



# AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776

PRESERVING THE PROUD LEGACY OF THE PURPLE HEART MEDAL



## 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-yrs: 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

**October 30-November 10.** Cdr. Richard Hunt and Patriots Curt Ebitz, Chuck Kanehl, Jerry Frease, Frank Hayes, and Mike Krebs participated in the Citrus County Veterans Appreciation Week Veterans in the Classroom Program sharing their military experiences and adventures with local students.

**November 9.** Chapter 776 was represented at the Inverness Primary School Annual Veterans Day Program by Chuck & Mickie Kanehl, Joe McClister & Annie Fair.

**November 11.** Participating in the Annual Citrus County Veterans Day Parade as the Grand Marshal and Honorary Marshal were Chapter 776 Patriots Bill Merryman and Will Korber. Also participating in the parade were Cdr. Richard & Mickey Hunt, Gary Bain, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Bob & Kathy Gibson, Chuck & Mickie Kanehl, Joe McClister & Annie Fair.

**November 11.** Chapter 776 Sr. Vice Cdr. Bill Merryman was the keynote speaker for Citrus County's 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Veterans Day Service and Associate Fred Daniels presented the POW/MIA Tribute with

*See Chapter completed page 2*

## Next Meeting

**Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024, 1 p.m.**

The chapter's bimonthly meetings are held the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May and July. The meeting time is 1:00 p.m. 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 Adj. Ebitz at [info@citruspurpleheart.org](mailto:info@citruspurpleheart.org) or call 382-3847.

## Member News

A very appreciative "Thank You" to Proud Supporter **Gary Marriage**, President & CEO/Owner of Nature Coast Financial Advisors, Inc. for his continuing generous support. Gary recently donated \$2,000 in support of the Chapter's charitable works. Gary has also been the Purple Heart sponsor for the Citrus County Building Alliance annual fishing tournament from which the Chapter receives a generous portion of the proceeds. A number of Chapter members are very satisfied clients of Gary. If you want to get the best return for your hard-earned dollars, contact his office at 352-794-6044 for an appointment and say you are a member of Chapter 776 Purple Heart.

## Member News continued

A well-earned salute to Associate **Sandy Cross** for another successful fundraising year as the program director for the Chapter's annual fundraising effort in support of the National Wreaths Across America program. Thanks to her leadership, Chapter 776 earned \$1,725 in rebates from Wreaths Across America and made possible the placement of 350 holiday wreaths on grave sites at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.

Congratulations to Patriots **Jerry Frease** and **Earl McMillen** on being the Veterans Night honorees during the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo at the Citrus County Fairgrounds.

A very appreciative thank you to **Marie Brotnitsky** who, on behalf of the Confederation of American Patriots, presented a \$500 donation to our Chapter during the Pearl Harbor dinner and holiday social.

Associates **Sandy Cross**, **Annie Fair**, and **Mickey Hunt** teamed up to prepare and provide 100 packs of four Christmas cards with stamped envelopes to inpatients at the VA hospital in Tampa to send to their family and friends.

Special thanks to the **Chapter 776 Ladies** for their homemade baked  
*See Members page 2*

## Eighteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony

**Please mark your calendars, spread the word and make it a priority to attend!**

Chapter 776's Annual Purple Heart Ceremony honoring Citrus County's fallen heroes and combat wounded warriors, featuring patriotic music by the Nature Coast Community Band, will be at **11 a.m., Saturday, February 10** at the Citrus County Fairgrounds Auditorium, 3610 S. Florida Ave., Inverness. With hundreds attending the annual ceremony, this is the Chapter's signature activity and the county's premier veterans' ceremony.

**Recommended dress is the Chapter's formal uniform (Chapter overseas hat, white shirt with Purple Heart tie, navy blue or black blazer and gray trousers. Purple Heart Medal should be worn on the left lapel of the blazer/coat.**

**If you do not have the Chapter's recommended uniform, please wear appropriate attire. All Chapter Patriots and Associates are urged to make every effort to attend with spouses and guests!**



### Chapter completed

Mari-Elain Ebitz representing the guest at the POW/MIA Missing Man Table. Other Chapter members in attendance were Cdr. Richard & Mickey Hunt, Curt Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Will Korber, Joe McClister & Annie Fair, and Pat Michael.

**November 11.** During its Veterans Day dinner dance, the Citrus Hills Veterans Day Planning Committee honored Chapter 776 Patriots Frank Hayes, Will Korber, Joe McClister and Bill Merryman. Also in attendance were Cdr. Richard & Mickey Hunt, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Carol Hayes, Barbara Merryman.

