

TAKE A VET FISHING, NFP
OPERATION HEALING HEROES FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

TWO NON-PROFITS . . . ONE MISSION . . .

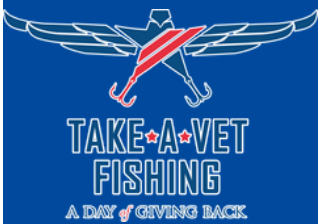
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

Your support reaches more veterans than you know. It allows us to partner to help fund and promote many amazing local and national veteran non-profits and programs, which increases the likelihood of finding treatment and solutions for veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress and other general anxiety issues. The more arrows in our quiver, increases those chances. Below are a few. Thank you so much!



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VETERAN SPOTLIGHT



ALAN CARPENTER

Thank you for your service, Al! Allan Carpenter was originally born William Allan Russell in 1938 in Portland, Maine. After a tumultuous childhood of poverty and domestic abuse, he decided to take the name of his mother's third husband, a local dairy farmer, and changed it to Allen Russell Carpenter to avoid confusion. Growing up on the 400-acre farm was a much better life for Al, his mother, and his brother and sister. Al graduated from Sanford High School in Sanford, Maine, in June of 1955.

Al enlisted in the US Navy on September 27, 1955, and graduated from boot camp at the Recruit Training Center in Bainbridge, MD, in December of 1955. He then went on to complete training in Airmen Preparatory School (Norman OK), Class A Radarman School (Norfolk VA), and Aviation Combat Information Center School (Glynco GA). His first duty station/squadron was VW-15 (Airborne Early Warning Squadron 15) Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, MD, with deployments to Argentina, Newfoundland, as extension and support of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line, also known as the Atlantic Barrier. In the middle of all this, he found the time to marry his high school sweetheart, Carolyn Malone on August 31, 1957!



Following Newfoundland, Al went on from October 1958 - August 1962 to graduate from Ground Controlled Approach School and Class A Control Tower Operator School in Olathe, KS. He excelled in all his training and was eventually invited to apply for the Integration Program (Seaman to Admiral) and the Naval Enlisted Scientific Program (NESEP). He was accepted for both, and he decided he could always get an education, but it may be his last shot to earn Wings of Gold, so he accepted orders to Flight Training via OCS at Newport, RI, being commissioned Ensign (ENS USN/0-1 in Aug 1962. Flight training took place in Pensacola, FL, Meridian, MS, and Kingsville, TX, during which he flew the T-34, T2A, F9F Cougar, and the F-11 Tiger. His dream of being a pilot came true in November of 1963 when he earned his wings as a Naval Aviator at Kingsville!





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ALAN CARPENTER

Al then attended Naval Justice School at Newport, RI, and completed Fleet Replacement training, known informally as RAG (Readiness Air Group) in 1964 and immediately reported to his new squadron, VA-72 at Air Station Oceana at Virginia Beach, VA, flying the A4 Skyhawk. In May of 1965, he embarked on his first combat cruise aboard the carrier USS Independence. This mission was the first major series of strikes against enemy supply lines north of the Hanoi-Haiphong complex. Al lost his roommate, Joe Mossman, on Sept 13, 1965, during this mission when his A-4E Skyhawk was shot down over North Vietnam. Joe was initially listed as Missing in Action, but in 1973, status changed to Killed in Action/Body not recovered.



On August 21, 1966, Al was shot down for the first time and was rescued by his ship's rescue helicopter. Then on November 1, 1966, on his 107th combat mission, Al was leading a flight of three A-4E Skyhawks on a SAM (Surface to Air Missile) suppression in the Haiphong area. His plane was hit by 85mm anti-aircraft fire, caught fire, and he lost control. He was able to head out over Haiphong Harbor and ejected at over 600 mph, causing severe injuries. He parachuted into the harbor, where nearby North Vietnamese fishing boats headed for him, was pulled aboard a fishing sailboat, and taken to the beach, where a truck transferred him to the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" North Vietnamese prison. Al would spend 6 years and 4+ months in captivity and endure numerous torture sessions while Carolyn was at home with four young children. In 1973, there were rumors that the US and Vietnam were conducting peace talks that could lead to the release of the 591 remaining POWs. This became reality when Al was repatriated via Operation Homecoming. He landed at Logan Airport in Boston and was reunited with his family and considers March 4, 1973 his "Re-Birthday!"



Reunited!!



