

In REMEMBRANCE

Vernon E. O'Meally ended his 20-year Air Force career as a highly decorated Lieutenant Colonel. Born in 1933 in Jamaica, New York, his Air Force service satisfied his fascination with aircraft and aviation. He enlisted in the USAF in 1952 and was accepted into the Aviation Cadet program, graduating in 1954 at the age of 20 with a commission as a $2^{\rm nd}$ Lieutenant.

This year lost, but not forgotten.

Vernon's Air Force career included a tour of duty in southeast Asia. He was based in far eastern Thailand at the Ubon Air Base, which deployed two historic aircraft: the F-4 Phantom, and the AC-130A Spectre gunship. The Phantom was the principal air superiority fighter for the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps; its strength was in critical ground-attacks and aerial reconnaissance.



The AC-130A Spectre was a low-flying, heavily armed, search-and-destroy gunship. At the time it was the deadliest Aircraft in the USAF. And Vernon O'Meally was a crew member. Its area of operation in Southeast Asia was the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which ran out of North Vietnam into Laos, crossing into South Vietnam below the DMZ. The trail was able to effectively supply the North Vietnamese Army fighting in the south with goods and supplies, a military feat unparalleled given it was the target of the single most intense bombing campaign in history, with bombs dropping on average every seven minutes, including assaults from the Spectre gunships.

Vernon's Spectre gunship was the first AC-130A loss of the war. As told by Vernon, while on armed reconnaissance (a.k.a. "truck hunting") along the Ho Chi Minh Trail over Southern Laos, "the sky lit up like the 4th of July—it seemed like every ant-aircraft gun in Laos was shooting at us. The plane was hit and the pilot ordered most of the crew to bail out—I crashed into a tree and was later rescued."

A skeleton crew managed to fly the damaged plane back to Thailand where it crash landed. Eleven crewmen survived the event, but two were killed in action.

Later, Vernon was told that if he were shot down a second time he could go home. "I appreciate the offer," he responded, "but I think I'll pass."

During his service in Southeast Asia he completed 107 combat missions. His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, seven Air Medals, and the Meritorious Service Medal.

After his retirement from the Air Force, Vernon became the City Manager in Hampton Virginia. Subsequently, he joined the MITRE Corp., retiring in 2013 after a 33-year career there as an associate department head based in New Jersey.

Vernon was involved with the establishment of the New Jersey Vietnam War Memorial. He was awarded the New Jersey Vietnam Service Medal and the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, New Jersey's highest military award. He also volunteered at the Memorial.

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NEW JERSEY VIETNAM VETERANS' MEMORIAL AND VIETNAM ERA MUSEUM

1 Memorial Lane (Garden State Parkway Exit 116) Holmdel, NJ 07733 732.335.0033 www.NJVVMF.org



Mission

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation offers a meaningful and engaging experience that recognizes the sacrifices, courage and valor of Vietnam veterans and that encourages and fosters a thorough understanding of the Vietnam Era including the political, historical, social, cultural and military aspects which affected the United States, and especially New Jersey.

Vision & Values

As an organization, we value the foundation built by the Vietnam Veterans and community groups that has enabled us to evolve into a thriving, community oriented nonprofit.

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation maintains a unique site; a Memorial that remembers our state's sacrifices and Museum focused on the Vietnam Era as a complex period of history. We strive to be respectful, inclusive and to convey an unbiased historical perspective through our programs, exhibitions and ceremonies.

We understand that museums are reflections of our culture and that our role is continually evolving. We are committed to embracing this role and working toward remaining relevant to current and future generations by using technology to enhance the way we teach about and share our stories, collections and resources.

We are committed to strengthening our relationships with the Veterans community and organizations that serve and support that community. We are committed to empowering all who serve and their support systems.

