



AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776



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

2024-25 Officers

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

Member News

Heartfelt condolences are extended to Patriot **Claude Gregoire** on the passing of his sister on February 4.

Chapter 776 Patriots and Associates extend a warm welcome to **Janice Tyler** as the Chapter's newest Associate member.

Please keep Chapter 776 Chaplain Emeritus **Ernie Tucker**, who is battling lung cancer and ischemic heart disease, in your prayers.

Associate **Mickey Hunt** recently had a nasty fall. Although she suffered a gash above her left eye, the good news is that a trip to the emergency room confirmed that there were no serious injuries.

Well wishes to **Patty Flanagan**, mother of Fallen Hero Sergeant Dennis J. Flanagan, who is recovering from heart surgery.

Well-earned congratulations to Chapter 776 Honorary Member **Barbara Mills** on being recognized during this year's Purple Heart Ceremony with Chapter 776's Lifetime Achievement Award for her selfless and dedicated support of local veterans, active and reserve component service members during the past two

Next Meeting

Tuesday, Mar. 18, 2025, 1 p.m.
 Citrus County Building Alliance,
 1196 S. Lecanto Highway (C.R. 491),
 Lecanto.

Bimonthly Meeting

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 **Adjutant Ebitz** at info@citruspurpleheart.org or call 382-3847.

decades.

A very appreciative salute to Citrus County Tax Collector & Chapter 776 Honorary Member **Janice Warren** and her office staff with special thanks to campaign coordinator **Jen Dooley-Huston** and top fundraisers **Tammy Smith, Lydia Dunn, and Bonita Tholund** on raising \$10,107.20 during its fall campaign and for attaining the cumulative milestone of over \$300,000 since 2004 for the benefit of the Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF), Chapter 776's principal charity.

A hearty thank you and well-deserved congratulations to Chapter 776 Cdr. **Richard Hunt** on another flawless job in planning, coordinating and serving as the Master of Ceremonies for Chapter 776's Nineteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony that attracted a full house of 600 attendees. Also, a rousing cheer to the members of the award-winning **Nature Coast Community Band** for their talented musical support of the ceremony, as well the **Patriots and Associates** who attended the ceremony.

Congratulations to Patriot **Bill Merryman** on his appointment to the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners Veterans Advisory Board; as the recipient of the Spirit of Crystal River Award from the Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery; and a job well done for organizing and planning an informational program on veterans benefits for local veterans and spouses that was well attended and received.

Many thanks to the following Patriots and Associates who stepped forward to serve as Chapter officers for 2025-26: Cdr., **Richard Hunt**; Sr. Vice Cdr., **Gary Bain**; Jr. Vice Cdr., **Jerry Frease**; Finance & Service Officer, **Joe McClister**; Sgt-at-Arms, **Bob Gibson**; 2-Yr. Trustee, **Nate Love**; 1-Yr. Trustee, **Bill Merryman**; Adjutant & Historian, **Curt Ebitz**; Welfare Officer, **Mickey Hunt**; Chaplain, **Troy Allen**; Americanism Officer, **Will Korber**; Judge Advocate, **Mike Krebs**.

Chapter Activities

Completed

January 14. Attending the January Associate Ladies' luncheon at Glory Days Grill in Lecanto were JoAnn Allen, Sandy Cross, Mari-Elain Ebitz, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Mickey Hunt, and Vikki Pietras.

January 24. Chapter 776 recognized the Citrus County Tax Collector Office and its top three fundraisers for their participation in the Fall 2024 fundraising campaign conducted in partnership with the Chapter for the benefit of the Citrus County Veterans Foundation. Chapter attendees were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Curt Ebitz, and Ann Fair.

January 30. Patriots Bill Merryman, Curt Ebitz and Chuck Kanehl attended the Citrus County Veterans Service Office mural dedication ceremony.

February 1. Patriot Merryman attended the Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Gala.

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February 8. Chapter 776 hosted its Nineteenth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony at the Citrus County Fairgrounds Auditorium with approximately 600 people in attendance to honor our fallen heroes and combat wounded. The ceremony featured: remarks by Congressman Gus Bilirakis; patriotic music by the 70-plus members of the award-winning Nature Coast Community Band; and presentation of Chapter 776's Lifetime Achievement Award to Operation Welcome Home founder Barbara Mills for her unparalleled support of Chapter 776 and the Citrus County veterans community. Additionally, each of the Citrus County School District's 23 schools had Purple Star displays honoring veterans.

February 20. Attending the Inverness Primary School Annual Veterans Dinner & Program were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Mickey Hunt, Sandy Cross, Fred Daniels, Curt Ebitz, Joe McClister & Annie Fair, Pat Michaels, Shirley Platt, and Patty Stevenson. Honorary Member Barb Mills donated patriotic decorated cupcakes for the dessert.

February 21. Curt Ebitz and Bill Merryman represented Chapter 776 at Congressman Gus Billirakis' Veterans Advisory Council quarterly meeting.

February 25. Patriot Curt Ebitz led the Pledge of Allegiance at the convening of the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners meeting.

