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Bob Wilson

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INDEPENDENCE



Honoring Our Heroes: Hospice of Southern Kentucky's Touching Tribute to Veterans

In the heart of Aviation Heritage Park, Bowling Green, KY, an inspiring event unfolded on May 19, 2024. Hospice of Southern Kentucky orchestrated a moving memorial to honor the valor and lives of 119 veterans who had recently passed under their compassionate care. The community came together to celebrate the legacies of these brave individuals in an atmosphere brimming with respect and gratitude.

The ceremony opened with the soulful strains of taps, a musical tribute that paid homage to the fallen heroes. As the notes echoed through the park, families of the honored veterans stood united, creating a powerful sense of camaraderie and collective remembrance. It was a moment where grief and pride intertwined, fostering a deep connection among those present.

A significant highlight of the event was the reading of the names. Each veteran's name was spoken aloud, ensuring that their service and sacrifice did not go unnoticed. This personal acknowledgment brought the memories of the departed into sharp focus, allowing their legacies to shine brightly in the hearts of their loved ones and the community.

Adding to the emotional hues of the day, a heartfelt poem was recited, encapsulating the profound gratitude owed to those who served our nation. The words resonated deeply, filling the families with a sense of honor and joy as they reflected on the courage and spirit of their loved ones.

In a touching display of community and support, the event featured a catered meal from Mission BBQ. This shared meal provided an opportunity for connection and healing, allowing attendees to exchange stories, celebrate lives well-lived, and find solace in shared experiences of loss and remembrance.

"Hospice of Southern Kentucky is deeply committed to honoring our veterans, not just in their final chapter, but also in the legacy they leave behind," expressed Steve Jantz, CEO of Hospice of Southern Kentucky. "Today was about paying tribute to the heroes in our hospice care and reassuring their families that their loved ones' courage and spirit will never be forgotten."

This heartfelt gathering underscored the mission of Hospice of Southern Kentucky, highlighting their dedication to supporting not only the individuals in their care but also uplifting their families and serving the broader community.

For more information on the services provided by Hospice of Southern Kentucky or to support their mission, please visit www.hospicesoky.org.

About Hospice of Southern Kentucky:

For over 43 years, Hospice of Southern Kentucky has been a source of compassionate care and support for patients and families facing life-limiting illnesses. Their unwavering commitment to honoring the dignity and service of veterans stands as a testament to their dedication to giving back to those who have selflessly served our nation.





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ISSUE 6 2024

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: 10
Independence

Good Living

SHAPING LIVES AND FUTURES 12

The heartfelt impact of WKU's Veterans Upward Bound program

AN EXPERT IN FILING 18

Veteran P.R. Webster gets veterans what they are due

FROM CLOUDS TO CLASSROOM TO CIVIL SERVICE 22

The inspirational journey of Mayor Todd Alcott

LOCAL TACO'S UNCONVENTIONAL TACOS BRING KENTUCKY FLAIR TO THE TABLE 26

Simply delicious tacos

FIREWORKS, FLAVOR, AND FAMILY 28

Cook up a patriotic feast for summer gatherings





Good Stories

- 30 FROM SERVING HIS COUNTRY TO SERVING HIS COMMUNITY**
Bob "Gunny" Wilson and the Kentucky Veterans Brigade serve the veterans of Bowling Green
- 34 THE VETERAN WHO FOUGHT BATTLES BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD**
The inspiring journey of Michael Stoyonovich
- 38 BOOTS ON THE GROUND IN BOWLING GREEN**
Malcolm Cherry is making great strides for veterans

Good Times

- 42 COMMUNITY EVENTS**
- 44 CHARITY LISTING**
- 46 ADVERTISER INDEX**

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The colors between the oceans

Healing is building for a more perfect union.

IF YOU took a snapshot of any moment in our country's history, there is a hurt we were trying to heal. The same is true today. It's our independence that lets us correct our wrongs, to heal, and to build our country up for a more perfect union. We can all be made by the same Creator and still land somewhere red, white, or blue. We can be different. That is the beauty of independence. This land is your land; this land is my land.

We can be better because of the people in our communities. Those who allow us to be independent provide an open field. We can run for miles into the unknown, and while it's scary, we know we are capable of whatever waits on the other side. We can run with the wind to our backs, hitting the ground to the beat of drums and trumpets that empower us. The same trumpets that rang as we fought a Civil War to keep a

country together with human rights for those of every skin color. The same drums that banged as we flew to Europe to end the Second World War. The same trumpets that helped us stand tall in September 2001. We're a country with the strength to hold each other up in 2020, even if it was through latex gloves.

While perfection will always be impossible to attain, it's our duty to fight for it every day — to get closer to the threshold of freedom and equality for everyone. Independence is a blessing that paints a beautiful picture of blues and reds that, when you pull away, make a purple you can only find between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

This issue of Good News highlights those in our community who make us better. It's their independence — and the fight to obtain it — that makes us who we are. GN

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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MARC HAMILTON

SHAPING LIVES AND FUTURES

THE HEARTFELT IMPACT OF WKU'S VETERANS UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM

BY HALEY POTTER // PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADIN PARKS

SITTING ACROSS from Marc Hamilton, the Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) program director at Western Kentucky University (WKU), his demeanor was a blend of reserved pride and the kind of approachability that instantly puts you at ease. His demeanor is that of a proud U.S. veteran. Hamilton, who retired as a lieutenant colonel in 2017, carries with him a wealth of military and life experiences that are a tremendous help in his current role at the university.

Hamilton began his military career straight out of high school in 1986, choosing the Army over immediate college education.

"I went to a college prep high school, so I was never supposed to go into the military. I was supposed to go right into college, but I wasn't ready for it," he explained.

This decision led him from Illinois to Germany, through various roles, and back into school at Illinois State University after his initial time in the service. His journey through the military wasn't just a career —

it was an experience that prepared him for challenges and opportunities in life.

Reflecting on his military service, Hamilton noted, "Being in the military definitely shaped your life... It groomed me for where I am today." His career took him across the world — from the Balkans to Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq — places that formed his logistical and leadership skills. But it's the personal growth and lifelong friendships that seem to have left the deepest impact on him.



