

Pedaling Toward a Better Future

Wheels4Change Charity Group Helps Veterans Build Sense of Community through Physical Fitness

262.

That's how many minutes participants were asked to spend riding their stationary bikes – one for every Ohio life lost in combat in the Middle East since 9/11 – when Wheels4Change held its first-ever fundraising event, "Pedal for Heroes," in February 2012. The level of dedication among those who attended the inaugural event wasn't lost on Wheels4Change co-founder Cassie Schumacher.

"It was really powerful," she said. "People refused to get off of their bikes because they recognized that each minute was a life lost."

Since then, many things have changed for the Fairlawn, Ohio-based charity. Over the years, the organization has added a bike giveaway and rental program and expanded its outreach efforts. In 2016, Pedal for Heroes morphed into the Remembrance Fitness Event and began to accommodate swimming, running and other forms of physical activity. This year it will change again, replaced by a summer-long virtual fitness challenge and an accompanying outdoor biking event aimed at honoring fallen soldiers, Schumacher said.

As 2018 progresses, the group's leadership structure also is evolving. Schumacher has begun to turn over

Wheels4Change Photo



Wheels4Change co-founder Cassie Schumacher stands near the finish line following her successful completion of the 2013 Race Across America endurance event.

major responsibilities to several other members of her team – military veterans, whom she hopes will imprint their own vision on the organization going forward. What won't change is Wheels4Change's commitment to honoring and supporting Northeast Ohio veterans and their families through outreach, education and awareness.

"The veteran community is a very underserved population, and besides being underserved, it's a population that can be pretty hard to reach," said Schumacher, an avid endurance cyclist

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The Power of Volunteerism

Helping Others Helps You

By [David Burden](#)
VSC Project Manager

Volunteerism is the lifeblood of organizational success, and with good reason. Volunteering provides experience, purpose and legacy to a younger and growing paid workforce, while also offering significant health benefits. It is a win-win proposition for both the agency and the individual.

For a younger person, volunteering is an opportunity to gain skills and experience, while bringing sometimes much-needed energy to an organization. In turn, older volunteers often inject much-needed experience and stability into organizations with a younger workforce.

Studies also have shown that volunteering can be therapeutic and promote longevity. One study from 1999, *Volunteerism and Mortality among the Community-dwelling Elderly*, suggests there is strong evidence to support a correlation between volunteering and better health and wellness. The study points out that the social contact and support a person experiences while volunteering can create positive emotions and a sense of purpose.

The 2012 study *Giving Time Gives You Time* argues that

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Director's Corner

Am I Eligible for VA Health Care Benefits?

If you served in the military on active duty and separated under conditions other than dishonorable, you may qualify for health care benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA sends each new benefits enrollee an introductory letter and personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook in the mail.

To obtain access to your VA health care benefits, first you must apply for enrollment. There are several convenient ways to do so, described below.



Apply by Telephone

The telephone application option is a convenient way to enroll, eliminating the need for a signed paper document. VA staff members will collect the required information and process the application for an enrollment determination. To apply, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. EST.

Apply Online

It also is possible to fill out an application online and submit via the web to the VA for processing. Using this method, no additional documents are required to verify military service. If you were recently discharged, the VSC will get your military information for you. Once the application is submitted, you will automatically receive a confirmation message notifying receipt. Complete the application online at: www.vets.gov/health-care/apply/.

Apply by Mail

You can pick up an application at your local VA office or download, print and fill out VA Form 10-10EZ enrollment application for health benefits and mail it to: *Health Eligibility Center, 2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30329-1647.*

Apply in Person

You can apply in person at: *Akron Multi-Specialty Outpatient Clinic, 55 W. Waterloo Road, Akron, OH 44319.* The clinic can be reached by phone at 330-724-7715.

You're also welcome to visit our headquarters office on Waterloo Road in Akron for assistance in completing your health care enrollment application.

In Appreciation,

Larry D. Moore

Executive Director



Services for Vets

We assist veterans with basic living needs; these services are available to eligible veterans, their dependents and widows. Services are subject to change.