February 22. Chapter 776's Purple Heart entities flew the Purple Heart flag in commemoration of the 293d anniversary of the birth of General George Washington, originator of the Purple Heart decoration.

March 3. Bill Merryman, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry & Kim Frease, Mike & Nancy Krebs, and Frank & Carol Hayes attended the Veterans in the Classroom Appreciation Luncheon at the Withlacoochee Technical College hosted by Citrus County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott Hebert.

From the Commander

Patriots & Associates,
My sincere appreciation to Congressman Gus Bilirakis, Darrick Buettner & Al Balk of Citrus County Schools, the Nature Coast Community Band, Marine Corps League Detachment 819, the Lecanto High School JROTC, Citrus County Fairground Committee, and Chapter Patriots & Associates for their support and assistance, which were instrumental to another extraordinarily successful Purple Heart Ceremony.

Chapter 776 acquires donated medical equipment, such as power scooters, power/manual wheelchairs, walkers, canes, hospital beds, shower seats and other durable medical equipment, for distribution to veterans upon request. Any Chapter member needing or knowing of a local veteran or spouse needing any of the medical equipment, should contact me at 407-579-6190 or obakesan@att.net.

My sincere thanks to the Chapter 776 Patriots and Associates who stepped forward to be Chapter officers for 2025-26. Installation of officers will be installed during the March 18 bimonthly meeting. **All elected and appointed Chapter officers 2025-26 are requested to make every effort to attend the meeting to be officially sworn in.**

The next Citrus County Building Alliance (CCBA) Fishing Tournament is April 25-27 with the Captain's Meeting Friday evening April 25. As in past years, professional boat captains have invited Chapter members to participate for free in the tournament. Chapter members interested in "Going fishing" should contact me at 407-579-6190 or obakesan@att.net.

Yours in Patriotism,
Richard Hunt, Commander

**Future**

April 25, 6:00 p.m. CCBA's 30th Annual Family Fishing Tournament Captain's Gathering. Chapter members are requested to attend and "show the flag" in support of the event, which provides the Chapter with its principal source of income.

April 26-27. CCBA's 30th Annual Family Fishing Tournament. **Chapter members interested in participating in the tournament as guests of fishing boat captains should contact Cdr. Richard Hunt** at 407-579-6190 or obakesan@att.net .

May 17, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Annual Armed Forces Day picnic, Bicentennial Park Pavilion, Crystal River.

May 21, 1:00 p.m. Chapter 776 Bimonthly business meeting, CCBA, Lecanto.

MOPH Department of Florida Convention

The 81st Department of Florida MOPH Convention will be held in Daytona Beach May 2-4. The Host Chapter is MOPH Chapter 316 (Daytona Beach). Convention attendees have two hotels, about a block apart, to choose from--- Best Western Plus Daytona Inn Seabreeze Oceanfront, 730 N. Atlantic Avenue, Daytona Beach, FL 32118 and Holiday Inn & Suites Daytona on the Ocean, 930 N. Atlantic Ave., Daytona Beach, FL 32118.

Price per night for each hotel is \$149.00. Both hotels offer ocean views and have been recently remodeled. Both hotels have free parking with the Best Western offering a free breakfast. For those staying at the Holiday Inn, a breakfast voucher will be provided by the Department of Florida to order from a special menu at their restaurant.

All of the Meetings and The Gala will be held in the Holiday Inn. The Department will pay for the lunch on Saturday and The Gala dinner on Saturday.

If you would like to attend, email Adjutant Curt Ebitz info@citruspurpleheart.org for reservation details.

Departed Patriot Edward Tinney



Chapter 776 recently learned of the death several years ago of Patriot Edward Tinney of Springhill at the age of 85. Patriot Tinney was career Army, retiring in 1972 with 22 years of service and the rank of First Sergeant. A combat veteran of Korea and Vietnam, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart and the Combat Infantry Badge.



The Citrus County Tax office (CCTO) fall fundraising campaign, in partnership with Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), presented a check to the Citrus County Veterans Foundation (CCVF) in the amount of \$10,107.20 to provide financial assistance to local honorably discharged veterans and their surviving spouses in urgent need. Left front row: Joe McClister, Chapter 776; Richard Hunt, Cdr. Chapter 776 & CCVF; Tax Collector Janice Warren; CCTO top fundraisers Bonita Tholund, Lydia Dunn, Tammy Smith; Curt Ebitz, Chapter 776/CCVF. Left back row: Annie Fair, Chapter 776; Bill Merryman, Chapter 776 & CCVF; J.J. Kenney, CCVF; John McGee, CCVF.

Chapter 776 Associate Ladies “ambushed” Inverness Primary School teacher Mary Tyler with a handcrafted quilt in appreciation for her leadership in organizing and conducting the school’s annual Veterans Appreciation programs each February and November. Left: Annie Fair, Lynn Miholics, Shirley Platt, Mickey Hunt, Mary Tyler, Pat Michael, Sandy Cross, and Barb Mills.



Attending the veterans’ mural dedication at the Citrus County Veterans Service Office were Patriots Bill Merryman, Curt Ebitz and Chuck Kanehl.

2025 Purple Heart Ceremony

