

VETS QUARTERLY

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A WORD FROM THE VETERANS

SEERVICES OFFICER

WESLEY TUCKER

Supporting veterans in the new year is a noble endeavor that requires collective effort. As we embark on a fresh chapter, let us pledge to honor and assist those who have served our nation with unwavering dedication.

One crucial aspect of supporting veterans is ensuring their seamless transition into civilian life. This can be achieved through comprehensive job training programs, employment opportunities, and initiatives that recognize the valuable skills they bring to the workforce. By fostering a veteran-friendly job market, we contribute not only to their economic well-being but also to their sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Mental health remains a paramount concern for veterans. It is imperative to destigmatize mental health issues within the veteran community and provide accessible and effective mental health services. Investing in mental health resources, support networks, and outreach programs can make a significant impact on the overall well-being of our veterans.

Community engagement is the bedrock of support for veterans. Encouraging local communities to actively participate in events, initiatives, and volunteer opportunities that specifically benefit veterans fosters a sense of belonging. Simple acts of gratitude, such as welcoming veterans into community events or organizing appreciation gatherings, can go a long way in showing our collective gratitude.

Lastly, advocacy plays a crucial role in addressing systemic issues affecting veterans. By staying informed about policies impacting veterans' rights and well-being, we can collectively advocate for positive change. It is essential to work towards policies that prioritize healthcare, housing, and social support for veterans.

As a community, Shasta County works hard to support the veteran community and I thank everyone who has contributed towards this effort. I also would like to challenge our community to seek out new ways to support veterans. Providing hiring opportunities for veterans, supporting the networks that foster a veteran community, and being educated on the services within the community so you can be a resource to our veteran population.

In conclusion, supporting veterans in the new year requires a multifaceted approach encompassing employment opportunities, mental health initiatives, educational support, community engagement, and advocacy. Together, let us commit to creating a society that truly values and supports those who have selflessly served our nation.

January's Legends and Leaders

Sgt. Alvin York



United States Corporal Alvin C. York reportedly kills over 20 German soldiers and captures an additional 132 at the head of a small detachment in the Argonne Forest near the Meuse River in France. The exploits later earned York the Medal of Honor.

Born in 1887 in a log cabin near the Tennessee-Kentucky border, York was the third of 11 children in a family supported by subsistence farming and hunting. After experiencing a religious conversion, he became a fundamentalist Christian around 1915.

Two years later, when the United States entered World War I, York was drafted into the U.S. Army. After being denied conscientious-objector status, York enlisted in the 82nd Infantry Division and in May 1918 arrived in France for active duty on the Western Front. He served in the successful Saint-Mihiel offensive in September of that year, was promoted to corporal and given command of his own squad.

The events of October 8, 1918, took place as part of the Meuse-Argonne offensive—what was to be the final Allied push against German forces on the Western Front during World War I. York and his battalion were given the task of seizing German-held positions across a valley; after encountering difficulties, the small group of soldiers—numbering some 17 men—were fired upon by a German machine-gun nest at the top of a nearby hill. The gunners cut down nine men, including a superior officer, leaving York in charge of the squad.

As York wrote in his diary of his subsequent actions: “[T]hose machine guns were spitting fire and cutting down the undergrowth all around me something awful.... I didn’t have time to dodge behind a tree or dive into the brush, I didn’t even have time to kneel or lie down.... As soon as the machine guns opened fire on me, I began to exchange shots with them. In order to sight me or to swing their machine guns on me, the Germans had to show their heads above the trench, and every time I saw a head I just touched it off. All the time I kept yelling at them to come down. I didn’t want to kill any more than I had to. But it was they or I. And I was giving them the best I had.”

Several other American soldiers followed York’s lead and began firing; as they drew closer to the machine-gun nest, the German commander—thinking he had underestimated the size of the enemy squadron—surrendered his garrison of some 90 men. On the way back to the Allied lines, York and his squad took more prisoners, for a total of 132. Though Alvin York consistently played down his accomplishments of that day, he was given credit for killing more than 20 German soldiers. Promoted to the rank of sergeant, he remained on the front lines until November 1, 10 days before the armistice. In April 1919, York was awarded the highest American military decoration, the Medal of Honor.