▲ Rhette Foust, Tiara Barbour, Marc Hamilton, and Shannon Taylor

“It really changed me for the better,” he shared with pride.

Transitioning from life in uniform to a civilian role, especially one so important at WKU, Hamilton has found a new avenue to impact lives — this time, helping fellow veterans navigate the path to higher education. The

VUB program at WKU is part of the broader TRIO initiative, a combination of federal programs that emerged from President Johnson’s War on Poverty in the 1960s.

“We assist veterans transitioning from military service into post-secondary education,” Hamilton said.

Whether it’s a two-year degree, a four-year degree, or a certificate program, the VUB is designed to tailor its support to the specific needs of veterans.

Hamilton passionately outlined the scope of VUB’s work, emphasizing the personalized support the program offers. From academic



“Last semester, we had two veterans who were homeless. We worked with local organizations to secure housing and basic necessities for them.”

- Marc Hamilton

“To help them be that stepping stone, to see where they are now and then four years later, to get that degree and go on and make an impact in the community — it’s great. I like doing that.”

In his first year at the helm of VUB, Hamilton has already seen significant success, with the program helping over a hundred veterans this year alone. His dedication to the cause is evident as he talks about the broader reach of the program, helping not just local veterans at WKU but also those from other regions through digital platforms like Zoom.

“We’re here at WKU, but we help veterans attending any two-year or four-year institution,” he stated, emphasizing the inclusive nature of VUB’s support system.

Hamilton’s story is one of service, both in uniform and in education. Through his leadership at WKU’s Veterans Upward Bound program, he is not just shaping individual futures but helping forge a stronger, more supportive community for veterans transitioning back into civilian life, a very inspiring and humbling feat.

Hamilton’s journey can serve as a reminder to both servicemen and women and civilians alike. Sometimes, the most impactful battlefields are the ones where we fight for others’ opportunities and successes, far from the front lines. **GN**

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a federal TRIO program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, visit <https://www.wku.edu/vub/>

preparation in basic subjects like math, English, and science to navigating complex educational benefits and resources, VUB stands as a crucial bridge for veterans.

“Last semester, we had two veterans who were homeless. We worked with local organizations to secure housing and basic necessities

for them,” he recalled, highlighting the program’s community impact and network.

But perhaps what’s most striking about Hamilton’s work is the personal fulfillment it brings him.

“It’s great because you actually see them grow before you,” he said, his eyes lighting up.

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VETERAN P.R. WEBSTER GETS VETERANS
WHAT THEY ARE DUE.

By Sara Hook // Photography by Amanda Guy

FORMS AND paperwork can be daunting even on the best days — especially when so many forms are important to fill out correctly. That is the struggle of many veterans as they work to file for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Fortunately, veteran service organizations (VSOs) like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion always have someone there to help: the service officer.

A service officer acts as a liaison between the veteran and the VA and has the knowledge and experience to handle claims with care. P.R. Webster provides that resource for thousands of veterans in Bowling Green and surrounding counties. For nearly 20 years, he has met with veterans

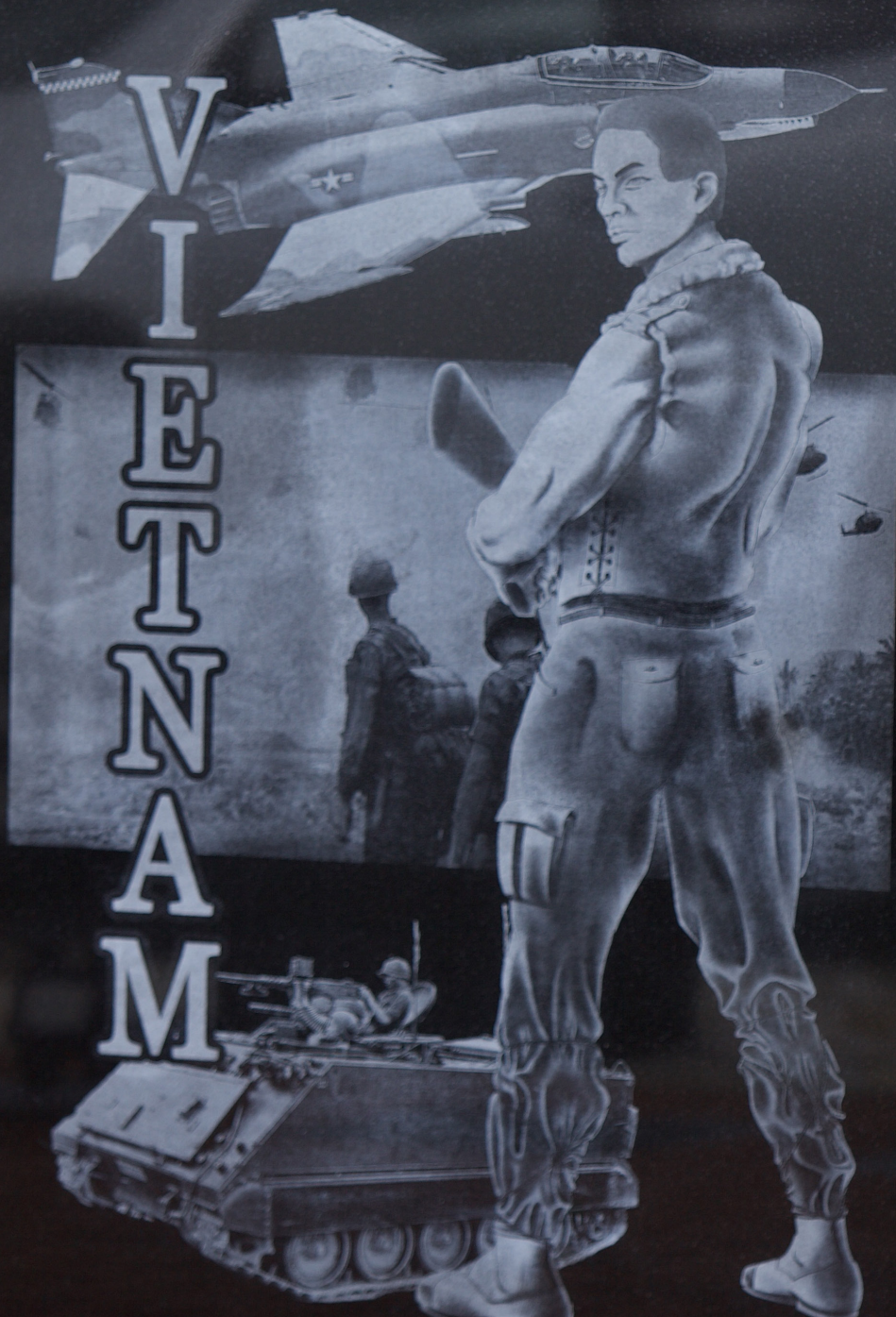
and filed paperwork, doing his best to get local service members the help and compensation they have earned.

