From the Executive Director

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in National Sew Day in February. I know you had a great day and I want you to think of the great day a veteran will have when awarded your QOV.

Have you checked out the new website design at www.QOVF.org? We will continue to make updates and enhancements to meet the needs of our users.

I am very happy to announce the addition of a new volunteer to the QOVF family. Dawn Gifford is joining us as IT Director. She brings a wealth of knowledge to the position and we are very happy to have her join us.

Check elsewhere in this newsletter for information about the 2016 Annual Conference and EXPO. It is shaping up to be an awesome event and one you won’t want to miss.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our State Coordinators. They volunteer many hours and resources in arranging awards, attending guild meetings, driving thousands of miles, while living the mission to honor and comfort. Thank you seems inadequate, but please know that the entire QOVF family appreciates what you do, day in and day out.

Finally, Spring is arriving and on March 20th we celebrated the International Day of Happiness. My hope for each of you is that you quilt with peace and happiness, knowing you are making a difference.

Ann Rehbein, Executive Director

QOVs HEAL OLD AND UNSEEN WOUNDS

By Marsha Strand

The Comstock Lode Quilters began in 2015 with six friends who wanted to make QOVs for northern NV veterans returning from their Honor Flights. Partnering with three Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapters, Battle Born, Washoe Zephyr, and Nevada Sage Brush, the group has awarded 199 QOVs—of those 108 were awarded to Vietnam War veterans.

Rarely do quilters in our group know the veterans who will be awarded the QOVs we’ve made until the presentation ceremony. Equally rarely do we fully understand how deeply the experience affects our veterans, although we do know they appreciate anything done for them.

Many of the Vietnam War veterans were deeply moved by receiving a quilt bearing their name on the embroidered label. As we gave our “Quilty Hug” we heard such comments as, “No one has done anything so special like this,” or “The trip was like getting cake, but getting this quilt is not only the cake, but the icing and champagne too.”

Some veterans write touching and heartfelt thank you letters that motivate us and strengthen our dedication. One letter stood out and helped us realize what a difference our quilts make in a veteran’s life, and how deeply and long veterans may suffer emotionally.

In his own words, Sergeant Harold “Butch” Heater, United States Marine Corps, explained the comfort brought by his QOV. What follows is the text of his letter.

Monday, December 28, 2015

Dear Honor Flight Nevada,

I just received my copy of the Honor Flight CD the other day. I can’t adequately express in words my gratitude for being included for the Oct. 3–5 trip. I’m sure you have heard many stories from grateful VETS who have been on these trips. Here is mine.

My twin brother and I were born and raised in the Air Force. Our whole world was the military. Looking back, we could not have had a more enriched upbringing and childhood experience.

Like so many other BRATS, we chose to join the military after high school. My brother, Paul, entered...
Frank Levingston, a WWII veteran who lives in Lake Charles, LA, was honored last year on Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, while participating in an Honor Flight to Washington, DC. At 110, Frank is considered America’s oldest living veteran. He was a private during WWII, serving in the Naples-Foggia Campaign in Italy. He was discharged in 1945.

Roxanne Brown, Louisiana State Coordinator, awarded Frank’s QOV on November 13, 2015, which happened to be his 110th birthday, just a few weeks before his journey to the capitol. She followed the story of her awardee’s trip on local and national news, and was happy to see his QOV went with him. In photos taken on an obviously breezy day at the WWII Memorial, Frank’s QOV is tucked snugly around him.

Frank’s quilt was pieced and quilted by Robin Hauser of DeRidder, LA, a member of the Knotted Threads QOV group of Glenmora. Another of Robin’s QOVs was among those displayed at “Quilted to Honor & Comfort” at the National Quilt Museum last year.

“We sometimes wonder if recipients really use their quilts. It was so neat to know his QOV was with Mr. Levingston there and back,” Roxanne said.

(About the Author: Roxanne Brown is QOVF Louisiana State Coordinator. Contact Roxanne at roxanne.brown@QOVF.org. Photos courtesy Jillian Corder, KPLC News, Lake Charles.)
HONOR ON BOTH SIDES
By Jina Barney

My parents immigrated to America from Australia when I was a young girl. When they became American citizens, my siblings—all under eighteen at the time—became Americans automatically. As I was nineteen, I did not.

Later, I later married an American, paid taxes, and did everything a good citizen does. My husband was nervous when I traveled abroad on my Australian passport, worrying I might be denied reentry.

Recently, with a significant birthday coming up, I decided the perfect gift to myself (and to my husband) would be gaining U.S. citizenship. I completed the paperwork, paid the fees, and passed the test, answering 200 questions many Americans probably couldn’t!

During a special ceremony, I stood with people of many different original nationalities and became an American citizen. I am proud to say I now travel on an American passport.

In Alpine, UT, Jina Barney presents a QOV and a hug to her brother, Ammon.

TEAMWORK, NOT TERRITORIES
By Ginger Fondren

Many years ago, I worked for a company that initiated an incentive awards program. When various departments reached specific goals, points were awarded to everyone in that department. These points were accumulated and then redeemable from a catalog of prizes. When this program was presented to the company’s employees, a theme song was part of the presentation. The chorus of that theme song went something like this—“fantastic things can happen when you dare to have a dream—and then go after it, working as a team.”

That verse stayed with me throughout my working career and recently came to mind when a QOVF volunteer apologized to me for stepping into “my territory” to make an award. It also comes to mind whenever I hear similar comments regarding areas within a state.

Teams are comprised of many people having varied skills—and we see this in our QOVF volunteers. We have volunteers who are excellent in assembling quilt tops, long-arm quilting, and binding. Other volunteers excel in being leaders as State Coordinators, group leaders, or being part of the Executive Staff. And there are several State Coordinators and group leaders who offer assistance in awarding quilts outside their areas. Those are the fantastic things that happen when we go after our mission as a team!

It takes all of us working together to complete our mission. Let’s all remember, we share the same territory—honoring our veterans.

(About the Author: Ginger Fondren is the Assistant Executive Director, QOVF. Contact Ginger at ginger.fondren@QOVF.org)
Mark your calendar! 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 will be a featured speaker and present a trunk show. There will be award ceremonies, updates on all things QOVF from our Board members, and possibly a surprise field trip.

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. Several special events and a portion of the admission fee are earmarked to support the mission of QOVF. During the EXPO, a QOVF award ceremony will be held each day with 50 quilts total—one from each state. The EXPO will feature classes, special guests, an ice cream social, quilting production lines creating QOV, and vendors galore. For more information, visit http://sewingexpo.com/AmericaQuiltsEXPO.aspx.

Quilts Reported
2012: 6,169
2013: 12,314
2014: 17,373
2015: 18,772
2016: 2,521
Total: 133,975
(as of 29 February 2016)

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