



From the Executive Director

Memorial Day has always been a significant day for me. Originally called “Decoration Day,” and observed on May 30, it was a solemn day set aside to remember and honor the nation’s war dead. When I was a little girl and there were no 1-800 numbers for flowers, my grandmother would go to the local dime store and order peonies for Memorial Day. Today, my yard is full of peonies waiting to burst into bloom and be used to honor and remember.



*Ann Rehbein,
Executive Director*

In my youth, I would also ride on a flatbed truck in a parade clutching bunches of veteran-made poppies that would be used to honor the final resting place of veterans. May 30 was also my dad’s birthday, but as he was a veteran of WWII, there was no birthday celebration until the official ceremonies were over.

While I still observe Memorial Day, my mission currently is for the living, to bring honor and comfort to veterans touched by war, to share their stories and memories, their hugs and tears, their laughter and joy.

I was part of an award ceremony recently at a state veterans home where nineteen WWII veterans were honored. One was a cook, one was a driver, another in the Battle of the Bulge,

one a prisoner of war, and two were women who served in the newly formed Women’s Army Corp. They participated in different capacities in the 1940s, but the common bond of service brought them together that day. They were all smiles as they received their quilts and our thanks for a job well done.

Our mission to cover all veterans continues daily across this nation. QOVF is well on its way to reaching a milestone this year of 150,000 quilts awarded. Thank you for being part of this passion with whatever contribution you are able to make, whether it be piecing, quilting, monetary or supporting. The veterans of WWII to the newest recruits will be honored and comforted by your special touch.

**LOVE FOR SOLDIERS
SEWN INTO 1,000 QUILTS**

By Jennifer Eberbach

The Brighton Casual Quilters guild of Brighton, MI, is closing in on a milestone of 1,000 quilts sent to U.S. soldiers and veterans of war.

The QOVs have kept wounded soldiers warm and served as comfort blankets. They are also like badges of honor that commemorate veterans’ service to country.

Guild members received word from Kandahar, Afghanistan, saying that wounded soldiers had worn quilts while being honored with Purple Hearts.

“It’s a way of telling people we appreciate their service. We weave prayer, appreciation and love into those quilts,” quilter Carolyn Gagacki said.



Terri Dubuc reads letters thanking Brighton Casual Quilters guild for making QOVs for U.S. soldiers and veterans. Carolyn Gagacki (left) and Mindy Kinsey (right) listen.

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“My daughter-in-law’s grandfather, Jake Haller, was in the Battle of the Bulge. I gave him a Quilt of Valor about two years before he died. He had [his quilt with] him when he died. His quilt was displayed on a stand right next to the casket at his funeral,” quilter Ruth Spangler said.

Guild members started making quilts to send overseas around 2003, and down the road they linked up with the national QOVF.

Brighton resident Ann Meredith, past president of the guild, brainstormed the idea for the Casual Quilters. “My father was a WWII vet who was injured. He was shot from his tank and lay injured by the side of the road. A fellow soldier tried to move him closer in and was killed. He saved my dad,” Meredith said.

Her father, who was in France at the time, came back to Michigan with a shot-up arm. She said he was frustrated because he needed to be taken care of when he was usually the one taking care

of his family. “I had already been thinking of them (wounded veterans) and thinking, ‘What could I do for them?’” Meredith said.

About 12 years ago, she organized local quilters to start making quilts, collect donations of fabric and raise funds for postage to send them off to medical units.

When they first linked up with QOVF, the organization was focused only on injured soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. Later, it expanded its reach to any service member who had been touched by war, including veterans who served during past conflicts.

The local guild’s official quilt count was 967 as of last week. “I have 18 to deliver and over 40 quilts out to quilters, and people should be bringing some on to our tag sale May 2. I also think I have at least 15 quilt tops all in a bag, which still need backs,” quilter Terri Dubuc said.

Many hands go into creating Quilts of Valor. Kits for people to make their own are available at The Stitchery sewing center in Howell, MI. When a

quilter finishes one, they return it to the sewing center. Then Brighton Casual Quilters members pick quilts up from there. “It’s not just one hand that’s touched these quilts. It’s many people,” quilter Mindy Kinsey said.

There are over 100 quilters in Brighton Casual Quilters who hail from Livingston County and beyond. Often, multiple quilters will work on one Quilt of Valor, or one person will make the front and another will do the binding or batting.

Brighton Casual Quilters held “A Quilter’s and Crafter’s Tag Sale” in early May at a local Catholic church. Donated fabric, yarn, tools, patterns, books and other craft-related items were for sale.

Proceeds will support the local guild’s QOV efforts and their work on their next 1,000 quilts.

(Reprinted with permission from Livingston Daily Press & Argus, reporter Jennifer Eberbach/photographer Gillis Benedict. Contact Jennifer at jeberback@livingstondaily.com)

AND WE JUST KEEP ON GROWING

By Ginger Fondren

Our membership continues to grow—this year alone we have added more than 1600 new members—this includes more than 180 individual new members, more than 40 new groups, and now we are adding quilt shops, too.