The job is neither glamorous nor easy. While Webster is retired, his position as a service officer includes 40-hour weeks and weekend overtime. He has to be familiar with dozens of different forms and qualifications, and he must travel across seven counties to meet with those he serves.

“The VA has over 730 forms, but we deal with about 30 or 40,” Webster explained. “It just takes time — patience — to learn how to do them.”

Because it is so time-consuming and complex, Webster said the position is often relegated to the “new guy” at a VSO. That is how Webster was introduced to the

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P. R. Webster

“

I HAD RETIRED FROM MY JOB, AND I NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING. I TOOK TO IT, I ENJOYED IT, AND I GOT GOOD RESULTS, AND SO I'VE STUCK WITH IT EVER SINCE.

- P. R. Webster

position in 2006. He'd spent three years in the army, serving in Vietnam. Years later, after retiring from his construction job, he joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion as a life member.

"I had retired from my job, and I needed to do something," Webster said. "I took to it, I enjoyed it, and I got good results, and so I've stuck with it ever since."

That persistence sets Webster apart from many other service officers, who Webster said wanted to help veterans but didn't want to learn the VA system. It's a system that many veterans are unaware of and need to know. Webster's job has helped him serve thousands of people, but there are many more who never seek out a service officer to get the benefits they are due.

"They don't know what they're supposed to do when they get out of the service," Webster said. "By joining a VSO, then people like me tell them what their benefits are, but a lot of veterans don't join veteran service organizations, and they're just out there playing with their

grandkids and [have] no clue what they might be entitled to."

It might be six years of work to get someone's back pay, or there may only be a few days to file a claim so a family can have military honors at a funeral. It could be filing for insurance, education, disability, or any number of other issues. Once a month, he goes to the Warren County jail to work with veterans who are inmates there, helping them access resources the VA can provide and prepare for their release. Any veteran, spouse, child, or widow may have a claim, and Webster helps all of them — free of charge.

As a result of his years of dedication, many veterans and their families have gotten the benefits they worked so hard to earn through serving their country. His work and those like him make Bowling Green a better place daily. **GN**

To contact American Legion Post 23, visit 201 Dishman Lane in Bowling Green or call (270) 781-4046.





From Clouds to Classroom to Civil Servant

The inspirational journey of Mayor Todd Alcott

By Amanda E. West // Photography by Adin Parks

FROM THE chilly East Coast to the balmy Southwest to countries thousands of miles away — such as Germany, Iraq, South Korea, Italy, and Kyrgyzstan — Todd Alcott dutifully served his country in the United States Air Force. For over two decades, he climbed the chain of command until he reached lieutenant colonel. At the time of his retirement, he was on the Air Staff at the Pentagon as the chief of resilience. His wife, Deb, who taught grades K-5 wherever they temporarily settled, packed their belongings and adapted to each new assignment along with the Alcott's son, Jacob.

Though the trio experienced international cuisine, heard different languages and dialects, and witnessed breathtaking scenery across the globe, to the Alcott family, there was no place

like home. So, in 2016, they returned to Bowling Green. Todd currently serves as mayor and has been the Junior ROTC (JROTC) teacher at Warren East High School for the last eight years, while Deb is a multilingual learner teacher at Bowling Green High School. Jacob graduated from Purdue University with a degree in computer science and is engaged to be married.

Todd's mother, Elaine Alcott, had been a fifth grade teacher at Alvaton Elementary School but joined him at Rich Pond Elementary School when he entered sixth grade. Even as a child, he heavily involved himself in the community through the Warren County 4-H, the Royal Ambassadors at Rich Pond Baptist Church, and his youth group. He graduated from Warren Central High School before attending Western



Todd Alcott

Kentucky University (WKU), where he was a third-generation graduate. While at WKU, he met and later married Deb.

Todd's dad, Fred Alcott, had been a naval helicopter pilot, so Todd grew up hearing endless stories of military service.

"I loved listening to my dad talking about being a naval helicopter pilot and flying on and off an aircraft carrier. I remember, my sophomore year at WKU, we had the Air Force Thunderbirds come to Bowling Green for an air show. I couldn't get enough of it, so I went to the Downing Center to hear the pilots talk, and during classes, I heard them zooming over the campus. Someone I knew was wearing a [U.S. Air Force] uniform underneath a C-130 aircraft. He told me I could train to be an officer while attending WKU. He invited me to Tennessee State University in Nashville to visit their JROTC program. After a lot of studying to take the qualifying test, I took an oath to become a cadet, and two years later, I took my oath to become a second lieutenant for the [United States Air Force]."

During his service, Todd served four combat support command tours and was selected as a squadron commander three times. He also served as the chief of Air Force lodging for over 31,000 hotel rooms and was the chief of personnel for the joint force Operation Security & Cooperation in



Baghdad, Iraq, as well as at the U.S. Embassy.

"For me, I liked the idea of serving because of Dad's stories. But I don't think I truly understood yet. When September 11, 2001, happened, I was a captain and knew I was in the right place. I felt like I was our global ambassador for Bowling Green because I was proud to tell people I grew up where Corvettes are made. As far as serving, I've never met a person who regretted it. I've only met people that regret not serving. There are many ways of serving — civil service, enlisted, officer. It takes us all."

In everything Todd has accomplished so far, the welfare of others has continuously been his motivation, and his role as mayor has proved no different.

"We increased the pay of our public servants, police, and firefighters and built our third fire station in three years. We're building a new police and fire academy on Porter Pike, and we've added an amnesty baby box that's been used twice. We're working to build government





support for local nonprofits to help our homeless population, such as the center we are renovating with the Salvation Army.

