



From the Executive Director

“Spring” can mean many things—to move suddenly, to propose something suddenly, to be a support as in a cushion, the season between winter and summer, or an underground well of water. What does spring mean to you?



*Ann Rehbein,
Executive Director*

Spring cleaning comes to mind, whether it is physical or mental: out with the old, in with the new. I look on QOVF as a bubbling spring of water, running its course smoothly while being a cushion of stability for its members, as they provide comfort and healing to our active duty service personnel and veterans.

A note from an awardee was recently shared with me. The veteran stated that she had been injured in Afghanistan and stuffed away all the feelings associated with her injury and mission. In fact, she still felt angry and frustrated six years after her return. She had been unable to let those feelings go until, faced with one more surgery, she was covered by her QOV.

“When I was blanketed with my quilt,” she wrote, “I felt your comfort, your love, and your support. You cared about me. You kept me warm under the colors I was ready and prepared to die for. I can’t describe the love and comfort that seeped into my body. No one has been there for me in time of comfort and support the way my quilt continues to be. Thank you. Thank you.”

I hope that your personal spring is running a smooth course as we continue the mission to cover those service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing QOVs.

SON & GRANDFATHER RECEIVE QOVs TOGETHER

Information provided by Janet Cooper-Bridge

Janet Cooper-Bridge was moved to tears when contacted by QOV volunteer Marina Teague, who was newly involved in QOVF. As a follower of Janet’s blog, thearmymom.com, Marina had come to know Janet through the writings on her blog and very much wanted the first QOV she made to go to Janet’s son, US Army Ranger Sgt. Brandon Bridge.

When Marina reached out to Janet, the seeds of a friendship were planted and the story and circle of care and compassion grew. Janet was not only a mother to an Army Ranger, but also

the daughter of an Army Captain. In the end, Marina and her fellow QOV volunteer, Leslie Birmingham, made and sent two quilts, one for Brandon and one for his grandfather, Janet’s father, Capt. William Cooper, US Army (ret.), a veteran of the Vietnam War. When the box arrived, Janet couldn’t open it. At the time, her son was in Afghanistan, deep into his fifth deployment in four and a half years. Although he had made the decision to leave the Army, for his mother his safe return seemed a billion years away.

Janet knew the presentation, whenever it happened, needed to be a joint one. “I wanted it done in a way and in a place that honored both my father’s



US Army Ranger Sgt. Brandon Ridge and his grandfather, Capt. Bill Cooper, US Army (ret.) hold their just-awarded QOVs, presented last fall at the George W. Bush Presidential Library.

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The makers of Brandon's and Bill's QOVs included letters of heartfelt thanks to the veterans when they shipped their quilts to Janet Cooper-Bridge.

and my son's service, recognized the love and labor the quiltmakers put into the quilts, and showed appreciation for the mission of QOVF."

Brandon returned stateside at the end of 2014, but getting him (a student in TX following his enlistment), her parents (in CA), herself and her husband (in NC), and the quilts together in one place and at the same time proved challenging.

Janet brought the still-sealed box with her when the planets finally aligned—more than a year later—for a family gathering in Dallas. As a family, they had visited other Presidential libraries over the years, so when Brandon suggested they all meet at the George W. Bush Presidential Library the following day, she knew the special location had presented itself.

Aided by a library docent, Janet opened the box privately. Inside, she found the letters the quiltmakers had enclosed with their QOVs. Again, she was moved to tears by the thoughtful and heartfelt gifts.

Janet writes, "On behalf of our family, I wish to thank the volunteers of the QOVF for their invaluable service to our nation's service members, veterans, and their families. I thank Marina for her dedication, patience, and support, and the other volunteers for their beautiful work. May you all know how deeply we appreciate your gifts. We are in your debt forever and always."

(About the contributor: Janet Cooper-Bridge blogs at [thearmymom.com](http://www.thearmymom.com). To read her full account of this QOV story, go to: <http://www.thearmymom.com/2016/02/quilt-of-valor-presentation-at-george-w.html>.)

"OPEN HEARTS" AT SPRINGS CREATIVE

Information provided by Kristine Nelson

Inspired by the mission of QOVF—and the coach-rookie program called Under Our Wings—employee Susan Morgan started an in-house QOV group at the Rock Hill, SC, headquarters of Springs Creative, the textile company where she works. Susan encouraged both non-sewers and beginning sewers to take part, recruiting capable quilters on staff to help the newbies.

Twenty-six individuals joined the "Open Hearts" QOVF member group when it launched in 2014, only six of them experienced sewers. To date, they've made and awarded eighteen QOVs, holding their presentations at the historic Cotton Factory building in downtown Rock Hill. Group members sew on lunch hours, after the workday,

and on Saturday mornings. Some bring their children along to learn about sewing and the meaning of national service. Many Springs fabrics find their way into these QOVs.

Everyone at Springs is encouraged to keep eyes and ears open to help locate veterans who have served but not yet been honored. Quilts have gone to employees' relatives, neighbors, and individuals they've met in doctor's office waiting rooms. Currently, Open Hearts is working to fulfill 40 new nominations.

The company's love and appreciation for the military and its service members began many years before QOVF was founded. In the 1940s, Springs Cotton Mills supported the war effort by developing fabrics for both the Army and Navy. The connection has continued through generations.



Quilts of Valor 11.6.15



Springs Creative provided a collage of images from the company's QOVF activity in 2015. In the top photo, employees pose with recipients of a few of the QOVs they've made during in-house sewing sessions. At center is Kristine Nelson, E-Commerce Merchandising Assistant, who leads the group.

