

HOT TOPIC – NOVEMBER 2020

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

President Pam has selected the Military and Veterans as one of her Special Projects - so without a doubt – that will be this month's Hot Topic!

Wreaths Across America is an annual event honoring our fallen veterans. Check out their website at www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org where you can sponsor a wreath to show your gratitude. The cost of sponsoring a wreath is \$15, and your donation can be made "In Honor Of" or "In Memory Of." In 2019 2.2 million wreaths were placed on headstones at 2,158 cemeteries. Several of our California clubwomen participate in placing these hand-crafted wreaths fashioned out of American balsam and hand-tied with a red velvet bow where it all begins in Columbia Falls, Maine. When volunteers place a wreath on a veteran's grave on December 19 this year, the veteran's name is said aloud. The memory of each veteran is kept alive through the saying of his/her name. Our GFWC President will lead a delegation to Arlington that day.

The website also offers the opportunity to purchase 100 business-sized "I Owe You" cards for \$5 which can be handed out to veterans thanking them for their service. The cards have a space for your signature and outline the pledge that you are making as a citizen to do more for our military families and veterans. These can be handed out any time during the year when you cross paths with military personnel and veterans.

Honor Flights are 3 day all-expenses paid excursion for veterans from their home hub (airport) to Washington, DC where they visit memorials and museums built in their honor. The cost of transporting a veteran is \$2,500. Each veteran is accompanied by a Guardian who is capable of attending to the physical needs of the veteran – often a family member or friend. \$450 covers the Guardian's

expenses. There are currently 133 Honor Flight Hubs in 46 states, 7 of which are in California: Fresno, San Francisco, Paso Robles, Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Bernardino and San Diego. It is estimated that 640 WWII veterans die each day. It is an awesome experience to be on hand at the participating hubs to welcome home the veterans. While the pandemic curtailed Honor Flights for most of 2020, monetary donations are vitally needed to ensure that as many veterans as possible have the opportunity to visit Washington and be further recognized for their service. If you are not near a hub to personally welcome them home, consider writing notes of appreciation which are distributed to the veterans during “Mail Call” on the way to/from DC. It was heartwarming to me to see that 11 clubs reported supporting the Honor Flight Program in 2019. This was up from 5 the previous year. Congratulations to Area A: West Valley Federated Women’s Club; Area B: Hacienda Heights Woman’s Club; Area C: GFWC South Bay Junior Woman’s Club, El Segundo woman’s Club, The Torrance Woman’s Club, Hughes-Elizabeth Lakes Woman’s Club, Canoga Park Women’s Club, Ebell Club of Fullerton, Norwalk Woman’s Club, Granada Hills Woman’s Club; Area D: Chula Vista Woman’s Club. As a CFWC-endorsed project clubs participating in 2020 are scheduled to receive Certificates of Appreciation at our 2021 Convention.

Fisher Houses are comfort homes where military and veteran families can stay – free of charge – while a loved one undergoes medical procedures. Fisher Houses are the legacy of Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher who created the program in 1990 upon observing the need of families to be near their loved ones. Zachary Fisher was a builder by trade, as well as a philanthropist and patriot. The Foundation was created and has provided life-changing experiences for those who walk through Fisher House doors. Fisher Houses can be found at the following sites: Travis AFB, Los Angeles, Palo Alto, San Diego, Camp Pendleton and Long Beach. As of February 2019, there are 86 Fisher Houses in the U.S., Germany and the United Kingdom. Fisher Houses can be found near military and VA Centers. Up to 21 suites are available to military families. They can accommodate 16 to 42 family members depending on the size of the house. While beds and baths are private, the families share common areas such as kitchen, laundry, dining and living rooms. Since its

inception, families have saved over \$451 million dollars in out-of-pocket expenses at these locations. In addition to monetary donations, volunteers are welcomed at Fisher Houses – simply contact the manager to determine how you can help.

USO – the United Service Organizations – came into being through President Roosevelt’s efforts to unite several service organizations (the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board) into one organization to lift the morale of our military. Today there are over 250 USO locations world-wide. Due to Covid-19, operations have been suspended at SFO, Los Angeles, Palm Springs and Travis AFB USO Centers according to the Internet, although activities currently continue at John Wayne USO. The USO is not a government agency, but relies on public donations to support service members and their families. The USO provides Snack Packs and Toiletry Packs for our military personnel. Wish Lists will request such items as individual serving size snacks, books, travel-sized toiletries, and hygiene products that can be packaged for distribution to those traveling through the airports and mailed to locations abroad. The Bob Hope USO Administrative Office can be reached at 562-999-7738 or by mail at Bob Hope USO Headquarters, 200 Pine Avenue, #240, Long Beach, CA 90802.