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ALAN CARPENTER

While Al was away, the work of keeping things together for the family fell squarely on the shoulders of Carolyn. She stated, "...as far as keeping things together, it was one day at a time, with help from family and friends. Christmas was the worst." In the early years, the government did not want families to talk about the treatment our POWs were receiving. In 1969, POW families, led by Sybil Stockdale, decided they were going to speak out about the horrible treatment our men were receiving in prison. Carolyn, along with many others, began speaking out to local groups, asking citizens to write letters demanding better treatment for the POWs. The response was amazing. At about the same time, the National League of POW/MIA Families was formed, and the wonderful idea of putting a POW's name on a bracelet to raise money for their cause became popular. Carolyn was very involved in both efforts.



After touching American soil for the first time since the mid-60's and receiving proper medical attention, Al returned to his hometown of Sanford, ME, to be with his family and restart his life. His final assignment in the Navy was as an instrument flight instructor in Virginia, where he also spent a year in the Navy College Degree Program, followed by a stint as Exec Officer of a squadron in Norfolk, retiring from the Navy in late 1978. Al and Carolyn currently live in the pretty little town of Cobbs Creek, VA, on a tributary of Chesapeake Bay. He worked post-Navy as a small marina owner, marina railway operator, conducted ultralight sales and service, and was an aerial photographer. He was also a guest speaker at many events where POW/MIA issues were discussed. He received 3 Silver Stars, 2 Bronze Stars, 11 Air Medals, and 4 Navy Commendations, among many other honors. His prison clothes, or "pajamas" as they were known, currently hang on display in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE, AL, AND THANK YOU TO YOUR FAMILY FOR THEIR SACRIFICE!
WELCOME HOME!**





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HONORING HEROES



POW/MIA stands for Prisoner of War/Missing in Action representing U.S. service members held captive or unaccounted for in conflicts, honored by a black and white flag and ceremonies on the third Friday of September, symbolizing the nation's commitment to never forget them or their families, with the motto "You Are Not Forgotten." Let's all be sure they are always remembered.



Words of wisdom. During a season 9 episode of Operation Healing Heroes, Gold Star father Calvin Murphy, whose Army Ranger son, Etienne, was killed on deployment, stated:

"...that last hug...feel like I didn't hug him long enough."

This was one of many poignant moments of the episode, and we can all learn from Calvin's statement for use in our own lives. Check out this amazing episode from Season 9 and hear the song written in Etienne's honor by his mother, Sheila. Go to the Operation Healing Heroes YouTube Channel to watch.



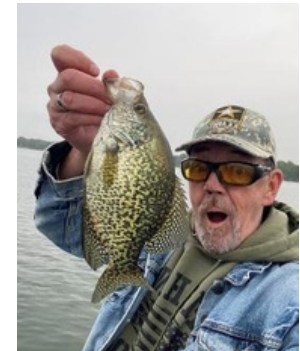
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NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS



The 2026 Take A Vet Fishing schedule is almost complete now, and scheduled events are posted on the TAVF website! It all starts in Florida with events in Madeira Beach on April 20th and 22nd. Things kick off in the upper Midwest on May 17th at Fox Lake, Illinois, then to our flagship event in Madison, WI, on June 13th. Lake Mille Lacs, MN, will be on August 8th, and Eagle River, WI, on October 10th. Second Minnesota and Wisconsin events are in the planning stages, and we hope to announce them soon!



The Exploits of DVD. TAVF Pro Staff Leader Dave VanDoorn is keeping busy! He was invited to lay wreaths at the Riverside Cemetery in Ladysmith, WI, for every veteran there who has been laid to rest. DVD, along with a group of community members, laid over 900 wreaths on a cold December day! Then “Santa Claus” paid a visit to ailing Army Veteran Ed Stygar, father of TAVF Pro Staff and Fishing 4 Veterans guide, Tom Stygar. Ed was presented with a custom-built TAVF rod combo built by Al Hutchison. Unfortunately, Ed passed away in early January. Please keep Tom and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Rest in peace, Ed, and thank you for your service.



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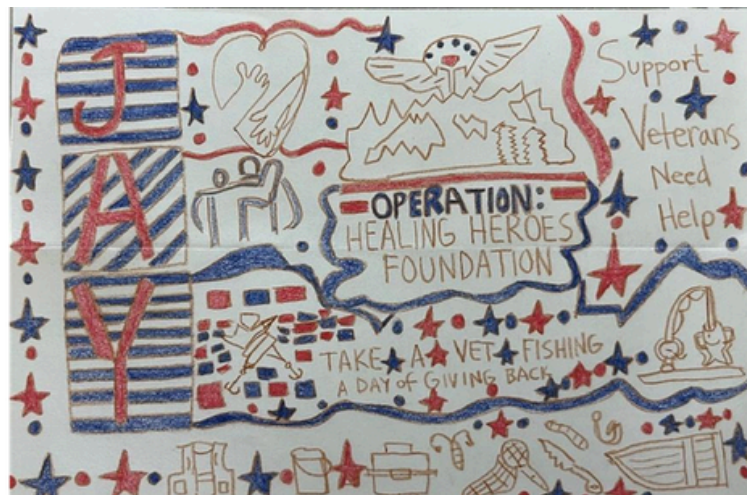
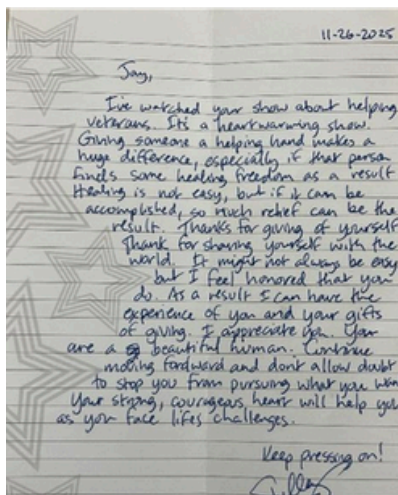


NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS



THANK YOU, VIEWERS!

Feedback comes from all over in different ways. Recently, OHHF President and TV show host Jay Garstecki received a very nice letter and drawing from viewer Shelley in Washington State. It is humbling to know people are moved when they watch and learn the inspiring stories, put together by the OHHF production team of Keith Anderson and Javi Villareal, of the veterans featured on Operation Healing Heroes, and what we can do to help them! This is due to your support! Please be proud of what you've done for veterans. Remember to watch Season 10 of Operation Healing Heroes each Sunday morning on the Discovery Channel as well as your YouTube Channel!



THANK YOU, TARGET!

Take A Vet Fishing was awarded a generous grant through their Target Circle Guest-Directed Giving Program! Target Circle members in the Madison and Milwaukee regions used their extra earned points to vote for worthy nonprofits. TAVF received 211,998 votes from our generous supporters!

Thank you, Target, and all who voted to help us continue our mission of honoring and serving veterans! Special thanks to TAVF team members Kris Garstecki and Michelle Eidsor for making this happen!



TAKE A VET FISHING, NFP
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NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

ROD BUILDING WORKS!

Take A Vet Fishing was honored to again be part of two wonderful rod-building classes in January held for veterans and first responders! Both were attended by great groups, and we were able to thank them for their service and present what TAVF is all about. **Jeff Somers** of Custom Rod Building Jigs and Marine veteran **Dan O’Kane** of Josie’s Gift held a rod-building class in Oshkosh, WI, which was graciously hosted by Lee Beverage. TAVF provided reels for all who participated. **Al Hutchison** of the Rod Builders Guild, along with Jeff Somers, held a rod building class hosted again this year at the Watertown, WI, VFW Post. Special thanks to Charlie Fisher of Hometown Hero Outdoors for all your help organizing and for presenting TAVF with a Certificate of Appreciation for providing funding and reels for this great event! Thanks, Al, Dan, and Jeff, for your willingness to help veterans and first responders with your expertise to make these beautiful rods. These classes not only give these folks something to be proud of, but of equal importance, a relaxing way also to focus and forget about the worries of the day. Thank you to all volunteers who helped! Consider a donation to help us continue these worthy events!



THE PATRIOT ROD

Coming soon! In honor of America’s 250th Birthday and the 25th Anniversary of 9/11, you’ll have the chance to own a limited-edition custom TAVF commemorative rod built on a St Croix blank emblazoned with the logos of TAVF, America’s 250th, and 9/11!! There will only be 250 of these numbered rods available for just \$250! You will be able to purchase a freshwater or saltwater version of St Croix’s private label, Seviin reel. Stay tuned for more information about this great way to own history and help veterans!



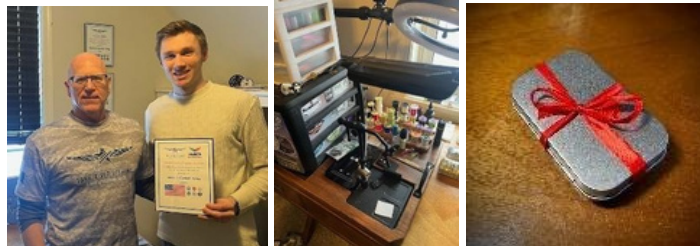


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SUPPORTING THE MISSION



Aaron's Custom Tying of DePere, WI, awarded TAVF again this year with the proceeds from their annual Holiday Season of Giving Event. Another generous donation was made to TAVF from the sale of the custom handmade fishing jigs and chocolate in the commemorative tin. Thanks again to the owner, Aaron Splan for your support. The winner of the drawing received a bunch of TAVF gear!