“Our city invested \$2 million of American Relief Protection Act funds to build showers, restrooms, laundry, and a collaborative walk-in center to provide the first step toward helping themselves.

The overwhelming response we received after the tornadoes in December 2020, working to build and find options for affordable housing, creating an entertainment district downtown, and working to create and establish a new park on the Barren River waterfront — all of these are the things I’m most proud of.” GN

“I’ve never met a person who regretted it. I’ve only met people that regret not serving. There are many ways of serving – civil service, enlisted, officer – it takes us all.”

- Todd Alcott

LOCAL TACO'S UNCONVENTIONAL TACOS BRING KENTUCKY FLAIR TO THE TABLE

*Forget authenticity —
these tacos are simply delicious.*



LOCAL TACO may not be your go-to spot for authentic Mexican cuisine, but its incredibly diverse menu and extensive selection of cocktails ensure there's something to delight every palate, from the youngest upward. Every time I have dined here, there are always a lot of families with small children accompanying them, and that may be because this casual dining spot is very welcoming. There's sure to be something on the menu that even the pickiest diner can enjoy — including a kid's menu.

We sampled the chicken tortilla soup, which is made in-house with chicken and vegetables and served with avocado, pico, tortilla strips, and sour cream. The chips and queso are another standout appetizer, as the chips were thin, crispy, and perfectly seasoned.

The entrees we enjoyed consisted of the Voodoo Fries, a giant pile of crinkle-cut fries smothered with queso, brisket, ground beef, guacamole, and “boom boom” sauce. These were fantastic and enough to serve an entire table of hungry people. The Nashville hot chicken tacos — as I said, the tacos are unconvention-

al — topped with spicy hot sauce. And Wickles Pickles was a standout, as well as the Korean BBQ taco, which consisted of Korean grilled sirloin, green onions, and Asian slaw.

The street corn is delicious and can be ordered on or off the cob. The side items include boraccho beans, Mexican rice, and Mexi-tots, which are tator tots flavored with Mexican seasonings. You can also enjoy coleslaw, fresh fruit, black beans, and sauteed vegetables.

The menu has a large selection of specialty margaritas, cocktails, beer, and tequilas to enjoy — which we may have done. Service is fast and friendly, and the wait staff is very enthusiastic about the menu and can suggest their favorite items as well as items you may enjoy based on whether you feel adventurous or would like a more traditional offering.

If you're looking for authentic Mexican cuisine, this probably isn't your first choice. But if you want delicious, reasonable, unconventional fusion cuisine that politely nods to Mexico, this may be your place. I know I'll be back. **GN**

GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Bowling Green. This month Eve Vawter visited Local Taco.

Eve Vawter
FoodCriticBowlingGreen@Gmail.com

Local Taco

30 U.S. 31 W. Bypass #105
Bowling Green
(270) 938-1025
localtacobg.com



LOCAL TACO

.....

Bowling Green, Kentucky



A collage of Southern-style barbecue dishes. In the foreground, there are several plates of ribs and a bowl of salad. In the background, there are more ribs and a bowl of corn. The text is overlaid on a dark red background.

Fireworks, flavor, and
FAMILY

Submit your recipes to be included in Good News Magazine
and the Exchange Cookbook: www.southernaprons.com

Cook up a patriotic feast for summer gatherings.

WHAT BETTER time to indulge in the ultimate celebration of all things American: backyard barbecues, July Fourth festivities, and the comforting flavors of home? Let's salute the classic dishes that evoke the nostalgia of summer gatherings and the joy of savoring delicious comfort food with loved ones.

From perfectly grilled burgers and sizzling hot dogs to mouthwatering potato salad and sweet, tangy barbecue ribs, these recipes capture the essence of summer indulgence. Whether you're hosting a backyard bash or simply craving comfort food, join us as we embrace the essence of outdoor cooking and revel in the flavors of freedom. **GN**



Grilled Chipotle Ribs

Submitted by Essie Mills

2 sm. onions, peeled, divided
1 rack pork spareribs, 4 1/2 lbs.
water, enough to boil ribs
1/2 c. mesquite flavored marinade
1 t. chipotle chili powder
2 T. fresh cilantro, chopped

Quarter 1 onion and chop remaining onion. In a roasting pan over high heat, bring ribs, quartered onion, and enough water to cover ribs to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. In a small mixing bowl, combine chopped onion, marinade, chili powder, and cilantro. Heat grill to medium high. Brush ribs with marinade mixture. Grill for 15 minutes or until thermometer reads 160°, turning once, brushing often.

Broccoli Slaw

Submitted by Brenda Hamilton

1 pkg. broccoli slaw
2 pkgs. Ramen noodles, chicken flavor, broken into pieces
1 bunch green onions, chopped
flavor packet from Ramen noodles
1/2 c. vegetable oil
1/2 c. sugar
1/3 c. white wine vinegar
1 c. slivered almonds, toasted
1 c. sunflower seeds, toasted

Mix broccoli slaw, Ramen noodles, and green onions together in a large bowl. In a sauce pan, mix flavor packets, oil, sugar, and vinegar together; heat slightly to help dissolve sugar. Pour over broccoli slaw mixture; mix well. Refrigerate 24 hours. Before serving, toss with almonds and sunflower seeds

Microwave Coconut Cream Pie

Submitted by Judy Flynt

3/4 c. sugar
5 T. cornstarch
3 c. milk
3 egg yolks, beaten
1 1/2 c. flake coconut
2 T. margarine
1 1/2 t. vanilla
1 deep dish pie shell, baked

In a microwavable bowl, combine sugar and cornstarch. Gradually stir in milk. Cook at full power for 6-8 minutes or until thickened and bubbling. Whisk 2-3 times during cooking. In a small bowl, beat egg yolks. Stir in 3/4 cup of hot mixture into egg yolks, stirring constantly. Return to hot mixture. Cook on full power for 1-2 1/2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from microwave. Add coconut, margarine, and vanilla. Whisk until margarine is melted. Pour into pie shell. Allow to cool for several hours before serving.

