



WWII Veteran Recognition Ceremony

World War II Veterans residing at Central Nebraska Veterans' Home (CNVH) were recognized as part of an initiative from Governor Jim Pillen and the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs recognizing Nebraska's living World War II veterans in 2025 for the 80th anniversary of the end of the war. A special ceremony



was held on December 10th at CNVH where a presentation was made by Governor Jim Pillen, Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs Director John Hilgert, and CNVH Administrator Dorin Vaipan.

After a brief speech by Governor Pillen, he recognized each of our WWII Veterans for their service, presenting them with a signed certificate marking the occasion and thanking them for their service. Those recognized included Donald Graper, John Finkner, Milton Hawkins (awarded posthumously to his wife Freda), Elmer Heeren, and Douglas Graul. Each was presented with a special recognition medal.

Families of those being recognized were notified in advance so they could choose to attend and witness the memorable occasion in the Juliet building's Hearth Room. We were pleased to see that several were able to attend and share in this special moment with their loved ones. More photos of this event can be found on page seven of this newsletter.



Message From the Administrator



By Dorin C. Vaipan,
CNVH Administrator

It is incredible how time flies, but here is December, the last month of 2024! Unfortunately, December brings much colder temperatures and shorter days, like the one on December 21st – the winter equinox day!

The month of December had other events, one of which is the commemoration of 83 years since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor's military installation in Oahu, Hawaii. Also, Mr. Doug Waterfield, Art Professor at University of Nebraska – Kearney, donated 15 paintings that now beautify some of Central Nebraska Veterans' Home's walls. In our next newsletter, we will have an article describing more of these paintings.



I hope that you already noticed that our facility newsletter, Liberty Express, has a new look! The old newsletter's format was getting "too long in the tooth" so an update was really needed.

From the newsletter's first page, you can notice that a crucial event was marked by the visit of Gov. Jim Pillen, NDVA Dir. John Hilgert, State Sen. John Lowe and Senator-elect Stan Clouse. Gov. Pillen recognized our members who were World War II veterans and presented them with the 80th Anniversary WWII Medals. With this occasion, Gov. Pillen accepted to autograph a football that is displayed in the facility, on which he wrote "Jim Pillen – Together We Can 2024!"



Of course, the winter holidays focused on plenty of activities for our members, celebrating Christmas as well as the New Years Day. Carol singers, volunteers or staff dressed in Santa Claus, elves, Grinch or other seasonal and colorful outfits, enlighten the lives of our members and created a jolly and cheerful work environment.

Until next time, wishing you all a healthy, prosperous and a very happy 2025!

If you have questions, feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience. Thank you!

Dorin C. Vaipan, CNVH Administrator

Member Council: Member of the Month - Ivan Bombeck

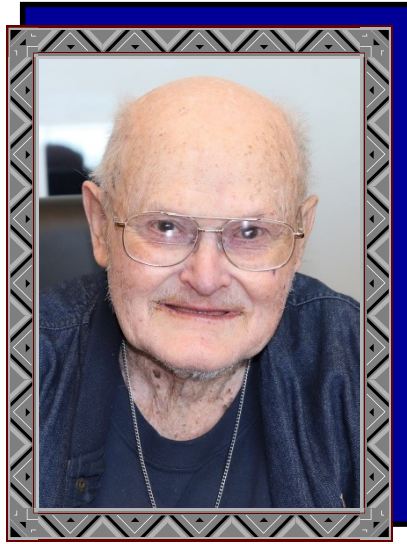
Ivan was selected as the “Member of the Month” by the CNVH Member Council. Ivan was born in Kearney, Nebraska and was raised in Shelton, Nebraska.

Ivan is an Army Veteran and served during the Vietnam war. He lived in Fort Riley, Kansas until he was stationed in Vietnam. After he finished his tour at Fort Benning, Georgia he returned to Kearney.

After the service Ivan began farming with his dad in Shelton. He drove a grain truck for Walnut Grove for 13 years. He later worked as a maintenance man at Centennial Apartments and also worked at Morris Press Printing.

