

Doubly Proud

VSC Celebrates Vietnam Veterans Wayne Wright and William Fast as Co-Veteran of the Year Recipients

Each year, the VSC presents its Veteran of the Year award to a Summit County veteran who demonstrates selflessness in the form of community service, and each year the organization finds itself choosing from hundreds of high-quality candidates who go above-and-beyond in their quest to improve the lives of others. This year was no different, except that two co-winners were selected: local Vietnam veterans William Fast and Wayne Wright.

"There are so many veterans across Summit County doing great things to help their community and fellow veterans that sometimes it really is impossible to choose just one for this prestigious award," said David Burden, project manager, VSC. "This year, the VSC is pleased to name William Fast and Wayne Wright as co-Veteran of the Year award recipients. Both of them have dedicated countless hours to improving the lives of Summit County veterans and their families."

Both Fast and Wright grew up in Northeast Ohio and came from families with a history of military service. Both had fathers who fought for their country during World War II. And both served as active-duty soldiers during the Vietnam War – Fast with the U.S. Army and Wright with the U.S. Marine Corps. However, each of them had their own reasons for joining.



Veteran of the Year co-winners Wayne Wright (left) and William Fast (right).

For Wright, who enlisted in July 1966 and was honorably discharged in March 1970, the choice was about discipline.

"I recognized I had some problems with discipline coming out of high school, and I figured that if I went into the Marine Corps I'd get some discipline," he said. "It made a big difference in my life going forward."

Fast, who served from the fall of 1967 through February 1975 – including two tours in Vietnam – joined the Army as a medic with the intent of continuing after the war ended.

"I really wanted to make a career out of it, but my wife didn't enjoy all the moving," he joked.

Fast's military experience was the launching pad for a 40-year career in nursing, most of which was spent in hospice care. His first-ever nursing assignment came in 1972 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in

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Second Annual James Seminaroti Golf Outing Brings in \$800 for ALS



Following the successful launch of the James C. Seminaroti Benefit Golf Outing in 2017, the second annual event – held Friday, Sept. 21 at the Fox Den Golf Course in Stow – built upon its success by bringing in \$800 to support the fight against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). All proceeds from the event were donated to the ALS Association Northern Ohio Chapter.

This year's event, hosted jointly by the VSC and American Legion Post 473, drew 32 attendees including members of local veteran organizations and VSC agencies from neighboring counties. Participants included Dennis Gutowski, former executive director of the VSC of Summit County, and Rich McClellan, director of the VSC of Portage County. Also in attendance was Pete

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Director's Corner

VAText Ready to Connect You with Upcoming Health Care Appointments

Did you know that more than 9 million VA health care opportunities go unutilized each year due to missed appointments? To increase access to health care for all veterans, the Veterans Health Administration has created VEText, an interactive mobile solution to remind veterans of upcoming appointments via text messaging.

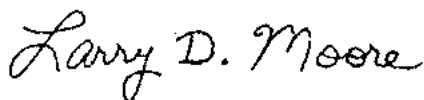
The VA's goal is to offer a quick and easy way to confirm and/or cancel appointments and then make every attempt to schedule another veteran into that time slot. Veterans throughout the nation are receiving interactive VEText appointment reminders on their mobile devices. Every enrolled veteran with a cell phone number listed in their health record is automatically included in the program, so it is very important to ensure that your local medical center has your current phone numbers. You can update your phone numbers during check-in at your next appointment.

The first text message reminder will be sent **seven days** prior to the appointment, and a second reminder text message will be sent **two days** out. Veterans should review the date and time of each appointment and use the prompts provided in the message to either confirm or cancel the appointment. Veterans with multiple appointments on the same day will receive multiple reminders.

VEText works for VA health care appointments only and the text messages do not currently replace the letters and automated phone calls already sent as reminders. Veterans will receive text message reminders for clinic appointments at their local medical center and outpatient clinics. They will not receive text message reminders for appointments in lab, community care. If a veteran has multiple appointments on the same date, the system will send a single text message identifying both appointments and providing separate options for confirming or cancelling each appointment. If you do not respond to the text message reminder, your appointment will remain scheduled.

Please note that personal health information will not be included in text messages and that VEText will not replace letters, postcards, or automated phone reminders.

In Appreciation,



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.

VA's Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP)

By [David Burden](#)
VSC Project Manager

[Rapid Appeals Modernization Program \(RAMP\)](#) is a program developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to streamline the appeal process. The new law was signed by the President on August 23, 2017 with the purpose and goal to gain a faster, more efficient review process in resolving a veteran's appeal within 125 days. Furthermore, a veteran opting into RAMP will automatically have his or her appeal removed from the old and cumbersome appeals process.

However, veterans should be aware of the RAMP eligibility rules before making a decision to opt into the program. RAMP-eligible rules fall under the following four stages: (1) have a Notice of Disagreement (NOD) filed with the VA; (2) a filed Form 9,

Appeal to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA); (3) certified appeal to the BVA (but not formally placed on its docket); or (4) remanded from the BVA to the VA. Therefore, it is not in the veteran's best interest to pull his or her appealed claim from the BVA docket – because the claim is likely to be adjudicated before the 125-day RAMP process is completed.