INDEPENDENT



By Sara Hook
Photography by Amanda Guy

BOB “GUNNY” WILSON



FROM SERVING HIS COUNTRY TO SERVING HIS COMMUNITY

Bob “Gunny” Wilson and the Kentucky Veterans
Brigade serve the veterans of Bowling Green.

VETERANS SPEND years serving their country, and whether they are in the Army, the Navy, or the Marines, their work is incredibly important.

It is only fitting that their efforts be rewarded after retirement, but transitioning from military to civilian life is not easy, and many fall on hard times. Fortunately for those in Bowling Green, the Kentucky Veterans Brigade (KVB) is eager to help.

KVB “unites civilian patriots with local veterans to bring honor, stability, and support to those veterans who are in need.” As a veteran himself, founder Bob “Gunny”

Wilson felt that the transition system for veterans could be better, and the organizations he volunteered with didn’t help the individual as much as he wanted. To solve that issue, Wilson and co-founder Tim Allen formed KVB.

“We both felt the same thing — this organization wants to do big things, and I’m sure they’re going to someday, but they don’t help the veteran on the street,” Wilson said. “We decided, well, it must be our job.”

It started small. KVB began with only \$5,000, giving transportation and food to veterans who needed it. Then,

the local VA heard about the group and asked KVB to take over managing its clothing closet, and things began to snowball. As a charity, KVB could take donations that the VA could not, so more and more people were introduced to the work. Now, seven years later, the program works with over \$150,000 a year. All of it is used to support the veterans in the community, whether it be through the clothing closet, temporary housing, or financial assistance.

“We have 20-something volunteers who rotate the three days that we’re open, which are Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday,” Wilson said. Nobody there gets paid; everybody’s there on a volunteer basis.”

Every volunteer at KVB has some connection to the military. Many are veterans. Like Wilson, they have not stopped helping others, even in retirement.

“I’ve served my country for quite some time — I’m done — but I’m not done serving my community,” Wilson said.

The VA is not the only veteran organization KVB works with. The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars often partner with the group, as do some other veteran service organizations. While it can be hard to work with other nonprofits sometimes, Wilson said, Bowling Green is very supportive overall. Each organization has a different focus, and tries to send veterans to the entity that will best assist them. Sometimes, that will be a veteran organization, and sometimes, a civilian one.


KVB’s temporary housing is an example of this. The VA can help veterans find a home, but that can be a long process, and they may still be homeless in the meantime. Now, the brigade gives them a place to stay while they find something permanent.

“We here in Bowling Green really do work together as a small community helping the veterans,” Wilson said.



Wilson said the individuals and businesses in the community do well in donating clothing, food, and supplies and keeping up with KVB’s weekly needs list. Some of those donations go to homeless people and veterans, and KVB has served as a donation and distribution center during large storms.

As with all nonprofits, however, the brigade could always use more general, unrestricted funds. Those funds help the individual needs that come up in the community. One of KVB’s big goals is to have its own property and building, allowing it to use more of its funding for community purposes instead of just renting for its location. That process is difficult not only because of the cost but also because of KVB’s location.



“We’re on the same sidewalk as the local VA, so a lot of our clients or customers [will] come from the VA and see us before their appointments or vice versa,” Wilson said. “We don’t want to be so far away that people stop doing that, so we’re kind of restricted in the area that we need to be in.”

Being available and capable of assisting veterans is incredibly important for the Kentucky Veterans Brigade and Bowling Green. After all, those are the members of the community who dedicated their lives to serving their country — and who will continue to do so if given the opportunity. If they use KVB’s assistance to better themselves and their families, they will ultimately better Bowling Green. GN



“We here in Bowling Green really do work together as a small community helping the veterans”

BOB “GUNNY” WILSON



By Haley Potter
Photography by Amanda Guy

MICHAEL STOYONOVICH



THE VETERAN WHO FOUGHT BATTLES BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD

The inspiring journey of Michael Stoyonovich

AFTER DEDICATING 26 years to the military, a lifetime of service doesn't just end with retirement. For Michael Stoyonovich, it continues with a story of heroism extending far beyond the battlefield.

Stoyonovich, a retired U.S. Army veteran, has dedicated his post-military life to advocating for veterans in Kentucky, transforming his experiences into legislative actions and compassionate outreach.

