



AARON A. WEAVER CHAPTER 776

PRESERVING THE PROUD LEGACY OF THE PURPLE HEART



2025-26 Officers

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

Chapter Activities

Completed

October 27-November 7. Cdr. Richard Hunt and Patriots Rob Coughlin, Curt Ebitz, Frank Hayes, Chuck Kanehl, Jerry Frease, 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.

October 28. Associate ladies enjoying lunch together at Mariana's Stinky Rose in Hernando were Carol Allen, JoAnn Allen, Kay Allen, Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Pat Michaels, Barbara Mills, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt, Deborah St Martin, Penny Tharp.

November 6. Chapter 776 was represented at the Inverness Primary School Annual Veterans Day Program by Cdr. Richard Hunt, Patriot Joe McClister, Associates Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Fred Daniels, and Honorary Life Member Barb Mills. During the program, Cdr. Hunt presented IPS teacher Mary Tyler with a special recognition plaque for carrying the program forward from Sandy Cross, who initiated the program over three decades

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Next Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, 1 p.m.

The chapter's bimonthly meetings are held the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May and July. The meeting is 1:00 p.m. at the **Citrus County Chamber of Commerce Building**, 915 N. Suncoast Blvd. (U.S. 19), Crystal River, which is located on the east side of the highway approximately 1/4 mile north of the Crystal River Airport. Any member desiring to place an item on the agenda should e-mail Adjutant Ebitz at info@citruspurpleheart.org or call 352-382-3847.

Member News

Chapter 776 Patriots and Associates extend their heartfelt condolences to the **Family of Patriot Maximino Perez Alvarez** who passed away April 25 months short of his centennial birthday.

A warm official welcome to **Deborah St. Martin** as the Chapter's newest Associate member. Deborah is the wife of Chapter 776 Patriot Paul St. Martin.

Prayers are offered up for Patriot **Claude Gregoire** in his gallant battle with terminal cancer. A fighter, he and his wife recently completed a grand motor tour in their RV, visiting with family and friends across the country.

An appreciative thank you to Associate **Sandy Cross** for her leadership as the

program director for the Chapter's annual National Wreaths Across America fundraising campaign. Thanks to her dedicated efforts, 450 holiday wreaths were placed on grave sites at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, earning the Chapter \$2,250 in rebates from Wreaths Across America.

Mike and Nancy Krebs recently returned from a Mediterranean cruise from Rome, Italy to Barcelona, Spain. During their thirteen days travel adventure, they visited 12 cities with "a lot of walking" as reported by Mike. Infantry kudos to Nancy who kept the pace despite knee replacement surgery a year ago.

The Chapter's deep appreciation is extended to the **Fleet Reserve Association, Branch 186** for its \$1,000 donation and to Republican State Committeeman and Army Vietnam combat veteran **Mike Belkin** for his \$100 donation made at the Pearl Harbor dinner and holiday social.

Heartfelt appreciation to **Dianne & Tom Bustetter** for their generous support of the auction following the Pearl Harbor remembrance dinner & holiday social with special hugs to their daughter, **Arianna**, for graciously assisting auctioneer Cdr. Hunt.

A thank you salute to Patriots **Chuck Kanehl** and **Nate Love** for volunteering *See Members page 2*

Twentieth 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 21** at the Citrus County Fairgrounds Auditorium, 3610 S. Florida Ave., Inverness. *The ceremony will be dedicated to the memory of Departed Patriot John Carlson who died last February.* 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 a coat and tie and your Purple Heart overseas hat or baseball cap. All Chapter Patriots and Associates are urged to make every effort to attend with spouses and guests!**



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November 11. Chapter 776 Honorary Life Member Barb Mills hosted a Veterans Day lunch for approximately 200 veterans and Kim Frease graciously volunteered to help. Chapter members attending were Cdr. Richard & Mickey Hunt, Fred Daniels, Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz, Jerry & Kim Frease, Bob & Kathy Gibson, Claude Gregoire, J.B. Haskins, Will Korber, Joe McClister & Annie Fair.

November 11. Curt & Mari-Elain Ebitz represented Chapter 776 at the Citrus Hills Veterans Day Planning Committee Veterans Day dinner.

November 14. Attending the Chapter's fellowship breakfast at the Central Café in Inverness were Jerry Frease, Will Korber and his brother Dean, Chuck Kanehl, Joe McClister.

November 14. Patriots Chuck Kanehl and Joe McClister participated in the Floral City Car Show with their classic cars.

November 21. Patriots Lee Helscel and Nate Love were the Veterans Night honorees at the 19th Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo at the Citrus County Fairgrounds.

November 21-22. Cdr. Richard Hunt was a volunteer worker for the 19th Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo.

December 4. Associates Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Kim Frease and Mickey Hunt prepared and provided 100 packs of four Christmas cards with stamped envelopes for inpatients at the James A. Haley VAH to send to their family and friends.