**November 16.** Turning out for the Chapter's monthly no host Patriot fellowship breakfast at Dillon's Cinnamon Stick Restaurant in Inverness were Cdr. Richard Hunt, John Carlson, Curt Ebitz, Jerry Frease, Will Korber, Chuck Kanehl, Joe McClister, and Colin Pearl.

**November 17.** Cdr. Richard Hunt and Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz attended the inurnment of Anthony "Tony" Huston, Beloved husband of Chapter 776 Proud Supporter Jennifer Dooley-Huston at the Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell.

**November 17-18.** Cdr. Hunt was a volunteer worker for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo.

**November 18.** Patriots Jerry Frease and Earl McMillan were honored during Veterans Night at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo at the Citrus County Fairgrounds.

**December 5.** Associates Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, and Mickey Hunt put together 100 packets with four Christmas cards and stamped envelopes for inpatients at the James A. Haley VAH to send to their families and friends.

**December 7.** Forty-nine Chapter 776 members and guests attended the Chapter's annual Pearl Harbor dinner and holiday social held at the Citrus National Golf Club in Southern Woods. Honored guests were 98-year-old World War II Army veteran Irving Locker and his wife of 74 years, Bernice. Irving, who participated in the D-Day landing and the Battle of the Bulge, gave an inspiring "show and tell" account of his World War II experiences as a young Army sergeant.

### Future

**February 10,** 11:00 a.m. Chapter 776 Eighteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony, Citrus County Fairgrounds Auditorium, Inverness.

May 18, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Chapter 776 Annual Armed Forces Day picnic, Bicentennial Park, Crystal River.

### Members continued

goods, candies and crafts that made the Pearl Harbor dinner and holiday social auction a fun and rewarding activity with the Chapter raising \$1,299.

A special thank you to Chapter 776 Proud Supporters **Steve & Robin Mecler** for arranging and transporting the Chapter's Pearl Harbor dinner guest of honor, World War II veteran Irving Locker and his wife Bernice.



Bill Merryman was the Grand Marshal for the 2023 Citrus County Veterans Day Parade.



Will Korber was the Honorary Marshal for the 2023 Citrus County Veterans Day Parade.

### From the Commander

Patriots & Associates,

Here we are wrapping up another year. Time surely flies. It is my sincere hope that 2024 brings us all a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year.

We continue to be a highly active and successful Chapter. I am so enormously proud and honored to be associated with all of you.

Our Nomination Committee is working hard to find willing and capable Officers for the coming term. If you are interested, please let Curt know of your interest.

Our Pearl Harbor/Holiday Social Dinner was well attended. The events of that day in December when Pearl Harbor was attacked will never be forgotten. All had an enjoyable time. Dinner was fabulous. Our auction was a resounding success, with donations of many baked goods, earrings and other items and spirited bidding to take these items home. Our Guest of Honor was a 98-year-old World War II veteran of Europe who was quite a character.

February is bringing our Purple Heart Ceremony. It promises to be the largest and best yet. The event is always free and open to all. Our own award-winning Nature Coast Community Band will be playing. We will also have displays by the many schools in Citrus County competing against each other.

Our Purple Heart Family remains strong. We need to continue looking out for each other. Together, we are the best.

Wishing the absolute best for all of you, my Brothers and Sisters, and may the coming year be a great one!

Yours in Patriotism,  
Richard Hunt, Commander





2023 Chapter 776 Pearl Harbor Dinner & Christmas Social



Rita & John Carlson with Congressman Gus Billirakis' aide David Halstein and guest Marissa.



Cdr. Richard Hunt & Guest of Honor WWII veteran Irving Locker



From Left; Colin Pearl, Lynn Miholics, Mike Miholics and Elaine Pearl.



Nazi flag captured by WWII veteran Irving Locker and signed by members of his unit.

Left: Jim Mills, Barbara Mills, Fred Daniels, Bill & Barbara Merryman enjoying the delicious buffet dinner at Citrus National Golf Club, in Sugarmill Woods.



From left, Jen Dooley-Huston, Vikki & Rob Pietras, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Kim & Jerry Frease, Jonathan Dooley.



Past Chapter 776 Cdr. J.B. Haskins, Earl McMillan, Greg Cross, Mickey Hunt, Tom Bustetter, Ari Bustetter, Dianne Doane Bustetter.

2023 VETERANS WEEK



Chapter 776 members Curt Ebitz and Mike Krebs with 3rd grade Lecanto Primary School students following their Veterans in the Classroom presentations.



Representing Chapter 776 at the Inverness Primary School Annual Veterans Program were Chapter members Chuck Kanehl, Ann Fair and Joe McClister.



Chapter 776 Patriots hosted and honored by the Citrus Hills Veterans Day Planning Committee during its annual Veterans Day dinner dance. Left: Bill Merryman, USA; Joe McClister, USN, Will Korber, USMC; Frank Hayes, USAF.