Although RAMP was signed into law in August 2017, the law does not take full effect until February 2019. However, the VA is allowing eligible veterans an early opportunity to select between two appeal processing lanes: (1) Supplemental Claim Lane, or; (2) Higher-Level Review Lane. The former allows you to add additional new and relevant evidence in support of your claim, while the later uses a complete review of all the evidence already in the file. Regardless of the veteran's choice, the VA's goal is to have a decision



ready within 125 days.

Moreover, should the veteran's claim be denied through the RAMP process, he or she will still have an option to have their appeal reviewed again with either review lane or to file another NOD. For more information and help from a qualified professional Service Officer, call (330) 643-2830, stop by our headquarters, located at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd., or visit www.vscsummitoh.us.★

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William Fast accepts his award

Bethesda, Md., where he served in the Presidential suite.

Both Fast and Wright similarly felt compelled to help veterans in their community after leaving the service. Fast has been actively involved in American Legion post 566, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post 1066 and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. In addition, he became an ordained minister in 2010 and joined the Ohio Western Reserve National

Cemetery as chaplain of the advisory board. Much of his time has been spent counseling veterans to help them cope with hospice.

"I've been through a lot of things other veterans have been through, and I've worked with a lot of illnesses they go through," he said. "I think I can understand what they're dealing with, and I think that helps."

Wright, likewise, is a member of numerous local veteran group, serving as a post commander with American

Legion post 209 and post chaplain for VFW post 8975, which he's been involved with for 50 years. He also is active in the Marine Corps League and Disabled American Veterans. Whether fighting against veteran homelessness or to prevent veteran suicide, his goal has always been to help his "brothers in arms."

"That's the way I've always looked at it – these are my fellow veterans," he said. "You don't have to be in a war. Veterans, we've all done something, and it doesn't mean we had to go to Vietnam, the European theater or the South Pacific to experience, in some respects, the same thing. We've all experienced a certain level of discipline, a certain level of training and being ready to do what you have to do to defend our country and others in this world who want to live in a free and democratic society."★



Wayne Wright accepts his award

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Seminaroti, James Seminaroti's son.

"My dad was red, white and blue, through and through," said Pete Seminaroti. "He loved nothing more than his country and helping other veterans who've served it."

Research has shown that veterans from any branch – even those who have served during a time of peace – are at a much higher risk than the general population for developing ALS, a rapidly developing neuromuscular disease that affects thousands of people throughout the U.S.

"ALS is a truly devastating condition that disproportionately affects

veterans and their families," said David Burden, project manager, VSC. "The VSC thanks those who came out to support us in our second year fighting against this deadly disease."

An Akron native and World War II veteran, James Seminaroti was actively involved in numerous local veteran organizations, becoming a founder of Fred W. Reese Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post 3310 in Akron and contributing to the American Legion, the Salvation Army and the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States. As a member of The Salvation Army's

Akron advisory board for more than 15 years, he organized a program called Operation Concern that aimed to make soldiers' send-offs more pleasant by providing breakfast and free necessity kits.

Seminaroti died Nov. 4, 1981 following his own battle with ALS. His legacy of service lives on in the VSC's annual Veteran of the Year Award, presented each fall to a Summit County veteran who displays selflessness through service.

If you want to donate to the ALS Association Northern Ohio Chapter, visit webnoh.alsa.org. ★



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

Civil Air Patrol Cadets Help VSC Retire American Flags

Group III of the Ohio Wing Civil Air Patrol (CAP) – a United States Air Force auxiliary and a 501(c)(3) charity, operating in part as a youth leadership development program – recently sent 16 school-age CAP Cadets and 10 adult volunteers to assist the VSC of Summit County in retiring hundreds of worn and faded American flags.

The event, which took place Oct. 6 at the VSC's Akron headquarters, gave participants a chance to perform a valuable community service and facilitated a better understanding of how to show respect to an American flag that is no longer serviceable. That lesson begins with learning how to correctly describe a flag retirement ceremony, according to Michael Sidman, Assistant Cadet Activities Officer for the Ohio Wing CAP.

"Especially with Cadets, you worry that they might go to school and say, 'I got to burn some flags this weekend,' and that's not the right answer," said Sidman, who organized and helped oversee the flag retirement

ceremony. "This event gave us a chance to educate them that they were retiring flags through burning, which in accordance with the code that governs the retirement of the American flag."

According to Sidman, performing a proper flag retirement ceremony comes with "loose general guidance" as opposed to specific details. Much like other ceremonies, there are multiple versions of the right way to approach it. Each version ends with a display of respect, either by retiring the flag through burning or burial.

Sidman praised the retirement ceremony as a valuable learning experience for participating Cadets and adult volunteers alike. More than that, it helped teach the next generation of Americans about what it means to be a good citizen.

"I think an important hallmark of being a good citizen is knowing that when a flag is no longer serviceable you don't just throw it out in the trash," Sidman said. "You have to treat



Photo Courtesy of the Ohio Wing Civil Air Patrol

it with a level of respect to make sure that we honor those who've served, those who've paid the ultimate price for the freedoms we enjoy and all Americans who are trying to move our nation forward."

Since its formation during World War II, members of the CAP have served their communities through emergency response, aviation and ground services. Designed for young people ages 12 to 18, the CAP Cadet program helps to shape members into future leaders and better citizens and prepare them for careers in aviation, space or the military. To learn more about the Ohio Wing Civil Air Patrol, visit ohwg.cap.gov. ★