

# WACF salutes present, past soldiers through its support



The calendar has turned to November. It's appropriate to have Veterans Day and Thanksgiving Day in the same month as we are truly thankful for our military men and women and veterans. With "40 stories for 40 years" in mind, the Watertown Area Community Foundation couldn't be prouder to review its list of grants supporting our troops and veterans.

"Whether a grant supported the 147<sup>th</sup> Welcome Home in 2010 or a trip in 2015 to Washington D.C. for area members of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1054, the Foundation wholeheartedly supports our veterans along with service men and women currently serving," said Jan DeBerg, WACF executive director.

Other grants have included those to the

- Codington County Veterans' Service Office, to support the Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall in the years 2000 and 2010.
- Northeast SD Vietnam Veterans of America for equipment including uniforms, electronic bugles and flags for its Honor and Color Guard.
- Codington County Post 17 American Legion to help with the expansion of flag displays throughout the City of Watertown in 2001 and a grant in 2017 to support the purchase of a vehicle for Honor and Color Guard to attend funerals and other events.
- Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1054 to support the purchase of a used 17-

passenger bus to assist veterans with transportation to funerals, parades, etc.

Substantial grants and administrative support assisted with the Veterans Memorial Park at Stokes-Thomas City Park on Lake Kampeska from the early stages. The sectioned memorial wall crafted from black mist granite lists thousands of veterans, their branch and dates of service. The dedication date of the memorial was Flag Day, June 13, 2006.

Since that time, additions and improvements have been made to the memorial. In 2014, the Foundation awarded another grant to support the completion of the helicopter project at the memorial, including sidewalks, a sign and benches.

"Sometimes, just as important as grants are partnerships with organizations," DeBerg said. In addition to grants supporting our military members and veterans, the Watertown Area Community Foundation helped in establishing the local Sea of Goodwill effort in 2012 with Michael Cartney, Colonel, USAF (retired); the Watertown Police Department, local businesses, veterans organizations and volunteers.

"We were losing a veteran every 80 seconds to suicide in the United States," said Cartney. "That was the genesis for creating the Sea of Goodwill at the national level. Jan and I went



to a meeting in Sioux Falls to learn about it. On the way back, we agreed that we should have a Sea of Goodwill in Watertown. We conducted two informational forums and low and behold, 40 local companies came forward and said they wanted to be involved.”

Sea of Goodwill, literally answers the call for veterans in need,” DeBerg said. “There are many services available to veterans, their families, even their employers. Sea of Goodwill makes the process of getting connected to the proper resources easier.”

Locally, military members, veterans, their families and employers of veterans are encouraged to call 605-882-5620 for assistance 24/7. Examples of help may include equine therapy, legal assistance, financial counsel, medical/prescription assistance and family retreats at Joy Ranch.

Sea of Goodwill has also made a difference in other ways including reaching out to Chief Justice Robert Timm to establish the first Veterans Court in South Dakota, Cartney explained. Sea of Goodwill, in coordination

with others’ support, also conducts the annual First Responders’ event, he said. The reason is simply stated in the Sea of Goodwill’s mantra: “matching the donor to the need to serve those who have served us.”

Currently, there are 2,059 veterans in Codington County that we know of, said Al Janzen of the Codington County Veterans Service office. There are also approximately 80 families of currently deployed soldiers.

“We salute them all,” said DeBerg. “As Francis Scott Key so aptly wrote in 1814, we truly are the ‘land of the free and the home of the brave,’” DeBerg said. “I know the Foundation is just one of many who pay tribute to our troops and veterans for it is they who continue to ‘give proof through the night that our flag is still there.’”