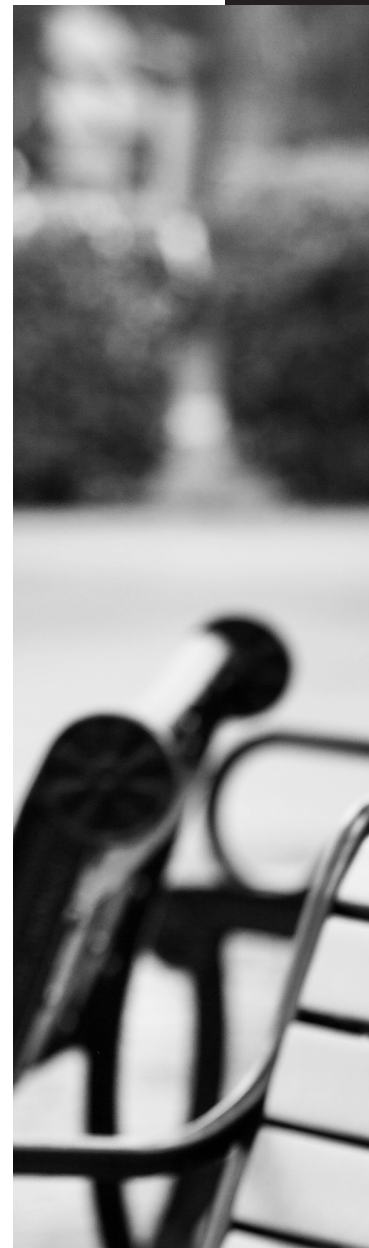
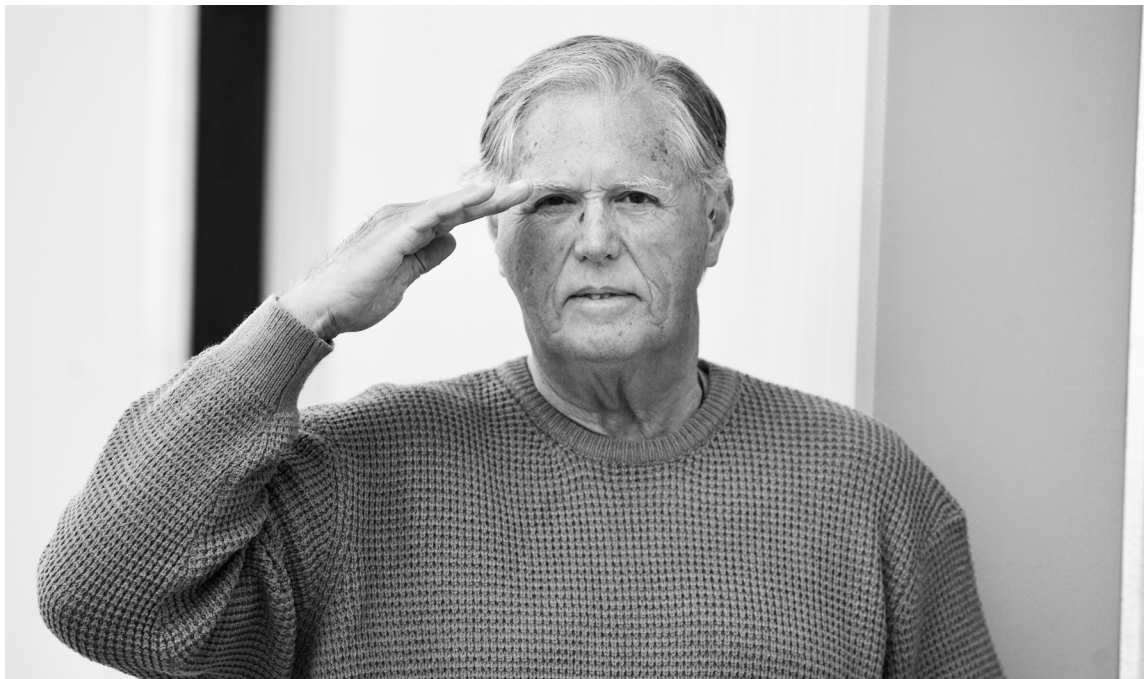
Stoyonovich's life took a pivotal turn when he was drafted into the Army in

1967. "I was a college dropout and quickly found myself in jungle training, preparing for Vietnam," he recalled. The war left an undeniable mark on him. Though he initially left the service, the commitment and discipline of the military drew him back, time and again, until his final retirement in 2007 after 26 years of service.

His military decorations, including the Bronze Star and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, speak volumes of his valor and commitment. However, it's his work after his combat boots were put away that tells the story of a different kind of bravery.

DEPENDENCE





Stoyonovich has turned his focus toward those who, like him, have faced the daunting transition back to civilian life.

As a state service officer for Disabled American Veterans, Stoyonovich has met and interviewed over 2,500 veterans, assisting them in navigating the complexities of their benefits. His efforts have secured over \$2.5 million in permanent annual income for these heroes, significantly enhancing their quality of life. “I never get tired of a veteran telling me, ‘You have made mine and my family’s lives better,’” Stoyonovich shared with a sense of pride.

But Stoyonovich’s advocacy doesn’t stop at individual consultations. Moved by the tragedy of a combat veteran under his care who succumbed to PTSD, Stoyonovich took his commitment to the legislative arena. He drafted the “Prevention of Veteran Suicide in Kentucky” bill, which has seen overwhelming support, passing the House 95-0. “This bill has an opportunity to save veterans’ lives,” Stoyonovich stated, hopeful and determined. This is what makes the mission all the more worthwhile for Stoyonovich.

Earlier, his legislative expertise resulted in the enactment of the “Green

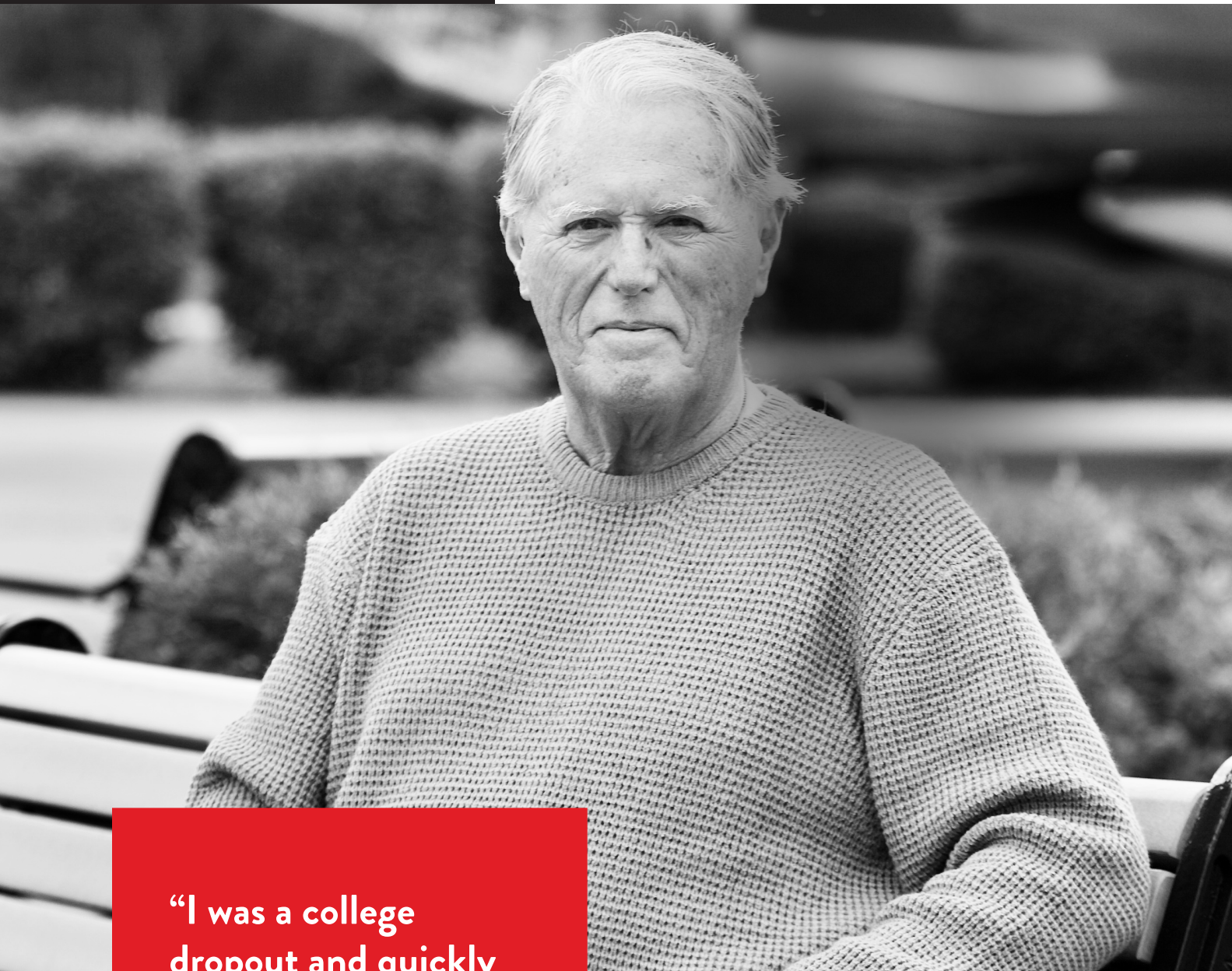
Alert” system in 2019. This system mirrors Amber and Golden Alerts and is specifically designed to assist in locating missing veterans at risk due to mental or physical health conditions. This law has already been instrumental in several cases, proving the worth of its advocate.