Aaron states, *"I started Aaron's Custom Tying on a whim in 2018. I randomly picked up a fly-tying kit at Fleet Farm that was on sale in the fishing section. I quickly found a passion in creating flies and jigs at home and going to test them out on the water. This led me down the process of tying jigs for every fishing outing, especially ice fishing. I strive to create new and unique jigs that you won't find in any tackle shop. My customers have found great success with my jigs, and I enjoy getting pictures sent of the great days on the water they have! Over the last three years, I've had the privilege of raising money through the sake of these jigs to support the incredible work Take A Vet Fishing does for our nation's heroes. Looking forward to many more years in business and continuing the partnership. Find me on Facebook and Instagram @AaronsCustomTying and shop at act-fishing.com."*

This year, **BigFUUT Custom Ice Rods** of Muskegon MI helped with an additional fundraiser donation through Aaron's association with TAVF! BigFUUT auctioned a custom ice rod and donated the proceeds! Thank you, owner Jen Helton and all at BigFUUT, for your support! Check them out on Facebook!



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NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Through the donation of a generous supporter, Take A Vet Fishing was able to donate some much-needed items to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove, WI. Thirty 70" x 54" fleece blankets and 60 pairs of warm gloves will now help veterans be more comfortable. Thank you, Activities Director and Volunteer Coordinator, Dana Kugler, for meeting and helping us create awareness for veterans and what TAVF has to offer. See www.wisvetshome/union-grove/ for more info.

TAVF was also able to donate 100 pairs of socks and 50 hygiene kits to Ground Zero Veterans Outreach, also in Union Grove. GZVO founder and director Crissy Luxem works to help homeless and isolated veterans through several programs they offer and operates a thrift store to help fund these endeavors. See www.gzvo.org for more info. Thanks, GZVO, for all you do for veterans!



Donuts with Doughboys. Take A Vet Fishing was proud to provide funding and be part of the February Edgerton, WI, Post 2708 "Coffee & Donuts with Doughboys!" A special treat of biscuits & gravy was served as well! 43rd Assembly Dist. Rep Brienne Brown was on hand, and a "P38 Challenge" was held to see which vet could open a C Ration fastest! This winter-month event is held at the Porter Room at the 210 W Fulton St Project and is open to everyone. The final Donuts with Doughboys is on Saturday, March 7th, so stop by to meet and chat with some local veterans over a cup of coffee and a donut! There's no charge!



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NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS



Wisco Women on Water. Take A Vet Fishing was happy to help Wisco Women on Water with their 6th Annual Ladies Day Ice Fishing Day! The event was held on the north end of Lake Koshkonong and hosted by Duner's Bar & Grill near Fort Atkinson, WI. There were 94 ladies registered to fish and compete for the largest fish of several species. TAVF provided a raffle basket in exchange for promotional considerations. Big Radio personality, The Fishin' Hole host, and TAVF guide Hurricane Jerry Huffar emceed the event!



Great Clips Clippings. For people going through cancer treatment, the idea of hair loss can be daunting, unsettling, and even isolating. Many patients find it empowering to get a clipper cut, because it allows them to choose when and how they lose their hair. That's why Great Clips created **Clips of Kindness**. Anyone who is losing their hair due to cancer treatment is welcome to come to any Great Clips salon for a complimentary clipper cut. Thank you, Great Clips, for making the cancer journey a little bit easier.





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SUPPORTING THE MISSION



Suzuki Holeshots. THE BEST IN THE INDUSTRY IS BACK! Suzuki Marine’s 7-Year warranty covers all eligible 150HP –350HP pleasure models. See www.suzukimarine.com for more information!



Recon With Recon. On top of the safe, great ride, room to move around, and top quality, every Recon Boat is equipped with the best in the industry and serious rod storage. This storage will keep your rods protected and ready!!



Fastenal Focus. Fastenal founder Bob Kierlin passed away about a year ago and his legacy is preserved through Fastenal’s motto of “Growth Through Customer Service”. All of us at TAVF and OHHF strive for the same service for our veterans. We all can learn from Bob’s Top 10 Rules of Leadership.

1. Challenge rather than control
2. Treat everyone as your equal
3. Stay out of the spotlight
4. Share the rewards
5. Listen rather than speak
6. See the unique humanness in all persons
7. Develop empathy
8. Suppress your ego
9. Let people learn
10. Remember how little you know

LEADERSHIP
ROBERT KIERLIN'S TOP 10 RULES OF LEADERSHIP



TAKE A VET FISHING, NFP

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Upcoming Events

- Strike Out PTSD Bowling Event Arizona - April 12th
- The Gathering Place Fishing Club Rummage Sale - Milton, WI, April 12th
- TAVF Event Madeira Beach, Florida - April 20th
- TAVF Event Madeira, Beach, Florida - April 22nd

Remember to check the TAVF and OHHF websites and see the Veteran Recognition section

To Donate use these QR Codes:



TAVF



OHHF