February 3, 2024

Four Chaplains Day



A day set aside to honor the four U.S. Army chaplains who gave their lives to save others when the troop ship USAT Dorchester sank during World War II

On Feb. 3, 1943, the U.S.A.T. Dorchester carrying 902 service men, merchant seamen and civilian workers was sunk in the cold Atlantic. Through the pandemonium, according to those present, four Army chaplains brought hope in despair and light in darkness. Those chaplains were Lt. George L.

Fox, Methodist; Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Jewish; Lt. John P. Washington, Roman Catholic; and Lt. Clark V. Poling, Dutch Reformed.

Quickly and quietly, the four chaplains spread out among the soldiers. There they tried to calm the frightened, tend the wounded and guide the disoriented toward safety.

“Witnesses of that terrible night remember hearing the four men offer prayers for the dying and encouragement for those who would live,” says Wyatt R. Fox, son of Reverend Fox. One witness, Private William B. Bednar, found himself floating in oil-smeared water surrounded by dead bodies and debris. “I could hear men crying, pleading, praying,” Bednar recalls. “I could also hear the chaplain's preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going.” By this time, most of the men were topside, and the chaplains opened a storage locker and began distributing life jackets. It was then that Engineer Grady Clark witnessed an astonishing sight. When there were no more lifejackets in the storage room, the chaplains removed theirs and gave them to four frightened young men.

“It was the finest thing I have seen or hope to see this side of heaven,” said John Ladd, another survivor who saw the chaplains’ selfless act. As the ship went down, survivors in nearby rafts could see the four chaplains—arms linked and braced against the slanting deck. Their voices could also be heard offering prayers. Of the 902 men aboard the U.S.A.T. Dorchester, 672 died, leaving 230 survivors. When the news reached American shores, the nation was stunned by the magnitude of the tragedy and heroic conduct of the four chaplains. “Valor is a gift,” Carl Sandburg once said. “Those having it never know for sure whether they have it until the test comes.”

That night Reverend Fox, Rabbi Goode, Reverend Poling and Father Washington passed life’s ultimate test. In doing so, they became an enduring example of extraordinary faith, courage and selflessness. The Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart were awarded posthumously December 19, 1944, to the next of kin by Lt. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell, Commanding General of the Army Service Forces, in a ceremony at the post chapel at Fort Myer, VA. A one-time only posthumous Special Medal for Heroism was authorized by Congress and awarded by the President Eisenhower on January 18, 1961. The special medal was intended to have the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor.

<https://fourchaplains.org/>

March is

Women's History Month

Please see the First Woman to join the US Military

Opha May Johnson- US Marine Corps

was the first woman known to have enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. on August 13, 1918, before women were even allowed to vote.



Loretta Perfectus Walsh-US Navy

became the first American active-duty Navy woman, the first woman to enlist in the U.S. Navy, and the first woman allowed to serve as a woman in any of the United States armed forces, when she enlisted as a sailor in the U.S. Naval Reserve on March 17, 1917. Walsh subsequently became the first woman U.S. Navy petty officer when she was sworn in as Chief Yeoman on March 21, 1917.



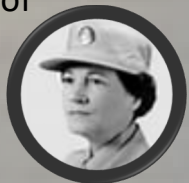
Deborah Sampson – US Army

Disguised herself as a man, and served in the Continental Army under the name Robert Shirtliff, and fought in the American Revolutionary War. She fought in the war for 17 months before her sex was revealed when she required medical treatment after contracting a fever in Philadelphia in 1783. After her real identity was made known to her commander, she was honorably discharged at West Point. In 1802, she became one of the first women to go on a lecture tour to speak about her wartime experiences. She died in Sharon, Massachusetts in 1827. She was proclaimed the Official Heroine of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on May 23, 1983, and in 1985 the United States Capitol Historical Society posthumously honored "Deborah Samson" with the Commemorative Medal.



Esther McGowin Blake- US Air Force

The first woman in the United States Air Force. She enlisted on the first minute of the first hour of the first day regular U.S. Air Force duty was authorized for women on July 8, 1948.



Myrtle Hazard- US Coast Guard

In January 1918. She was the first woman to enlist in the Coast Guard, and the first to hold electrician status in the Coast Guard. For her service, she received the Order of St. Sava from the government of Serbia.



These women were trailblazers in their own right and paved the way for future generations of women to serve in the military.



Please feel free to email questions or concerns to us at

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**Monday – Friday
8:30am -11:30 am & 1:00pm – 4:00pm**