

Robert Joseph Burns, U.S. Navy, Naugatuck

Robert Burns served during both WWII and the Korean Conflict. After serving in the military, Robert became an active member of the VFW, Catholic War Veterans and the American Legion where he continues to be an invaluable source of information for the younger members of these groups. Robert was also an active member of the Veterans Who Care Committee for 18 years. This committee was founded in 1989 to assist needy Veterans and their families in Connecticut. He could always be counted on when it came to fundraisers and food drives for these needy Veterans, his attendance record for all volunteer meetings and conferences continues to be outstanding. Robert spent 45+ years coaching, umpiring and refereeing for Naugatuck's Little League Baseball, Junior Football and American Legion Baseball. Robert volunteered his time with a group advocating for the beatification of the Borough of Naugatuck. Robert is a man who is believe, cherished and held in the highest esteem by everyone who knows him.

Francis Cletus Conahan, U.S. Navy, Ledyard

Francis (Frank) Conahan has supported and helped strengthen both his family (including his Navy family) and the communities in which he has lived. Over the course of his life, Frank has donated over 40 gallons of blood between Connecticut and Florida (126 pints to Connecticut, 201 pints to Florida) and according to the American Red Cross, Frank has potentially helped to save 981 lives through these gifts of blood. Frank has also donated 25 gallons of platelets translating to another 200 lives potentially saved. Frank's contributions to community go much further than blood and platelet donations. He has assisted in the cleanup after hurricanes, refurbishing non-profit organizations and repainting a school. He was also a member of the Ledyard Volunteer Emergency Squad (Ambulance) for over 10 years and has participated in over 300 ambulance runs and has received five Stork awards for participating in the successful delivery of 5 healthy babies. As licensed Foster Parents for the past nine years, Frank and his wife have taken in 126 children ranging in the age of 2 weeks to 10 years old, all from various difficult living situations and many from Veteran and Military families. He is certified to provide Foster Care, Respite Care, Emergency placement and Medically Complex care. Many of the children living in their home had complex medical issues. Frank's care for these children goes much further than addressing their physical needs. Frank provides, sometimes for the first time in these children's lives, a loving, nurturing and emotionally stable living environment. For the past five years, Frank has volunteered his time as "Santa" for many non-profit organizations bringing holiday joy to the less fortunate children in our state.

Bradford, Davis, U.S. Marine Corps, Bloomfield

Since his time as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, Brad Davis has made countless contributions to the Veterans community in the State of Connecticut. Most notably, Brad's legacy can be seen in the Connecticut Wall of Honor Memorial, housed in the Concourse between the State Capitol and the Legislative Office Building. In 2007, Brad, in partnership with Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman, worked tirelessly to develop and implement the Connecticut Wall of Honor Memorial. This Wall of Honor serves as a tribute to our state's heroic men and women of the Armed Forces who have lost their lives in service to this country following the tragic

terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Brad has become a steadfast contributor to the annual Wall of Honor Ceremony, in which he welcomes the families of our fallen soldiers to come together and remember the sacrifices made by their loved ones. Brad's thoughtful and poignant remarks are continuously a comfort to the Gold Star Families he has come to know over the course of the past nine years. In addition to this work, Brad is affiliated with a number of Veterans and patriotic organizations across the state. He participates in numerous parades, flag raising ceremonies and Veteran gatherings. Brad's radio career began in 1956 and he has made a distinct effort to incorporate public service into his platform as a radio personality. He supports countless charitable organizations across the State of Connecticut. As his reputation grew, so too did his personal efforts on behalf of those less fortunate than himself. Brad participates in the annual Connecticut Children's Medical Center Radiothon Fundraiser. Since 2003, over \$2 million dollars have been raised to benefit the Children's Hospital in Hartford. This year, the Radiothon beat its previous fundraising goals and raised a record-breaking \$145,554.00 over the course of one day. Brad spent this day meeting with patients and families in the Children's Hospital and promoted the event live on his talk show. As important as fundraising events are to the success of the many organizations he supports, they are not the only ways in which Brad is involved in community outreach. Brad has made a habit out of helping others outside of his public persona. As he is stationed in downtown Hartford, he has become a familiar face in the neighborhood. He collected food for the local community, and could often be seen driving the neighborhoods in the winter bringing those in need to local shelters.

Archie Elam, U.S. Army, Stamford

A graduate of West Point and Veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Archie Elam continues to exemplify the qualities of a true community leader. He is a life member for more than 15 years of the VFW and was recently elected as the Commander of the Fairfield County District representing 2300 Veterans. He held the position of CT VFW's State Surgeon where he led their state-wide visitation/outreach programs for Veterans in hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities. He raised money and collected thousands of items for donation to those in need. Archie led the VFW's programs in Fairfield County to raise money for Veteran programs and to award scholarships to middle school and high school students. He led a post project that involved more than 100 community volunteers each year to plant some 4,500 flags on the graves of fallen Veterans. In addition, he sponsored two Eagle Scout projects that surveyed cemeteries where flags had been planted to build computerized, GPS-verified, location databases that uncovered another 4,000+ Veterans graves. These databases continue to assist in the care of our fallen Veterans. Archie speaks to numerous children in city schools about the importance of community involvement and civic duty. He is a sought after speaker/mentor to numerous children in city schools. He continues to make presentations to community organizations and city leaders on the development of a Veterans Day program for city schools. Archie has spent a career in uniform serving his country in peace and war. He continues to share his success with fellow Veterans and citizens alike, he raised money, organized and directed an array of programs and events and has become a true advocate, coach and leader to so many throughout the state.