Ivan was in a bowling league at Hilltop Lanes and on a league in Shelton. Ivan also enjoyed going to dances on Friday nights.

A true Nebraska native through and through, he is truly supportive of the Nebraska Cornhuskers. In



Ivan Bombeck

Member of the Month

Ivan’s free time he enjoys watching them play, especially football, baseball and basketball.

Some of Ivan’s favorite things are bingo and westerns—even better is a movie with his favorite actor Audie Murphy. Renowned George Strait is his favorite music performer. When it comes to food, steak, mashed potatoes and gravy are tops! Red and green are his favorite colors. Favorite pets have been dogs and he loves German Shepherds!

When Ivan was asked what he likes best about living at CNVH he stated, “doing what I like and getting treated with great care.” But he didn’t stop there. He continued, “I also love the entertainment that we have here, and the therapy team helps me stay healthy.”

Congratulations, Ivan on being selected “Member of the Month”!

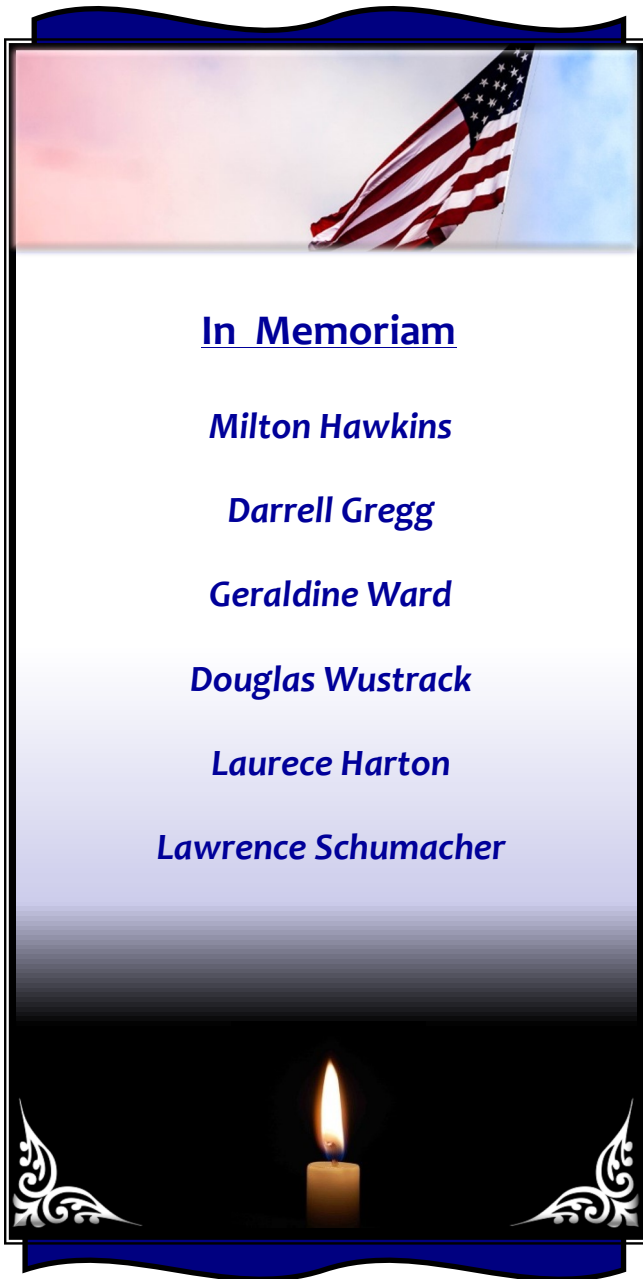
Member Council: Employee of the Month



Josh Geiselman in Crafts/Woodshop

Josh Geiselman is an outstanding member of the Activity Team and the Craft Department. Josh is always willing to help a member when they need to figure out a new wood project. Often, members will arrive with a very vague idea of what they want and will describe what they have in mind. After a short back and forth with Josh they can have a full fleshed out idea of what they really wanted to make in the wood shop. Josh is often willing to go the extra mile to make sure the member gets what they really want out of a project.