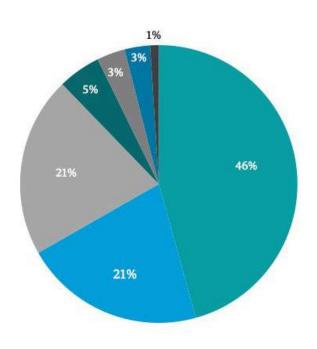
We maintain transparency in our practices, values and mission to foster and preserve the confidence of our community. We strive for a standard of excellence in best practices and professionalism of our Board, staff and activities.

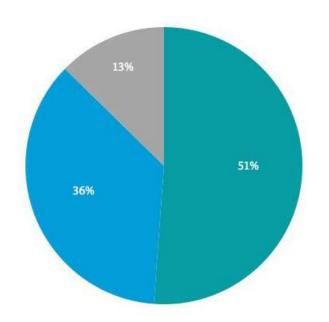


Statement of FINANCES

Operating Income

Donations
Donated Services & Facilities 21% \$200,127
Special Events
Admission Fees 5%
\$42,319 Merchandise
\$31,355 Investment Income
\$28,152 Membership
\$9,536





Operating Expenses

Programs	51%
\$527,905	
Administration	36%
\$373,213	
Fundraising	13 %
\$130,834	

Special EVENTS

23rd Annual Salute to Patriotism Gala

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation 23rd Annual Salute to Patriotism Gala was a huge success this year selling out with over 300 guests. The Gala was held at the beautiful Eagle Oaks Golf & Country Club in Farmingdale. The event boasted an impressive \$195,000 in funds raised to support the care of the NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial and the Vietnam Era Museum, exceeding all goals.

The room was filled with the tones of the talented Jeff Brown Trio, bringing an upbeat ambiance to the evening. Valerie Incontrera kicked off the program with her powerful



rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner." Colonel Michael Warner returned as our event emcee alongside Chairman of the Board Major General Clark Martin. The honorees recognized were Utility & Transportation Contractors Association (UTCA) and Heavy and General Construction Laborers Local 472 for their contributions



that made the groundbreaking of the Memorial possible 30 years ago. Among guests were Senators Ron Rice and Declan O'Scanlon, the Honorable Kim Guadagno, and Camden County Sheriff Gilbert "Whip" Wilson.

Notable highlights of the Gala were some of the amazing auction items which featured exciting vacations, upscale dining experiences, high-end accessories, and one-of-a-kind memorabilia. Much of the success can be attributed to the steering committee which included Col. Michael Warner, Gordon Pingicer, Louis Vlahakes, Joseph Scerbo, and Bobby Briant, Jr.



CEREMONIES

Our annual ceremonies continued to strengthen our relationships with our Veterans community, legislators, and the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Vietnamese American Community Association



This year, the Vietnamese American Community Association commemorated the fall of Saigon with their annual Ceremony. Members of the community remembered the impact of the Vietnam War on their families, community and country while celebrating the resilience of that community.

In Memory Ceremony

In March, on National Vietnam War Veterans Day, we held our first annual ceremony dedicated entirely to the In Memory Program. We inducted eleven individuals into our In Memory Program, recognizing the veterans and civilians who served and died as a result of the war in Vietnam. Their names are placed on an engraved stone inside the Memorial so that all who visit will know that they are with their honored comrades.

Some of these deaths are due to Agent Orange exposure, Hepatitis C, and the physical or emotional wounds received in Vietnam. The deaths of these individuals are no less tragic than those that occurred in-country, but their names do not appear on the Memorial.





Veterans Day Ceremony

This year's ceremony included the induction of five Vietnam Veterans into our In Memory Program, a special recognition that honors those who served and later died as a result of complications from their tour in Vietnam. We were honored to be joined for a special performance in honor of these Veterans by the New York Police Department's Pipes and Drums.