Richard Iannucci, U.S. Navy, Stratford

After a long military career, Richard could have easily settled for a quiet retirement; however this was not his way. Instead, he took on the leadership of an organization, Port 5, as Commander and in this position has taken on the responsibilities of running a business, effectively raising money for charity, motivating the membership to volunteer, advocate for Veterans rights and celebrate the lives of all members of the service. He does all of this and more as a volunteer as this is an unpaid position. He is the embodiment of what it means to be in service to your community and country. One of Richard's greatest accomplishments has been his ability to take a disparate group of people and turn them into a vibrant civic organization that seeks to give back to the greater community. Richard is a man who has dedicated his life to community service. He is an inspiration to so many and has touched the lives of thousands of people through his work with several of Connecticut's largest cities by celebrating the service and sacrifices made by the men and women of the United States Armed Forces on Veterans and Memorial Day. He works with organizations such as the WorkPlace to raise public awareness of the importance of Veteran's service and how to be advocates for Veteran's needs.

William Orstad, U.S. Navy, Norwich

Paul was an inspirational leader with 20 years of experience and leadership in the U.S. Navy. After retirement, Paul continues to be an inspirational, involved leader and Veteran. He has dedicated a great deal of time volunteering and giving to others. His actions are tireless and he makes a huge difference with everything he is involved in. Paul is a respected and influential leader within the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), U.S. Submarine Veterans (USSVI) and in the local community. Through the BSA and USSVI, he has been a key player involved in numerous programs that benefit boys and young men in scouting, Veterans, Active Duty Sailors and others within the community. He takes great pride in the help he gives to others through his leadership and involvement with programs of recognition and charitable causes. In October of 1992, Paul volunteered to be the USSVI National Scholarship Chairman. He held this position for 25 years and has been directly responsible for raising over \$650K in funds used to provide scholarships to children or grandchildren of Veterans to assist them in furthering their education. When Paul initially took over as Scholarship Chairman they would receive approximately 10 applicants and would grant 4 scholarships. Under his leadership, the program has grown to over 90 annual applicants and approximately 40 Scholarships awarded. For the past 16 years, Paul has volunteered every Thanksgiving to assist in the Annual Thanksgiving Program. He is the team leader in carving approximately 200 turkeys. The program feeds more than 1000 single Sailors, Veterans and Police Officers in the area.

Linda S. Schwartz, U.S. Air Force, Pawcatuck

Dr. Linda Spoonster Schwartz was confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Veteran Affairs for Policy and Planning by the Senate on September 16, 2014. She serves as VA's principal advisor on all matters of policy, interagency liaison activities and strategic planning.

Prior to her confirmation, she served as Connecticut Commissioner of Veterans Affairs (2003-2014) and was known for her strong advocacy for Homeless Veterans, Veteran Suicide Prevention, and Women Veterans. Dr. Schwartz served during the Vietnam War, as a member of the United States Air Force Nurse Corps (1967-1986) serving both on Active Duty and as a Reservist. She retired in 1986 after sustaining injuries in an aircraft accident while serving as a USAF Flight Nurse. Her disabilities brought her face to face with the care and needs of veterans seeking help from the VA.

After her military service, she earned a Masters in Nursing from Yale and went on to achieve a Doctorate in Public Health from the Yale School of Medicine through the VA Vocational Education Program. From 1989 to 1998 Dr. Schwartz served as a subject matter expert to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on Homeless Veterans, Veterans Mental Health and Women Veterans issues. She has been elected to the National Board of Directors of the American Nurses Association, Vietnam Veterans of America and the Vietnam Women's Memorial. She also served as President of the Connecticut Nurses Association and Connecticut Nurses Foundation and the first and only woman elected President of the National Association of State Directors of Veteran Affairs. Her volunteer activities include serving as the National President of the Vietnam Veterans Assistance Fund, she raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to assist veteran programs and support service throughout the Nation. She was instrumental in bringing "Stand Down" to Connecticut in 1992 a tradition which survives to this day. Dr. Schwartz successfully procured over \$50 M in Federal Grants to improve the aging facilities at the Connecticut Veterans Home in Rocky Hill and Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, CT. She led the effort to construct first State Memorial to honor Connecticut Veterans and was named President Emeritus of the Connecticut State Veterans Memorial. Her honors include the National Commendation medal of Vietnam Veterans of America for "Justice, Integrity, and Meaningful Achievement"; the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of the Four Chaplains; Sigma Theta Tau' International ARCHON AWARD "for her leadership and research on the human effects of exposure to Agent Orange. She was honored by her home state in 2004 by being inducted into "The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame." The American Academy of Nursing recently honored her with the prestigious "Civitas Award" for her leadership, stellar nursing career and relentless efforts to improve the health of America's veterans and their families."