Josh not only helps the members in the home but often helps his team members as well. Josh is an outstanding human being who is always there to help. His passion for the woodcrafts shows in his dedication the field and his creativity in getting some unique looking projects done. Josh is an artist with wood, and that shows in the products he helps the members complete.



In Memoriam

Milton Hawkins

Darrell Gregg

Geraldine Ward

Douglas Wustrack

Laurece Harton

Lawrence Schumacher

Trees All A Glitter

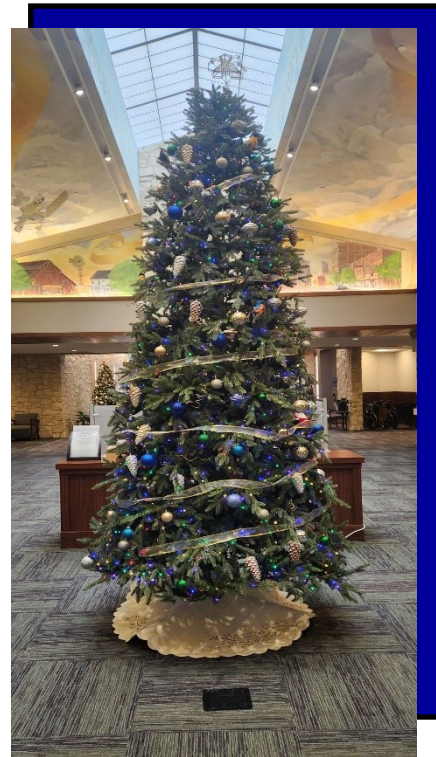
This holiday season, Christmas Trees at CNVH were sponsored by organizations in our community. These gorgeous creations helped make the homes and common areas throughout the campus look extra festive for all to enjoy! Thank you one and all!

Graczyk Landscaping

Knights of Columbus

Sampson Construction

Gold Star Parent Tree



Our heartfelt thanks to these groups for their kindness and generosity—making the holidays bright!

Sponsors providing member gifts this year!

YRTC Office Staff-Kearney, Members of IconPoly-Gibbon, St. James Catholic Church-Kearney, Staff members of Ashley Furniture-Kearny, Staff members of The Sporting Edge-Kearny, Staff members of Miller and Associates-Kearney, Kearney VFW Auxiliary, St. George Orthodox Church-Kearney, Staff at Two Rivers Public Health Department-Kearney

It's a New Year - Great Time to Develop Your Craft



By Ralph Healey, CNVH
Crafts and Woodshop
Supervisor

Let me introduce myself! My name is Ralph Healey and I joined the Central Nebraska Veterans' Home team in June of 2024 as the Supervisor for the Crafts and Woodshop areas. The start of a new year is a great time to consider

trying something new and my department has many things to choose from—let's see if our team can help inspire you!

This department works on a variety of fun and exciting activities for all levels of individuals who enjoy ceramics, wood working, leather working, puzzles, socializing, painting, handmade crafts, and getting together with others for fun. Knowing how to do any of these activities in advance is not a prerequisite because our knowledgeable staff is there to help you learn and grow in your artistic capabilities. Many members who attend regularly will admit they had never even touched ceramic items or wood working prior to coming their first time and now love the activity. Come on down and give us a chance to show you the ropes and learn if this type of activity is right for you.

On the Ceramics side of the Crafts Department, you will pick out a pre-shaped piece of clay that is shaped into an animal, character, or other object and clean that into a workable object. This will then be shaped using scrapers and sanding files. We will then fire those in our five kilns at two thousand de-

grees locking in their shape so the next time you come in they can be painted. We will then help you pick out the colors you want them to be. Some of the paints are spray sealed, some are re-fired in the kilns. Once they are done you can either keep them in your room

to be displayed, give them away to your family or friends as gifts, or sell them in our display case in front of the crafts department.

