



AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776

Chapter Purpose - To preserve the proud legacy of the Purple Heart



2023-24 Officers

Cdr: Richard Hunt
Sr. Vice Cdr: Bill Merryman
Jr. Vice Cdr: Gary Bain
Finance Off: Joe McClister
Judge Adv: John Carlson
Sgt-at-Arms: Robert Gibson
Trustee 2-yr: Will Korber
Trustee 1-yr: Leo Stockmaster
Adjutant: Curt Ebitz
Service Off: Joe McClister
Welfare Off: Mickey Hunt
Historian: Curt Ebitz
Chaplain: Troy Allen
Americanism Off: Chuck Kanehl

Chapter Activities

Completed

May 20. Fifty-three Patriots, Associates, and guests attended the Chapter's Annual Armed Forces Day Picnic. Citrus High School senior Evan Jones was introduced as the 2023 recipient of the Chapter's \$1,500 College of Central Florida Endowed Scholarship and Crystal River High School senior Austin Edwards as the 2023 recipient of the Chapter's \$1,500 Sgt. Dennis J. Flanagan Memorial Scholarship. Also, a Special Scholarship Award of \$1,000 was presented to **Marleigh Miller**, a Crystal River High

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Next Meeting

Tuesday, July 18, 1 p.m.
Citrus County Building Alliance
1196 S Lecanto Hwy.
Lecanto, FL 34461

Bimonthly Meeting

The chapter's bimonthly meetings are held the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May and July. The meeting location is at the Citrus County Building Alliance, 1196 S. Lecanto Highway (C.R. 491), Lecanto, which is located on the west side of S. Lecanto Highway approximately 1/2 mile south of S.R. 44. Any member desiring to place an item on the agenda should e-mail Adjutant Ebitz at info@citruspurpleheart.org or call 382-3847.

Member News

A very warm welcome to Chapter 776's newest member, **Jerry Frease**, who recently transferred to Chapter 776 from Chapter 696 (Fort Myers). In the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, he and his wife **Kim** relocated to Citrus County and are temporarily residing in Hernando as they search for a home to purchase. For more about Patriot Frease, see page 2.

A very appreciative "Thank you" is extended to **Beth & Benje Thomas**, owners and operators of ServiceMaster Professional Services, 3558 N. Citrus Ave., Crystal River for their extremely generous donation of water and soda beverages for the Chapter's Armed Forces Day Picnic. Beth was a Citrus High School classmate of Aaron Weaver.

Member News continued

Comradely thanks to Chapter 776 Patriot **Robert Hummel** for his extremely generous donation of \$500 to the Chapter at the May 16 meeting. Patriot Hummel also donated \$500 to the Chapter during the March 21 meeting.

Our heartfelt thanks to **Pat & Dennis Flanagan** for their very kind donation of \$500 to the Chapter's Sgt. Dennis J. Flanagan Memorial Scholarship and their faithful participation in presenting the scholarship award each year during the Chapter's Armed Forces Day Picnic.

Congratulations to Patriot **Earl McMillan** who formally received his belated high school diploma from Citrus County Superintendent of Schools Sandra "Sam" Himmel during the Citrus High School graduation ceremony. Congressman Gus Bilirakis also presented him with a challenge coin and certificate attesting to his military service being entered into the Congressional Record. Patriot McMillan dropped out of high school at the age of 17 to enlist in the Army where he completed his GED, bachelors and masters degrees. After rising to the rank of Sergeant First Class, he was commissioned, ultimately retiring as a Major. After retirement, he earned his CPA and taught at the college level. Patriot McMillan is a Silver Star, Bronze Star (Valor) and Purple Heart recipient.

See Member News page 2

Annual Purple Heart Anniversary Breakfast

Chapter 776's annual Purple Heart anniversary breakfast will be hosted by the West Citrus Elks Lodge 2693 on **Saturday, August 5 at 9:00 a.m.** The lodge is located at **7890 W. Grover Cleveland Blvd, Homosassa** about 3/4 mile east of U.S. 19 in Homosassa. The anniversary celebration will feature a delicious breakfast served by the Lodge's Veterans Committee and a short program honoring Purple Heart recipients and commemorating the 241st anniversary of the creation of the Purple Heart. All Purple Heart recipients, family members of those who fell in combat, associate members, Purple Heart entities and Chapter 776 Proud Supporters and their guests are cordially invited to attend. Attendees are requested to **register for the free breakfast by contacting Curt Ebitz at 352-382-3847 or Email: info@citruspurpleheart.org**. Please indicate the number in your party and their names.



Chapter Activities continued

School graduate currently enrolled at Florida Gulf Coast University. **Dennis** and **Pat Flanagan**, parents of Fallen Hero Sgt. Dennis J. Flanagan, joined Cdr. Hunt in presenting the scholarship named in honor of their son.

Many thanks to **Scott Hebert**, Assistant Superintendent Citrus Schools, **Darrick Buettner**, Coordinator of Special Academic Programs Citrus Schools; and **Crystal Lizanich**, Inverness City Councilwoman for honoring us with their attendance at the Chapter's Armed Forces Day Picnic.

May 29. Officiating at the Memorial Day ceremony at the Old Homosassa Veterans Memorial as the master of ceremonies and chaplain were **Chapter 776 Cdr. Richard Hunt** and Associate member **Troy Allen**, respectively. Other Chapter members in attendance were **JoAnn Allen**, **Rick Allen**, **Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz**, **Mickey Hunt**, **Zig & Nancy Laska**, **Joe McClister & Annie Fair** and **Pat Michael**.