- Financial Assistance
- Mortgage payments / Homeowner's insurance
- Rent
- Utilities
- Roofs
- Furnace (replacement and repair)
- Stoves and refrigerators
- Food
- Children's clothing
- Adult work clothing
- Car payments, repairs and insurance (limited)
- Medical / Dental (including dentures, glasses and hearing aids)
- Regularly scheduled transportation to VA medical facilities and Ohio Veterans Home
- Grave markers and flags

Veterans Affairs Assistance

- Assistance applying for Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits
- Preparation of VA forms and paperwork
- Supportive documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Proper submission of claims to the VA
- Service connected compensation
- Non-service pension
- Widows pension
- Burial benefits
- Headstones

If you are a veteran in financial need or need help with your VA claim, please visit us at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd., Akron, OH, or call

330-643-2830

National News

75 Years Later

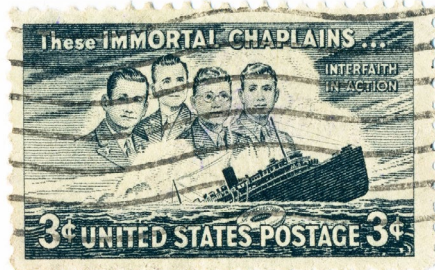
The Story of the Four Chaplains Remains an Enduring Example of True Selflessness

In the early hours of Feb. 3, 1943, the USAT Dorchester, one of three ships in the SG-19 convoy, was nearing its destination at an American military base in Greenland when a German torpedo slammed into its hull with deadly precision. Less than 20 minutes later, the former luxury coastal liner, which had been converted into an Army transport ship to support the war effort, disappeared under the water.

During that brief period of time after the initial explosion and before the ship sank, chaos ensued as those still alive after the torpedo blast fought to abandon ship. Of the 902 service men, seamen and civilian workers aboard, 672 went into the water and never came back.

Among those who died were four Army chaplains of different faiths, who worked together to distribute life preservers to those aboard the

sinking vessel before eventually giving up their own life jackets to save more soldiers. After helping members of



In 1948, the United States Postal Service issued this stamp to honor the four chaplains.

the crew leave the sinking vessel, the chaplains – Lt. George L. Fox, a Methodist minister; Lt. Alexander D. Goode, a Jewish Rabbi; Lt. Clark V. Poling, a Dutch Reformed minister; and Lt. John P. Washington, a Roman Catholic priest – remained aboard, praying and singing hymns together

as it went down. This year marks the 75th anniversary of their sacrifice.

“Despite coming from very different backgrounds, Reverend Fox, Reverend Poling, Rabbi Goode and Father Washington worked together to save the lives of many service men without giving a second thought to their own,” said David Burden, project manager, VSC. “Even after 75 years their story remains an example of true valor and selflessness in the face of despair.”

In 1944, the four chaplains were posthumously awarded a Distinguished Service Cross and a Purple Heart. Members of Congress also wished to grant each a Medal of Honor but were constrained by the requirement of heroism under fire. Instead, Congress authorized a Special Medal for Heroism – called The Four Chaplains’ Medal – which was presented to their next of kin on Jan. 18, 1961. ★

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who “accidentally” laid the foundation for Wheels4Change while planning for her participation in the 2012 Race Across America. Schumacher, whose father is a Vietnam veteran, decided to use the 3,000-mile ultra-endurance event as a platform to raise awareness for the struggles that veterans endure. The positive response she received, along with the \$35,000 she raised to support veterans returning home from active service, prompted her to take it even further.

With the help of her friend Leslie Manna, Schumacher launched Wheels4Change as a registered 501(c)(3) charity in spring 2012. Since then, the group has focused on providing fitness opportunities to help veterans better connect with their community and to improve their physical and psychological health.

“When you’re in the military, you have a community that you’re a part of, but when you leave and you’re struggling, the loss of that community can have a huge impact,” Schumacher said. “Physical fitness is a great way to build a new community, and there is a lot of research to support it as one of the best antidepressants out there.”

Wheels4Change supports and raises awareness for veterans in several ways, including its “Ride for the 23” bike event, created to educate members of the community about the 22 veterans and one active-duty service member who take their own lives each day. In addition, the Wheels4Change Athletic Team – made up of

military veterans, spouses and supporters – participates in various racing events, marathons and triathlons to bring attention to veteran issues and raise funds to support its various programs. This year, more events will be added, Schumacher said. Through partnerships with local veteran groups and various other entities, Wheels4Change also trains qualified veterans to become certified peer mentors.