May Ceremonies

In May, Colonel Mark Piterski,
Deputy Adjutant General, State
of NJ spoke at the New Jersey
Vietnam Veterans' Remembrance
Day Ceremony, awarding the New
Jersey Service Medals during this
touching event. The month
concluded with our Memorial Day
Ceremony, highlighting the service
and sacrifice of our Veterans and
the meaning of Memorial Day.

Community EVENTS

Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom



This year marked the 23rd Rolling Thunder Ride for freedom. The ride ended at the Memorial with a touching ceremony ensuring that those still considered POWs and those missing in action are remembered.

New Jersey Run for the Fallen

Each September, NJ Run for the Fallen ends their three day run at the New Jersey Gold Star Family Monument on our campus. In an apolitical reflection of remembrance, a team of military runners from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurts and other locations across the U.S. come together to embark on a 190+ mile journey from Cape May to Holmdel, to honor every New Jersey service member killed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and other conflicts. Each mile is dedicated to a fallen NJ Hero and their Gold Star Family with the goal of creating a 190+ memorial trail through New Jersey.

Poppy Project

Jennifer LaScala, ceramics visual arts teacher at Sayreville War Memorial High School in Parlin, NJ had her students create ceramic poppy flowers to honor our Veterans. She reached out to the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation to install the flowers on the Memorial grounds for Memorial Day, in a space where they would be appreciated and would honor the soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.



Ms. LaScala's students created nearly 200 ceramic poppies that sit at the base of the armed forces flags at the Memorial's outer wall. Sayreville is joined by the art teachers of Northern Burlington County Regional High School, Burlington High School, New Brunswick High School, and Middlesex High School, placing about 320 poppies on the site for Memorial Day.

Wreaths Across America

In December we were once again honored by a visit from the Wreaths Across America Caravan. During a ceremony that honored New Jersey's Gold Star Families and the 1,563 memorialized on our Wall, the organization made sure that these individuals and their families will not be forgotten. During the ceremony, 366 wreaths were laid at our Memorial, one for each panel of the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial.



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the core of the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation. Working with regional students and teachers, assisting with ceremonies, and staffing our front desk, our volunteers enrich our work in countless ways.

Rick Amsterdam Jim Biringer Carl Burns Andy Butzko **Bob Cattrell** Tom Chalfant Michael Coale Anthony D'Altrui **Chuck Dauchert** Susan DiBarba Frank Dunn Cappy Everhard Joe Formola **Robert Frost Dick Furlong** Rich Goldstein Ron Guralnick Ken Gurbisz Maryanne Ioli Pat Keating Ioe Kochanski Joe Leone Bill McClung



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EDUCATION

2019 Teacher of the Year: Robert Gangi



This year, the Foundation recognized Robert Gangi as our 2019 Teacher of the Year. The NJVVMF introduced this honor in 2018 to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the opening of the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Museum and Education Center.

Robert Gangi was selected by the Teacher of the Year Committee, consisting of

NJVVMF Staff and members of the Board of Trustees, for his commitment to the teaching of the history of the Vietnam Era. For over a decade Robert has brought students from his course, "The Vietnam War Era," to tour the Memorial as part of the curriculum. During these trips, he serves as an "unofficial" photographer of the Memorial and has captured dozens of beautiful images showing our tour guides interacting with his students. We have used some of his photos in our publications, as he is able to truly capture the passion our volunteers bring to their tour experiences with students.

When notified of the award, Robert said, "I am truly honored, for as you know I have great reverence for what all the staff and volunteers do every day at your outstanding museum and education center. I am indeed very proud to have a close working relationship with the NJVVMF, and it is always a highlight of my year to take students there. I really am touched by this honor."

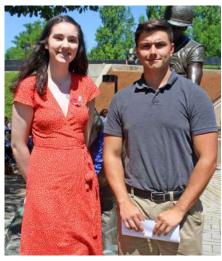
Annual Interdisciplinary Forum



Hosted by the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation and the New Jersey Council for Social Studies, the 19th Annual Interdisciplinary Forum, titled "Civil Rights and Liberties During the Vietnam War", allowed educators to learn about new resources and ways to engage students in the classroom. Attending teachers receive 8.5 hours of Professional Development Credits.