Stoyonovich’s relentless drive comes from personal battles with post-traumatic stress disorder and physical injuries. “I was diagnosed with PTSD over 40 years after Vietnam. I denied having that condition because I had gotten married and we had our first child, and [I] couldn’t let my mental condition interfere with making a living and taking care of my family.” Stoyonovich shared that he felt fortunate to contain his mental anguish and carry on with his everyday life.

“A lot of veterans I worked with to get their benefits, could not,” he explained, highlighting a common thread among veterans who often downplay their struggles.

Stoyonovich’s impact extends beyond the veteran community. Elected to multiple board positions and involved in various civic activities, he has become a symbol of hope and action. His weekly column in the local newspaper, USA Veterans Corner, provides veterans with essential information and heartfelt stories that connect and inspire.

In recognition of his tireless service, Stoyonovich has received numerous accolades, including the title of “Kentucky Veteran of the Year” in 2022. But perhaps more



“I was a college dropout and quickly found myself in jungle training, preparing for Vietnam.”

MICHAEL STOYONOVICH

telling are the lives he’s touched, the veterans he’s helped, and the community he’s built around service and advocacy.

Most recently, Stoyonovich’s dedication led to the Kentucky State Senate passing his bill 37-0 and Gov. Beshear signing it (# HB30) into law on April 4, 2024. The bill will become official law in June 2024.

Looking at Stoyonovich’s life and work, it’s clear that his battles have gone beyond the warzone overseas. His story is one of courage, not just in the face of enemy fire, but in the quiet moments helping a fellow veteran find peace, in the halls of government advocating for systemic change, and in the community, offering hope and resilience to other veterans. Michael Stoyonovich is not just a soldier; he is a guardian — a fighter for those who can no longer fight for themselves. **GN**

INDEPENDENTEN



By Amanda E. West
Photography by Amanda Guy

MALCOLM CHERRY



BOOTS ON THE GROUND IN BOWLING GREEN

Malcolm Cherry is making
great strides for veterans.

THE ASSASSINATION of President John F. Kennedy changed the trajectory of young Malcolm Cherry's life. As the events unfolded, Cherry watched our nation mourn. He'd planned to be a welder, fabricator, or machinist but chose to serve and protect his beloved country first. In 1969, when he was old enough to enlist, he chose the United States Marine Corps because he admired the "dress blues" uniform.

"I became an infantry rifleman. When I left the Marine Corps, my rank

was lance corporal. I was stationed at Parris Island/Camp Lejeune for training. Then, I went to California to prepare for Vietnam. I served 16 months overseas and in Vietnam before returning home to Camp Lejeune to finish out my tour. I received a 'school cut' to attend Western Kentucky University and the trade school," said Cherry.

Three years after enlisting in the Marines, Cherry officially pledged his heart to Susan Brosche. Their marriage has now spanned 53 years, and they welcomed two sons: Bryan, a retired Marine Corps Captain, and Jason, who oversees the family

business, Metals-N-More. The Cherrys also have two daughters-in-law, Lorie and Natalie, whom they especially adore because they've given them seven grandchildren.

After serving in the Marine Corps, Cherry worked for Chrysler and then started American Machine and Welding, which he ran for 27 years until he sold it in 2005. Before the ink dried on the deed of sale, he opened their current business.

When Cherry takes on something new, he jumps in with boots on the ground, displaying the Marine Corps motto "Semper Fi," which translates from Latin to "always faithful."

"As former military [personnel], our veterans, both past and present, impact our community. To this day, we are still upholding our oath of service by believing in and supporting the Constitution of the United States."

"As a lifelong resident of Bowling Green, this is the greatest place to exist. No matter the cause, there are always concerned citizens who donate time, resources, and money to assist those in need."

MALCOM CHERRY

Cherry has been involved at Post 23 of the American Legion for 30 years. He served as the vice president for eight years before moving into his current position as commander eight years ago. During his tenure, the post has soared to being recognized as the second largest in the state. In fact, since 2018, Post 23 has contributed over \$2 million in community support and, in 2023 alone, provided close to \$60,000 to local charitable organizations.

Cherry is also a founding member of the local Marine Corps League, which oversees the annual Marine Toys for Tots drive. What started 20 years ago as a push to collect toys for 200 underprivileged children swelled under his leadership and that of the other Marine Corps League members to include 17 counties and an astounding 20,000 children last year. Along

with the American Legion, he's also a member of AM-VETS and a life member and officer of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

"My most significant accomplishment has been organizing and facilitating all of the veteran service groups coming together under the same roof with a combined mission of serving veterans, community, and children."