May 29. Chapter 776 Associate **Fred Daniels** was the organizer and master of ceremonies for the annual Floral City Memorial Day ceremony hosted by American Legion Post 225. Chaplain Daniels has been the master of ceremonies, organizer and program director of the ceremony for the past 19 years.

May 29. Chapter 776 Cdr. **Richard Hunt** organized and conducted a Veterans Day program at Grand Living at Citrus Hill for its residents and guests.

Future

July 18, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 bimonthly meeting, Citrus County Building Alliance, Lecanto.

July 27, 1:00 p.m. Purple Heart Proclamation, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners, County Courthouse, Inverness.

July 27, 1:00 p.m. Purple Heart Proclamation, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners, County Courthouse, Brooksville.

Future continued

August 5, 9:00 a.m. Purple Heart Anniversary Breakfast, hosted by W. Citrus Elks Lodge, 2693, Grover Cleveland Ave., Homosassa.

New Member Profile: Patriot Jerry Frease

A native Californian, Chapter 776's newest member was drafted into the Army in August of 1967. He arrived in Vietnam in February of 1968 during the Tet Offensive and was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Division as a light weapons infantryman.

During his year-long combat tour, Patriot Frease saw extensive close combat earning him two Bronze Stars (Valor & Meritorious Service), Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal (Valor), Air Medal, and Combat Infantryman Badge.

Following his discharge from active duty, Patriot Frease enlisted in the Nevada Army National Guard rising to the rank of staff sergeant.

Selected for and successfully completing Officer Candidate School, he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Nevada Army National Guard.

Upon relocating to Illinois, he served as a Captain in the Illinois Army National Guard where he commanded Combat Support Company, 3rd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, 47th Infantry Division (Viking Division).

In 1985, he was assigned to the Inactive Reserves. For the majority of his civilian career, he was a general manager of manufacturing plants.

Patriot Frease jokingly notes that his wife, Kim, the daughter of a Navy Captain and Naval Aviator, outranks him.

As a member of Chapter 696, Patriot Frease served as the adjutant and is the current Florida State Commander of the Combat Infantrymen's Association.

*From the Commander*

Patriots and Associates,

Here we go again with our balmy Florida summers. It doesn't take long to get the ice and snow off the windshields and sidewalks. Of course, I'm a bit off. It comes with being a Marine.

We are in that time where hydration can be and is critical for some of us. Our heat and humidity can be brutal. Please be careful.

Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 continues to be strong with many accomplishments both collectively and individually.

Our annual Purple Heart Breakfast hosted by the Elks on August 5 is rapidly approaching. Please plan to attend.

Plans are underway in conjunction with the Citrus County Schools and the Nature Coast Community Band for our Purple Heart Ceremony in February.

I remain ever grateful for what we have and the community where we are privileged to live.

Be safe and look out for each other.
Richard Hunt, Commander



Chapter 776 Cdr. Richard Hunt presented Citrus County Property Appraiser Cregg Dalton a Purple Heart coffee mug for his presentation on property tax exemptions and discounts for disabled veterans.

Armed Forces Day Picnic

Chapter 776 hosted its Annual Armed Forces Day Picnic May 20 at Bicentennial Park, Crystal River. Among the 53 Chapter members and guests in attendance were honored guests Dennis and Patricia Flanagan, Gold Star parents of Fallen Hero Sergeant Dennis J. Flanagan; Crystal Lizanich, Inverness City Councilwoman; Dr. Scott Hebert, Asst. Superintendent of Citrus Schools; Darrick Buettner, Coordinator of Special Academic Programs for Citrus Schools; Barbara Mills, Operation Welcome Home and Chapter 776 Honorary Member; Chapter 776 2023 scholarship recipients Evan Jones, Austin Edwards and Marleigh Miller.



Citrus High School senior Evan Jones was the 2023 recipient of the \$1,500 Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 MOPH College of Central Florida Endowed Scholarship. Left: Darrick Buettner; Kathy Tomposelli, grandmother; Richard Hunt; Evan Jones; Dr. Scott Hebert.



Crystal River High School senior Austin Edwards was the 2023 recipient of the \$1,500 Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 MOPH Sergeant Dennis J. Flanagan Memorial Scholarship. Left, front row: Kent and Julie Edwards, parents; Richard Hunt; Austin Edwards; Patricia and Dennis Flanagan; Dr. Scott Hebert. Back row: Darrick Buettner.



Marleigh Miller, a Crystal River High School graduate now enrolled at Florida Gulf Coast University, was the recipient of a \$1,000 Special Scholarship Award for her exemplary support of Chapter 776 and the Citrus County veterans community. Left: Darrick Buettner; Joni Miller, mother; Richard Hunt; Marleigh Miller; Dr. Scott Hebert.



Beth & Benje Thomas, owners and operators of Service Masters Professional Services in Crystal River kindly donated the beverages for the Chapter picnic. Beth was a Citrus High School classmate of Aaron Weaver.



Cdr. Hunt recognized the Chapter's Patriot of the Year (Curt Ebitz), Associate of the Year (Sandy Cross) and Volunteer of the Year (Troy Allen). Patriot Ebitz and Associate Member Allen were also selected as the MOPH Department of Florida Patriot of the Year and Jonas Jacobsen Volunteer of the Year, respectively.

From left: Patriot Curt Ebitz, Associate Sandy Cross and Associate Troy Allen.