The one-day conference featured a presentation and Q&A by Keynote Speaker Mary Beth Tinker from the Supreme Court Case Tinker vs. Des Moines. Mary Beth was 13 when she

was suspended for wearing a black arm band to protest the violence of the Vietnam War. In the ruling, the Supreme Court upheld the First Amendment protections for students by stating that the school could not censor student speech unless it disrupted the educational process. Mary Beth continues to educate young people about their rights, speaking frequently to students groups across the country. She is an advocate for the rights of youth, particularly in the areas of health and education.



Annual Scholarships

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation awards two \$2,500 scholarships for post-high school education (college, university or trade school) each year. These scholarships are presented to the two winning students at our Memorial Day Ceremony. This year's winning scholarships were awarded to Meghan Helen Merenich of Mainland Regional High School to pursue her education at Duke University, and to John Grasso of Hammonton High School to pursue his education at Rowan University.

CURATORIAL

Above & Beyond: The History of the Medal of Honor

This year's special exhibit, "Above & Beyond: The History of the Medal of Honor," explored the history of the most prestigious military decoration awarded to members of the United States Armed Forces. The medal is awarded to those who distinguish themselves through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. There have only been 3,505 recipients of the Medal of Honor since the award was created by President Abraham Lincoln in 1861.

The exhibit was split into two sections. The first section featured a timeline that explained the history of the award from its humble beginnings during the Civil War to modern times, allowing visitors to understand why the award was created and how it has changed over time. The timeline also featured stories of ten individuals that were awarded the Medal of Honor, including the first, the youngest, and the only woman.



These medals and the stories of the various Medal of Honor recipients are powerful teaching tools for our visitors. They left with a better understanding of United States military history and a deeper respect for those that serve in the United States Armed Forces.





Biography Project: WALL OF FACES

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation Museum announced that there is now a photograph for each of the 1,563 New Jersey Vietnam Veterans who died while deployed overseas serving their country in the Vietnam War.

The Wall of Faces is one of the signature projects facilitated by the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation. Available online, the project's' principal goal is to collect at least one image of each of those New Jersey Vietnam Veterans who died overseas in the Vietnam war. Behind each of those faces, the professional staff and a host of dedicated volunteers have also compiled and uploaded important biographical information, so that each person is remembered for who they were in life — complicated, interesting individuals who deserve to be remembered for the lives they lived as well as for their deaths in service to our country.

After years of searching, the last photo to be found was of Frank Joseph Kohlmyer, an Air Force Staff Sergeant from Pennsauken. Finding his photograph completes the search and the 1,563 names on the wall now have a photo on the NJVVMF Wall of Faces.

"The effort to find photographs of each of the 1,563 New Jerseyans who lost their lives while serving in Vietnam has been ongoing since our organization began," said Greg Waters, Curator for the NJVVMF and principal staff member responsible for seeing the project to its successful conclusion. "We are so excited that this project is now complete as these photographs are an incredibly important way to remember these individuals and honor their service and sacrifice."

New Jersey is the 40th state to find all of their photographs, a feat that represents the work of dozens of volunteers and staff, as well as hundreds of hours of dedicated research and conversations with family and friends of NJ Vietnam vets. "Over the years there have been numerous staff members and volunteers who have spent their time and energy searching for these photographs," said Waters, "and we are incredibly grateful to everyone that has helped along the way."

The Wall of Faces is often the first resource that family, friends, students and educators use to begin researching the history of the Vietnam War, especially as it relates to the impact of those who bravely served and sacrificed all. Anyone with information about any of the soldiers remembered on the NJVVMF Memorial Wall is invited to contact Waters to discuss updating the biographic information available online or to donate or loan artifacts to the Museum.



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