The American Legion joined forces with Marine Toys for Tots and launched a separate program that provides veterans with essentials such as shampoo, body wash, and clothing.

Residents of 15 nursing homes in the seven surrounding counties will also be provided baby dolls, puzzles, games, books, shampoo, body wash, and other needed items. Donations can be dropped off at Metals-N-More.

They are also making gigantic strides with homeless veterans through the Good Deeds Club initiative, which secures housing and household items. Through grants and private donations, they purchased a box trailer to help veterans move their belongings into their new homes and a nine-passenger van to shuttle them to doctors' appointments. The Kentucky Veterans Brigade program allows veterans to walk in, take a hot shower, receive food, clean clothes, hygiene supplies, and financial help through the Veterans Alliance Center.

Alongside his fellow veterans, Cherry continues to forge a legacy of giving, proving that the spirit of the Marine Corps extends far beyond the battlefield to the very heart of American life.

"As a lifelong resident of Bowling Green, this is the greatest place to exist. No matter the cause, there are always concerned citizens who donate time, resources, and money to assist those in need. I'd like to encourage anyone considering enlisting in the military to do it! The military builds character [and] instills honor, courage, and commitment. I wholeheartedly believe [in honoring] my God, my family, and my country, [having] the courage to do what is right, and [being] committed to [seeing] it all through." GN

For more information, go to www.legionpost23.com.



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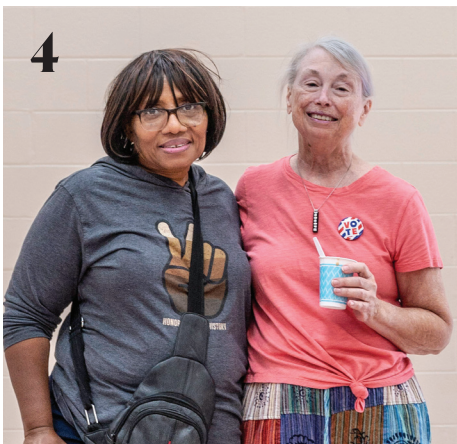
REMEMBER
OUR SACRIFICE

Kentucky Gardens Event - March 11



Photography by Gretchen Clark

In response of a displacing rezoning approval for the residents of Kentucky Gardens Mobile Home Park, the community organized a fundraiser event, rallying support to aid displaced families. Through horse rides, cartoon portraits, food vendors, and donations, they raised funds to assist with relocation costs and provide emotional support. Amidst uncertainty, solidarity emerges, showcasing the power of unity in the face of adversity. The event fosters a sense of belonging and compassion. It highlights the resilience of communities coming together to ensure no one is left behind, even in the face of challenging circumstances.



1. Magnolia Gramling and Teresa Christmas 2. Mindy Dockery
3. Alexis Grant and Keila Colorado 4. Johnalma Barnett and Joyce Adkins 5. Mark Hendershot

Snodgrass - March 11



Photography by Gretchen Clark

Snodgrass Veterinary Medical Center hosts an event every year to say “thank you” to the community. The place was packed with children holding snow cones. Westbrook Farms was there with its petting zoo, from alpacas to camels, and even a kangaroo. The animals were amazing creatures. To add to the fun, the event also offered free hamburgers and hot dogs, creating a festive atmosphere and encouraging community bonding over good food and furry friends. It was a delightful blend of fun, education, and community engagement, showcasing the clinic’s dedication to both pets and people.



1. Dr. Mara Bynum and baby Emilia Bynum 2. Ezerleigh Padlo
3. Hali and Mya Cook 4. Josh Thomas

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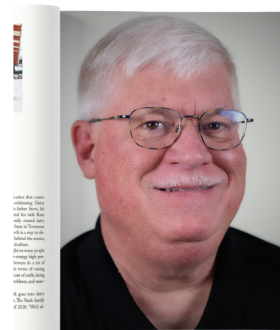
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ROAST BEEF S \$6.09 | M \$9.09 | L \$12.79

CORNED BEEF S \$6.09 | M \$9.09 | L \$12.79

TUNA SALAD S \$5.99 | M \$8.99 | L \$12.19

A blend of tuna, relish, mayo and black pepper with provolone. Served cold.

VEGGIE \$8.89

Caramelized onions and green bell peppers savory mushrooms, Provolone, cheddar, Monterey Jack, lettuce, tomato, onion, mayo, deli mustard, and Italian dressed

All subs and extras also available in small and large sizes.

EXTRAS

Extra Cheese 95¢
Add Bacon \$1.50
Add savory mushrooms 90¢
Gluten-free roll \$2.49

KIDS' COMBOS

Choose Meatball, Smoked Turkey Breast, or Virginia Honey Ham with Provolone, or Grilled Cheddar Cheese \$5.99

Served with 12 oz AHA! flavored water, dessert, and a kid-sized fire hat

SALADS

All salads start with Romaine; diced tomato, green bell pepper, and cucumber, Mozzarella; and choice of dressing

HOOK & LADDER SALAD® \$9.99

Smoked turkey breast and Virginia honey ham

ITALIAN WITH GRILLED CHICKEN SALAD® \$9.99

Grilled chicken breast and Genoa salami

FIREHOUSE SALAD® \$9.99

Smoked turkey breast, Virginia honey ham, or grilled chicken breast

NO MEAT \$7.99



Thanks to supporters like you, FIREHOUSE SUBS PUBLIC SAFETY FOUNDATION has awarded millions of dollars worth of lifesaving equipment and resources to fire, police and public safety organizations across the country.

Prices vary by location. Prices subject to change.

www.firehousesubs.com





Graves Gilbert Clinic Health Walk



The Graves Gilbert Clinic Health walk is designed to bring providers and patients together to connect, while enjoying a walk outdoors. Rain or shine, join us for the opportunity to learn about current health topics and speak directly with a Grave Gilbert Clinic provider.

Let's walk together towards a stronger, healthier community.

**Free Health Education,
Medical Screenings
and Giveaways!**

Bowling Green Ballpark
Saturday
Mornings

7:30-9am

June 15th
July 20th
August 10th
October 19th



Lost River Cave
Last Wednesday
of the Month

7:30-9am

May 29th
June 26th
July 31st
August 28th
September 25th
October 30th



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