At the core of Wheels4Change is a bike program that offers veterans and their families the chance to borrow bicycles from the group’s purpose-built storage shed at Ohio Veterans’ Memorial Park in Clinton, Ohio. Veterans also can earn a free bike by completing 5-25 hours of “give back” service, either through volunteer work with Wheels4Change or another local organization.

“Ultimately, we want to help people help themselves,” Schumacher said. “For veterans interested in earning a bike, we count one hour of community ‘give back’ volunteering with us or a like-organization as \$10.”

The benefit to this strategy is twofold, she said. Not only does it give veterans the opportunity to become more involved with their communities through volunteer service, but it also serves to perpetuate the program as these volunteers encourage friends and family to participate.

For more information or to find out how to participate, visit www.wheels4change.com, email info@wheels4change.com or call 234-206-2082. ★

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people often have more time to volunteer than they think they do. The case studies presented revealed that people who spent their free time focusing on helping others experienced increased time affluence – or a feeling of having more free time – over those who focused on themselves.

Furthermore, volunteerism knows no age limit. In fact, it can prove to be a powerful motivator for finding fulfillment and purpose later in life. One volunteer who comes to mind is Ret. MSG Robert Swecker, 85, who volunteers his time every Wednesday with the VSC of Summit County. Swecker, who served in the U.S. Army and has 40 years of motor pool experience, utilizes his



expertise to provide safety checks and vehicle readiness for all VSC vehicles. His efforts help to ensure the safe and reliable transportation of Summit County veterans to their VA medical appointments.

VSC volunteers have contributed to the betterment of the organization in many ways, contributing to a healthy working environment for the VSC staff and greatly enriching the lives of clients. They serve in a variety of capacities, helping to greet and encourage clients, participating in holiday functions and offering other services to support the overall mission. In the process, they become valuable – and valued – members of the VSC team. ★



Tip of the H.A.T. • Helping America's Troops

Judge Amy Corrigan Jones Helps VSC with Toy Donations

The generosity of Summit County residents was on full display during the 2017 holiday season, as members of the community turned out to support local veterans and their families during the VSC's sixth annual holiday toy drive. Hundreds of toy donations, along with \$1,200 in gift cards, from individual donors and various local organizations went toward ensuring that more than 200 Summit County children had gifts to open.

Each year, the VSC's holiday toy drive attracts several volunteers who spend time manning tables, helping to pair veteran families with donated gifts. This year, a special guest was on hand to assist with toy donations – Judge Amy Corrigan Jones, presiding judge of the [Summit County Valor Court](#).

Established in 2013, the Summit County Valor Court provides local veterans charged with low-level felony offenses access to programs, treatment and mentorship to help them transition successfully into civilian life. Corrigan Jones, along with several members of the Valor Court treatment

team, spent two days at the VSC headquarters helping to pack up and hand out gifts. Among those who participated were Tamara Keefer, Danielle Sampson, Lori Mann, Steve James and John Schluep.

"The Summit County VSC and Director Larry Moore have been incredibly supportive of our Valor Court program and our veterans since we were established in 2013," Corrigan



Corrigan Jones

Jones said. "They have worked tirelessly to support our veteran participants, providing treatment and wrap-around services. Additionally, the VSC is an active member of our treatment team and regularly attends our court sessions. In an effort to demonstrate our gratitude to the VSC, our veterans and their families, I thought it would be a meaningful effort to volunteer and participate in such a worthwhile cause."

In addition to members of the treatment team, Corrigan Jones noted that more than 20 Valor Court veteran participants signed up for shifts to help with the toy drive. Each participant received community



Valor Court Photos

Members of the Summit County Valor Court treatment team and Valor Court participants work to box up toys during the VSC toy drive.

service credit, a requirement of the Valor Court program. VSC Project Manager David Burden said the extra help was appreciated.

"Our annual toy drive aims to ensure that children of these veterans always have presents to open during the holidays," Burden said. "We are truly grateful for the assistance we received from Judge Corrigan Jones, her team and all of the Valor Court program participants who worked to help us make sure that dozens of local veteran families had a great Christmas."

To learn more about the VSC's annual toy drive or other volunteer opportunities, please contact David Burden at 330-643-7636 or by email at dburden@vscsummitoh.us. ★