A STAR'S JOURNEY: BOLT TO BATTLEGROUND & BACK

By Marianne Fons

Imagine for a moment you are a single blue star in a field of printed stars on a bolt of 100% cotton fabric in an independent quilt shop somewhere in America.

One day, a member of the local QOVF sew group, or a volunteer thinking of joining, walks into the shop carrying with her a pattern for a beautiful, red, white, and blue patchwork quilt. You wind up in the middle of the two-yard piece she buys. On the way home in the car, she reaches into the bag of fabrics and gives you a loving little pat.

Soon, you reside on a half-square triangle. Your triangle becomes part of a larger, pieced star block. Your block is joined with similar-but-not-identical blocks. Next, the batting and backing are layered. You are part of a beautiful, completed quilt.

But then something extra happens. The hand that patted you in the car sews a label to the back of the quilt, and suddenly you are not just any quilt, but a Quilt of Valor. As the last stitch goes in, you feel the maker's love and hope for healing infuse the quilt with special energy. When the completed quilt is washed, the energy is not rinsed away—it increases.

"Stars and Stripes" by Nancy Mahoney is available as a free pattern (courtesy of Martingale) to QOVF THREADS readers by clicking on the link [here](#).



Before long, your quilt is folded, label-side out, and placed on a table with other quilts. You have become part of an award ceremony. The other quilts are presented. Your turn finally comes.

Words of appreciation and admiration are spoken, you are unfurled, and soon you are wrapped around the shoulders of a veteran. You feel the rapid, pounding heartbeat of the recipient. You sense distant, rumbling sounds of war—gunfire, shouts, engine whines, and calls for medical personnel. The vibrations reach a pitch and then, slowly, subside. Your

recipient's heartbeat steadies.

Over the ensuing years, you spend many hours with your veteran, sometimes in fifteen-minute naps, sometimes all through the night. Sometimes you are shown to visitors and comrades who come to call. Your once-bright blue color fades as your quilt is repeatedly washed. Eventually, you and your fellow stars are threadbare. Your destiny has been fulfilled.

(About the Author: Marianne Fons serves on the QOVF Board of Directors as Liaison to the Quilting Industry. She lives in Winterset, IA.)

QOVs ON VIEW AT ACCUQUILT GALLERY

By Marianne Fons

AccuQuilt, an Omaha-based manufacturer of fabric cutters and dies, features a beautiful quilt gallery as part of their headquarters, offering changing exhibits of quilts for employees and visitors to enjoy throughout the year.

On display during November, December, and January were eight QOVs made by Omaha QOVF group members and others.

"We were thrilled to showcase these amazing quilts from quilters who volunteer their time to honor our veterans in such a special way," said AccuQuilt CEO (Chief Energizing Officer) Steve Nabity.



QOVs decorated the walls of AccuQuilt's in-headquarters gallery last November, December, and January.

Additionally, on Veterans Day, the company hosted a special event and award of QOVs. In all, ten Quilts of Valor were awarded, including one to female veteran Kimberly Hinnenkamp. A local Girls Scouts of America troop presented a QOV they made to Clinton Huey, a veteran of multiple tours in Iraq. The young sewists used the company's special equipment to create the blocks for the quilt. Nicole Arth,

Troop Leader and AccuQuilt employee; Lori Bain of the Omaha Modern Quilt Guild; and Judy Fletcher of the Omaha Quilts of Valor group assisted.

(About the exhibit space: AccuQuilt's quilt gallery is available for viewing by the public during office hours. To check open hours and availability, click [here](#) or call 888-258-7913.)

Growing Pains

By Ginger Fondren

The QOV family continues to grow. While a few state coordinators have retired, QOVF has added six new state coordinators: Heather Brock—Alabama; Warren Larsen and Ralph Osenbaugh—Iowa; Tonya Johnson-Spratley—Maryland; Billie Blakeney—Pennsylvania; and Maribeth Shreve—West Virginia. We have also added Debra Kaldenberg, Special Events Coordinator; Jennifer Keltner, Managing Editor for our newsletter THREADS; Dawn Gifford, IT Director; Juliet Madsen, Under Our Wings Program Coordinator; and Myra Coddens, Quilt Shop Group Coordinator. Membership is now over 6,000 members with many joining during the National Sew Day event. And finally, our new website is up and running. It truly has been a whirlwind couple of months.

Some say they're feeling our growing pains. I'm calling them OPPORTUNITIES—opportunities to get together with fellow quilters and have QOV sew days; opportunities to share the dream of QOVF founder Catherine Roberts by speaking at guild meetings and other public events; but most important, opportunities to cover a veteran with a quilt of comfort and healing. Let's continue working together as a team to find opportunities to complete our mission.

QOVF Core Values

Treating people with respect • Promoting excellence • Valuing service over self • Being accountable

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For more information about QOVF, see www.QOVF.org
For more information about the BOD, the QOVF staff, and how to contact your State Coordinator (SCs) go to <http://www.qovf.org/content/about-us.html>.



Quilts Reported

2012: 6,169
2013: 12,314
2014: 17,373
2015: 18,772
2016: 3,915

Total: 135,369
(as of 31 March 2016)



Reminder! The annual **Quilts of Valor® Conference** will be held on May 24-25, 2016 at the **Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, IA.**

Along with regular breakout sessions from the staff members, **Mary Fons** and **Tony Jacobson** will be featured speakers, there will be a bus trip to the **Iowa Quilt Museum**, and much more. Register on the Events Page at www.QOVF.org/events.

The Conference is being sponsored in part by the **America Quilts EXPO**, which will be held May 26-28, 2016, also at the Iowa Events Center.

Newsletter

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