The **Knit Your Bit Campaign** of the World War II Museum in New Orleans welcomes hand-crafted scarves which they, in turn, mail out to VA Centers around the country for distribution. The scarf can be any pattern and some patterns are suggested on their website where you can also sign up for their enewsletter. Gender-neutral and patriotic colors are suggested in sizes varying from 7”x48” to 6”x60.” Simply attach a card with your club name to each scarf and mail your package to: The National WWII Museum, Knit Your Bit Campaign, 945 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130. Include the names of the participants and the Museum will send a Certificate of Appreciation. The pandemic forced the Museum to put this project on hold so do check before mailing your packages. This is also a CFWC-endorsed project so certificates will be presented to participating clubs at

Convention Area Meetings. Any scarves made for the military will be included in this project.

A **Cup of Joe** is a CFWC-endorsed project where certificates will be presented to participating clubs at Convention Area Meetings. Green Beans Coffee has Cafes on military installations in 8 countries and 16 states. \$2.50 buys a cup of coffee for deployed personnel. The \$2.50 can be redeemed for coffee or tea, or credit towards any other food or beverage which is prepared daily in the Café. Personal messages of encouragement can be included. Often, the recipient may email their thanks to you. Chef Robert Irvine has created a protein smoothie and bars that are now on the menu. Check them out at www.cupofjoeforajoe.com where their FAQ will answer many questions you may have

HISTORY OF THE POW/MIA BRACELETS. Voices in Vital America (VIVA) was a Los Angeles based student organization that produced and distributed the bracelets during the Vietnam War. Carol Bates Brown, daughter of a member of the GHWC, was the National Chairman of the POW/MIA Bracelet Campaign for VIVA. Honorary Co-Chairmen were Bob Hope and Martha Raye.

The idea for the bracelets started as a way to remember American prisoners of war suffering in POW camps in Southeast Asia in late 1969. Carol and a fellow student, Kay Hunter, met with wives of missing pilots who wanted their help in drawing public attention to their plight. Carol and Kay were looking for ways college students could become involved in positive programs to support U.S. soldiers without becoming involved in the controversy of the war itself. Bob Dornan, a local TV personality, facilitated the meeting. He, himself, wore a bracelet he'd obtained in Vietnam from tribesmen which he said always reminded him of the suffering the war brought to so many. The idea for POW/MIA bracelets was born! On Veterans Day in 1970, the program was introduced to the public and the response was overwhelming. Over 12,000 requests a day were being received. With this income, there was money to pay for brochures, bumper stickers, etc. to

publicize the POW/MIA issue. VIVA distributed nearly five million bracelets before closing its doors in 1976.

Bracelets are now available from the non-profit Ohio Chapter POW/MIA which donates 100% of all proceeds to the National League of Families, which is the only national organization whose members are close relatives of those still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

Today's POW/MIA bracelets are stainless steel, ½ inch wide, and bear the name, rank, service branch, county and date of loss, and cost \$15, which includes shipping. The original bracelets bore simply the name and date of loss and sold for around \$3. Bracelets can be ordered from: Ohio Chapter MIA/POW, P.O. Box 14853, Columbus, OH 43214.

Next week we will be celebrating Veterans Day. A most moving ceremony to honor our Veterans is the **MISSING MAN TABLE & HONORS CEREMONY**. In non-pandemic times, this can be done at a club meeting as part of the day's program.

The narrator explains:

"As one enters the room, you may have noticed a special table. It is reserved to honor our missing men.

Set for six, the empty chairs represent Americans who were or are missing from each of the services – Army, Marine Corps, Navy, air Force, Coast Guard – and civilians, all with us in spirit.

Let me explain the meaning of this table, and then join me for a moment of silent prayer.

The table is round – to show our everlasting concern.

The cloth is white – symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to serve.

The single red rose reminds us of the lives of these Americans....and their loved ones and friends who keep the faith, while seeking answers.

The yellow ribbon symbolizes our continuing uncertainty, the hope for their return and our determination to account for them.

A slice of lemon reminds us of their bitter fate, captured or missing in a foreign land.

A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears of our missing and their families.

The lighted candle reflects our hope for their return.

The Bible represents the strength gained through faith, to sustain us and those lost from our country, founded as one Nation under God.

The glass is inverted – symbolizing their inability to share a toast.

The chairs are/the chair is empty – they are missing.....(moment of silence).

Let us now raise our water glasses in a toast to honor America's POW/MIAs, to the success of our efforts to account for them, and to the safety of all now serving our Nation!"

These are just a few of the ways we can support President Pam's Special Project: Military and Veterans, and answer GF's Challenge to Support and Aid Women Veterans. Good Luck!