On the Wood Shop side of the Crafts Department, you will work to design what you want to make. A display case to sit on your desk, or maybe a jewelry box for a wife or daughter. The various kinds of wood available can be selected so you know what the final product may look like at the end. Then that object will be cut out and you will begin to sand on the wood to get the product nice and smooth. Once the items are smoothed to perfection you will help get the items assembled into the shape you envisioned and begin painting or staining the final product. Once it is done this object can be kept for yourself, given as a gift, or sold off just like

the ceramic items can be.

Campus neighborhoods have scheduled sessions in Crafts and Woodshop on a rotating basis. If you are interested in trying something new, wanting to develop your inner artist or hone your overall "craft" skills, please contact your neighborhood Activity Specialist. Our team looks forward to working with you!

"Many members who attend regularly will admit they had never even touched ceramic items or wood working prior to coming their first time and now love the activity."

Christmas at CNVH

The month of December was full of Christmas cheer here at CNVH. Throughout the month members got to enjoy Christmas tree decorating, Christmas concerts, Christmas goodies, Christmas parties and more.

The month of December started out with decorating here at CNVH to get ready for the holiday season, the trees in the homes were sponsored by different organizations (listed on page 4). We greatly appreciate all our sponsors for the trees and decorations.

On December 3rd we had Gift for Yanks Parties, this was sponsored by the American Legion family. The members enjoyed an afternoon of playing Christmas Bingo and having cookies. The members also received a special gift from the American Legion Family for the holidays and thanking them for their service.

Some special singers joined us on December 9th to sing Christmas music for our members.



Members enjoyed their time with the kids and watching them sing and dance. There were a lot of smiles in the room.

The members enjoyed a Christmas program presented by kids from the Glenwood Elementary School. They also had made ornaments for each of the members and shared them after the concert ended.

On December 23rd, all neighborhoods had Christmas parties and gifts were passed out to the members. In preparation for these parties, Activity staff worked with members back in October asking them what they wanted for Christmas. These items were all written on Christmas bulbs and each member was sponsored by an organization so they would have a gift for Christmas (see page 4 with a list of the sponsors). The members loved their gifts and are very thankful to the sponsors for the gifts.

Throughout the month our neighborhoods did Christmas Light Bus Tours so members could go out and see the pretty Christmas lights in our community. Thank you to everyone for making December a great month for our members.



Suite Preschool came and performed and later were helped by our members to make ornaments to take home with them. The mem-



WWII Veteran Recognition Ceremony (continued from page 1)



Above: Governor Jim Pillen presented recognition medals to our WWII veterans on December 10th. Also at the ceremony were NDVA Director John Hilgert (left), Senator-elect Stan Clouse (right), and Senator John Lowe (far right).



Above: NDVA Director John Hilgert (left) visits with WWII Veteran Dr. John Finkner after the ceremony.

Left: WWII Veteran Doug Graul proudly shows his recognition medal.

Be Your Best sELF Day!



December 18th was “Answer the Phone Like Buddy the Elf Day”. While campus phones weren’t answered that way, the elf ears were certainly at attention, spreading holiday cheer for this photo op! Santa and the Grinch even made time in their busy schedules to celebrate the festive occasion with some of the elves on staff. Look at the size of those candy canes!



Check us out on the web!

<https://veterans.nebraska.gov/cnvh>

Special Points of Interest Next Issue:

- *Merrymakers Concert with John Worsham sponsored by American Legion Auxiliary*
- *Chinese New Year Bingo Party sponsored by American Legion Auxiliary*

The Liberty Express is published monthly by Central Nebraska Veterans' Home.

Administrator: Dorin C. Vaipan

Editor: Jessica Modlin



GOVERNOR
JIM PILLEN

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
JOHN HILGERT

CENTRAL NEBRASKA VETERANS' HOME ADMINISTRATOR
DORIN C. VAIPAN

Central Nebraska Veterans' Home

4510 E. 56th Street
Kearney, NE 68847
Phone: 308-865-6000