Salvatore Sena, U.S. Marine Corps, Newington

Upon discharge from the Marine Corps, Sal worked as an iron worker and stayed at this position until suffering a serious injury which ended his employment and required him to undertake two years of outpatient therapy. During this time, he continued his education and obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in just three years. With degree in hand, Sal accepted a position as a Construction Engineer for the State of Connecticut and eventually became Senior Project Manager for numerous multi-million dollar highway and bridge projects. In 2000, Sal suffered a heart attack and stroke and was forced to leave his position. This did not stop Sal from seeking out opportunities to show gratitude and appreciation to his country and community by giving back. He joined the Marine Corps League of CT and immediately assumed the position of Adjutant in the largest Detachment in the State. After 3 years he was nominated and accepted the position of Sr. Vice Commandant and in 2007 he became Commandant. During this time he was also the Detachment Chaplain and Funeral Honors Coordinator; a position he still holds today. Under his direction, the Funeral Honor program has expanded from 90 details per year to

over 400 details per year. The team has grown from 8 Marines to over 90 due to Sal's dedication, guidance and direction. Sal's affinity for deceased Veterans does not end at the graveside, but begins immediately upon notification of the death. He personally visits the family prior to and after interment and avails himself in any way possible to assist the grieving family from administrative tasks, to assistance in the preparation for the burial to comforting the family in a way only fellow Marines can do. Sal's contributions, as many as they are; do not end with his Marine Corps League duties. He has heralded numerous community projects to better improve the lives of others. Sal sponsors a drive to collect clothing for homeless and needy Veterans and distributes them personally each year. He contributes during the Christmas Season by working hand in hand with the Marine Corps Reserve collecting and distributing for the Toys for Tots drive. He and fellow Marines attend a Christmas party at the Rocky Hill Veterans Campus where they distribute gifts of clothing and blankets to the resident Veterans. His love for children motivates him to plan and oversee the annual picnic for the Cromwell Children's Home. He continues to act as head baseball coach for the Columbian Squires, a youth organization with the Knights of Columbus. As a huge proponent of Veterans and their families Sal works in concert with the CT Department of Veterans Affairs by assisting and volunteering in any events requested.

Kjell T. Tollefsen, U.S. Army, Killingworth

Kjell has been a staunch supporter and advocate for Veterans since his days in the military during the Vietnam War. He has assisted many Veterans in his quiet inconspicuous way with monetary donations and assistance when a Veteran is in need. In his role as Vice President of Operations at Oak Hill, Inc. (the largest non-profit provider of disability services in CT), he is always looking for ways to assist disabled Veterans. Kjell never says no when requested to do anything for Veterans. He has been involved in the planning and implementation of many of the largest statewide special events and activities to honor and thank Veterans. Some of those events included the 2013 "Remembrance of the Fallen"; a Vietnam 50th Commemorative memorial ceremony in Hartford, where a public reading of the 613 Connecticut men killed/missing in Vietnam took place. In 2015 he served on a panel for discussion of the film "Last Days in Vietnam". He was also key in a Vietnam Commemorative two day event held at the CT Air Guard Base in East Granby and the New England Air Museum in Windsor Locks. This event was attended by more than 10,000 people. Kjell worked on the Executive Committee for two years planning and preparing for this historic event. Time and again, Kjell performs small acts of kindness for Veterans in need. Since 2008, Kjell has volunteered with the CCSU Veterans History Project and conducts interviews with Connecticut's wartime Veterans whose oral histories will be preserved forever at the Library of Congress. Kjell is almost always the volunteer for this project that goes to Veterans in Hospice care to conduct an interview. Kjell served five times as a "Guardian" and team leader for American Warrior "honor flights", escorting World War II Veterans from Connecticut to Washington DC to visit their memorial.

Arthur Ward, U.S. Marine Corps, Bristol

Since returning home from his service, Art has participated in almost every parade and memorial service on behalf of Veterans. He has remaining dedicated and involved in local Veterans' organizations, has held roles on the executive boards and has actively worked on projects and

committees. Art's commitment to Veterans involves speaking at schools, actively advocating for Veterans rights and benefits, supporting local Bristol Veterans and keeping the memory alive for those servicemen and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice. He continues to educate the population so that our youth today, "never forget". Art also supports those young servicemen and women as they prepare to depart for duty. In addition to his regular community activities, Art worked very hard to be elected Bristol Councilman and Mayor. Throughout his political involvement, he never lost focus on Veterans and always continued to have the respect for service of all Veterans. He continued to work with Veterans organizations even when the majority of his time was required in his role as Mayor. Regardless of other commitments, Veterans' events were still the priority for Art.