December 7. Fifty-four Chapter 776 members and guests attended the Chapter's annual Pearl Harbor remembrance dinner and holiday social at the Citrus National Golf Club. Honored guest was twice awarded Silver Star and three-time Purple Heart recipient J.B. Haskins, who is a Navy Korean War and Vietnam War veteran. Distinguished guests were County Commissioner Janet Berek and Citrus County Tax Collector Janice Warren. The Purple Heart City of Crystal River was represented by the city's Assistant Growth Management Director, Heather Lacey, and Code Enforcement Officer, Joe Palminteri.

December 10. Cdr. Richard Hunt was the featured guest on the Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative (WREC) podcast, *The Turkey Man Show*, which has sparked

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WREC's interest in becoming a Purple Heart Entity.

December 12. Attending the Associate ladies' luncheon at the Central Café in Inverness were Carol Allen, JoAnn Allen, Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Vikki Pietras, Shirley Platt.

December 18. Attending the Chapter's fellowship breakfast at the Socos House of Eats in Homosassa were Cdr. Richard Hunt, Jerry Frease, Curt Ebitz, Al Golfieri, Will Korber, Mike Krebs and Joe McClister.

January 7. Associate ladies kicked off the New Year with lunch at Oysters in Crystal River. Attending were Carol Allen, JoAnn Allen, Kay Allen, Sandy Cross, Annie Fair, Kim Frease, Mickey Hunt, Nancy Krebs, Barbara Mills, Vikki Pietras, Deborah St Martin.

Members continued

to represent Chapter 776 on the Florida National Cemetery Joint Veterans Support Committee in the design and construction of a Purple Heart monument at the cemetery.

Future

February 21, 11:00 a.m. Chapter 776 Twentieth Annual Purple Heart Ceremony, Citrus Auditorium, Inverness.

It was recently learned that Chapter 776 **Patriot Maximino Perez Alvarez** of Hernando, age 99, passed away on April 20, months short of his centennial birthday. Patriot Alvarez was a proud member of America's Greatest Generation, having served in the U.S. Navy during World War II from December 1943 to May 1945. Alvarez saw combat action in the Pacific Theater of Operations. He was the recipient of the Purple Heart for wounds received in action during the battle for Leyte, Philippine Islands, the first battle in which Japanese aircraft carried out kamikaze attacks, as well as the last-ever battle between battleships. Before moving to Hernando, he and his wife, Rosa, lived in Ossining, NY and Chappaqua, NY. He was predeceased by his wife of 73 years in April 2023.

**From the Commander**

Patriots & Associates,

Here we are wrapping up another year.

Our Chapter held some great events, and I feel that this will continue with 2026.

December 7, we held our Annual Pearl Harbor Dinner. Attendance was wonderful. We had a "Surprise" Guest of Honor, with a reading of a Silver Star Citation and a narrative of his second award of the Nation's third highest decoration for Valor. Background was given for his three Purple Hearts, each awarded in a different war, followed by Curt reading his Biography. His name was withheld until the very end, when our own J.B. Haskins was introduced to a standing ovation.

It is my intention to continue honoring our members for their sacrifices while serving in the military of our Great Country.

We set a record \$1,414 with our auction, thanks to the generosity of all who attended and the spirited bidding of the Bustetter family.

Our Purple Heart Ceremony is just around the corner, coming up February 21st at the Citrus County Auditorium. The Nature Coast Community Band will be playing for us. Once again, the Citrus County School District will have a display from every school in the district. A big shoutout to Dr. Scott Hebert, Darrick Buettner and the combined JROTC Cadets for their involvement.

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 Chapter officers for the coming term. If you are interested, please let Curt know of your interest at 352-382-3847 or info@citruspurpleheart.org.

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

Wishing a fabulous year for all of you, my Brothers and Sisters.

Richard Hunt, Commander

2025 Chapter 776 Pearl Harbor Dinner & Christmas Social



Over 50 members, proud supporters and friends of Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 attended the Chapter's annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance dinner and social at the Citrus National Golf Club, Homosassa.



Chapter 776 Jr. Vice Cdr. Jerry Frease read Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' Pearl Harbor Remembrance Proclamation commemorating the selfless sacrifice and undaunted courage of those who defended Pearl Harbor.



Navy Korean War and Vietnam War veteran J.B. Haskins and past Chapter 776 Commander, who is a two-time Silver Star and three-time Purple Heart recipient, was the dinner's guest of honor.



Navy veteran and Chapter 776 Associate Fred Daniels presented a \$1,000 donation to the Chapter on behalf of the Fleet Reserve Association, Branch 186, following the dinner.

Attendees Paul & Deborah St. Martin at the Pearl Harbor Remembrance dinner and social at the Citrus National Golf Club, Homosassa.



Colin & Elaine Pearl enjoyed dinner at the Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance dinner and social.



2025 VETERANS WEEK



Chapter 776 Patriots J.B. Haskins, USN, and Will Korber, USMC, were the Honorary Marshals for the Citrus County Thirty-third Annual Veterans Day Parade.

The 19th Annual Citrus Stampede Rodeo Veterans Night honorees were Chapter 776 Patriots Lee Helscel (Vietnam) and Nate Love (Iraq).

