMERICAN LEGION NEAL POST #743**

Address: 2606 East Center Street (Rt 20), North Kingsville, OH

POC - John Pildner Jr. (Commander) • (440) 813-4981

Dale Hayes (Vice Commander) • (440) 994-9641

Will Runyan (Adjutant) • (440) 228-6023

Email: nealpost743@gmail.com

Facebook: American Legion Neal Post 743 • Website: nealpost743.com

Neal Post is a small dynamic Legion Post of approximately 50 members with service from WW II (3 members) through the current War on Terror. Our reason for being is to serve our fellow Veterans and our community. We meet at 7 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month with all sessions being open to all

Veterans and Community members. Events on our yearly calendar include Three Chaplains Recognition, Armed Forces Day/Echo Taps Ceremony\*, Flag placement on Veteran Graves at 8 cemetery and community locations, 3 Memorial Day Ceremonies, Flag Day Retirement Ceremony\*, August Post Picnic, Veterans Day Ceremony\*, Veterans Day Dinner, Pearl Harbor Day Breakfast, and Wreaths Across America placement and Ceremony\*. (Events marked with \* occur at and with the generous cooperation of Greenlawn Memory Gardens in North Kingsville.) Our Honor Guard has the privilege to lead Final Military Honors for all Veterans when asked.

**ORWELL, OH**

**AMERICAN LEGION POST #719**

Address: 215 N. Maple St., Orwell, OH

POC - Roger Anderson

(440) 473-6280 • (440) 862-7866 • (330) 367-7628

Serving the Grand Valley and surrounding areas of Ashtabula, Trumbull and Geauga. Legion meetings 2nd Tuesday of the month; Auxiliary meeting 1st Tuesday of month. **Upcoming Post Events:** Reverse Raffle/Chinese Auction Saturday, February 11, 2023, 5 p.m. Tickets \$35 each, \$1,000 Main board, only 100 tickets sold. Spaghetti Dinners Thursday, January 19, 2023 and every third Thursday following, from 4-7 p.m. All you can eat for \$10, Kids under 5 eat for Free. We are currently looking for Veterans, Auxiliary and Sons of the Legion wanting to give back to the Grand Valley area. It is time for the next generation to take over and operate our Post. No experience necessary. Rewarding opportunity. Learn at your own speed. Mentors are available.

**THE MUSTANG STABLE**

POC - Deliarose Marroquin (Ms. M) • (440) 805-4545

The Mustang Stable is Grand Valley Local Schools' community learning center. The Mustang Stable's mission is to provide resources, opportunities, and hope to the Grand Valley Community. Resources at The Mustang Stable include clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and school supplies. The Mustang Stable is open to anyone living in the Grand Valley School District.

**ROCK CREEK, OH**

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST #4953**

Address: 3276 N. Main St., Rock Creek, OH

POC - John Dyrzc-(440)563-9699

The VFW meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Every Wednesday, there will be a Queen of Hearts Drawing, and on Sundays, we congregate to watch NASCAR or the sport of the season and enjoy one another's company.

**OUT OF COUNTY SUPPORT**

**AKRON, OH**

THE ROLLING THUNDER® CHAPTER 2 OHIO

Address: PO Box 485, Lakemore, OH 44250

Email: ekmauric69@gmail.com

Meetings are held the first Sunday of each month at 1 p.m. at VFW Post 3383, located at 690 W. Waterloo Rd, Akron, OH 44314. Rolling Thunder® Ohio Chapter 2 is an all-volunteer, POW/MIA awareness organization made up of citizens who are dedicated to helping disabled, hospitalized, and homeless veterans from all wars. Our members are professional, blue-collar workers, students, veterans, non-veterans, and motorcyclist, non-motorcyclist all coming together to work on common veteran issues.

**VSC WEBSITE!**

Find our website at ashtabulaveterans.com for a lot of great information about the services we provide. From there, you can request a service officer, take a poll to tell us how we're doing, schedule FREE transportation to your VA medical appointments, or leave feedback about the Commission to the Director. There is a calendar on the homepage where you can see different events that the VSC is involved in over the next several months. We have a Tribute Page that is dedicated to the veterans of our county. All you have to do is provide a picture of yourself or your loved one in service uniform with the conflict you served during and the city in the county that you are affiliated with and we will update our site with it.

**Please follow us on Facebook @AshtabulaVSC. From here, you will see all of our current events as well as any valuable information that we have to share that could benefit you as a veteran.**