With the increased growth also comes the need for additional coordinators, not only in states where we currently do not have a coordinator, but also in many of our states where we have one coordinator with a large population of veterans.

Over the next few months we are encouraging all our members to seriously consider becoming a State or District Coordinator. If you are interested in learning more about either of these positions, please contact me at ginger.fondren@QOVF.org.

(About the Author: Ginger Fondren is the Assistant Executive Director, QOVF. Contact Ginger at ginger.fondren@qovf.org.)

CLOTHWORKS LAUNCHES MYSTERY QOV BOM DESIGN

By Marianne Fons

Clothworks, the creator of American Made Brand (AMB) cotton solids, this month launches a new mystery Block-of-the-Month program designed especially for Quilts of Valor. The finished design is top-secret, naturally, but I got a sneak-peek, and—trust me—it’s neat! I also got permission to reveal the quilt’s title, Our Land.

To sign up, go to <https://blog.clothworks.com/>. You’ll get a new block design the first Monday of each month. You can use Clothworks’ suggested AMB colors, or strike out on your own. Every Monday, you’ll get an email with a tutorial, a related project, color variation ideas, or a fun link. Post photos of your block to American Made Brand’s Instagram #AMBmystery for a chance to win fabric prizes.

The layout of Our Land is a bit more “modern” than some in our community of toppers may have made in the past, but the patchwork is easy. Think of the program as a great opportunity to sew slightly out of the box.



I’m always thrilled when a vendor recognizes the important role the QOVF community plays in the marketplace by coming up with something special just for us. We’ve given Clothworks permission to display the QOVF logo in their advertisements and the posters they’re providing to participating shops.

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

COMFORT KNOWS NO SEASON

Information provided by Rhonda Bunnell

On a snowy Veterans Day in south central Iowa, QOVF volunteers Rita Wood and Rhonda Bunnell of Earlham presented two of the many QOVs they have awarded. The event took place before there was an accessible Policies & Procedures Manual with available scripts and suggested protocol.

Simply following their instincts, they chose the local veterans cemetery, brought along a hot beverage and a box of cookies, and, when the snow began to fall, gathered the two recipients and the group of fifteen friends and family under the overhang of a building in the vicinity.

They used a laptop to play a few songs and showed the Iowa Public Television video clip familiar to so many to explain the meaning of QOVs to those who braved the weather that day.

After a photo op with the day's recipients, they found the glass doors of the building unlocked and stepped into the building for huddled conversation and treats.



Left to right: Awardee Terry Blythe of West Des Moines, IA, volunteers Rhonda Bunnell and Rita Wood, both of Earlham, awardee James Ross of St. Charles. The inscription on the Vietnam War memorial marker reads, "NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER."

AMERICA QUILTS EXPO: A MUST-SEE EVENT!

Information provided by Marlene Ingraham

For the first time ever, the QOVF has a full-blown, fresh and energetic, open-to-the-public event to raise awareness and lend support to the mission: *To cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.*

America Quilts EXPO is coming to the Iowa Events Center (Hy-Vee Hall) on May 26, 27 & 28, 2016, to provide financial, creative and social support to the foundation and the quiltmakers who make it all happen. What could be a better way to jump-start your own patriotic holiday weekend than to participate?

The EXPO is an event to enjoy and remember forever. Several special events (like the Ice Cream Social and Celebrity Small Quilt Auction), plus a portion of the admission fee is earmarked to support QOVF financially. And even though more than 136,000 quilts have



already been awarded, demand never wanes. Thus, the goal of creating six-dozen quilt tops in the course of the three-day event will also provide a big boost. Quilt production will be ongoing throughout the EXPO, with volunteers stitching on machines provided by sewing machine manufacturers, piecing fabrics donated by generous fabric suppliers, all for this unprecedented event.

Guest quilt celebrities, including nationally known talents such as Marianne Fons, one of the founders of *Fons & Porter's Love of Quilting* magazine and public television series, will be teaching, helping with special events

and more. Alex Anderson and Eleanor Burns, two more icons of the quilt world, join Marianne.

Everyone can enjoy hundreds of quilts on display and take pride in seeing QOVs awarded to service members and veterans each day. Quilt presentation ceremonies, free and open to the public, take place each morning starting at 9:00 a.m., prior to the opening of the EXPO at 10:00 a.m. It is sure to be an unforgettable event not to be missed! Join us!

(For more details about America Quilts Expo, visit www.americaquiltsEXPO.com.)

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

By Ginger Fondren

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. Tony Jacobson will speak about how he designs quilts. There will be award ceremonies, updates on all things QOVF from our Board members, and more. The conference precedes the America Quilts EXPO (see page 3 of this newsletter for more information).

Deanna Bryce has announced her retirement from the position of Destinations Coordinator. Deanna has contributed thousands of hours to the success of QOVF and we wish her well in her future. If you, or someone you know, are interested in applying for the Destinations Coordinator position, the job description may be found at <http://www.qovf.org/open-positions/>

Quilts Reported

2012: 6,169

2013: 12,314

2014: 17,373

2015: 18,772

2016: 5,183

Total: 136,638

(as of 30 April 2016)

QOVF Core Values

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

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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>.



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Newsletter

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