

Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans gives back to Heritage Woods veterans

Posted by [RVPEditor](#) / In [Belvidere Daily Republican](#), [Events](#)



By Kathryn Menue

Editor

BELVIDERE – In honor of Armed Forces Day (May 21), Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans, a continuously growing 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, dedicated Friday, May 20 to the veterans living at Heritage Woods.

Beginning on June 14, 2014 (Flag Day), Charlotte Kennedy created the organization Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans in honor of her father, Sgt. Walter Petroske, 95.

Sgt. Petroske served in the Army in WWII, Company A, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion. Petroske served as a demolition specialist who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and disarmed the explosives on Remagen Bridge to help the Army pass through the border into Germany.

Honorably discharged in 1945, Petroske continued his patriotism for America and his duty to others.



At the age of 61, Petroske received a plaque for bravery for saving his disabled neighbor from a house fire in the Village of Niles. Although the fire department reprimanded him for his dangerous action, he responded that “it was his duty” to save his neighbor.

Petroske’s daughter, Charlotte Kennedy, is following in her father’s footsteps by giving back to veterans in the community.

“My dad has always been a patriotic person and has always been my hero,” Kennedy said.

To honor her father and to serve her country, Kennedy established Sgt. P’s Lapghans for Veterans where 50 volunteers create lapghans for veterans. These 50 volunteers are comprised of 45 from Illinois, one from California, one from Pennsylvania, one from Michigan, and two from Wisconsin.



“A lapghan is a wheelchair-friendly afghan” that won’t get caught in the wheels of wheelchairs.

“Our mission is to wrap our veterans in comfort and warmth with lapghans made out of love and gratitude for their sacrifice and service,” Kennedy wrote.

Sgt. P’s Lapghans for Veterans does this by donating lapghans to individual veterans along with distributing them at William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison, Wis.;

Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Assistance Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wis.; Top of Illinois Veterans Stand Down in Rockford, an organization dedicated to homeless and less fortunate veterans; VFW John Hugo Kaiser Post 1461 in Belvidere; Veterans Assistance Commission of Boone County; and Housing 4 Our Vets in Janesville, Wis.

Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans will spread to more organizations as they continue to expand.

With only being 23 months old, Sgt. P's has already donated 939 lapghans.

"There is a tremendous need for lapghans," Kennedy said, which was evident at the last Stand Down in Rockford where they provided 140 lapghans to veterans in the area.



Kennedy said that some veterans think lapghans are worth more than the service medals they've received. Like one individual who took a yellow lapghan Kennedy thought no one would take. The veteran simply said, "You don't know how cold it gets in February."

Kennedy, and two of her volunteers, Phyllis Starke and Val Langendorf, continued their dedication by donating 13 more lapghans to the veterans at Heritage Woods in Belvidere. They donated to seven who served in the Army, two in the Navy, three in the Marines, and one in the Airforce.

The only requirement for receiving a lapghan was a hug, which the veterans appreciatively provided.

After the presentation of the lapghans, the crowd gave Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans volunteers a round of applause.

"I know what all of the veterans have been through," Kennedy said. "I shouldn't get the applause. It should go to the veterans...God bless America and God bless our veterans."

With those sentiments, the veterans gathered outside and were saluted by the local Colored Guard who provided a 21 gun salute in honor of the Heritage Woods veterans.

Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans would love to continue giving back to the veterans who have served this country. They will continue their work with a few upcoming events.

On June 10, in honor of Flag Day and their two year anniversary, Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans will present their 1,000th lapghan at VFW Post 1461.

In July, the volunteers will knit hats, scarves, gloves, and more for the Stand Down veterans to help them keep warm through the winter months.

Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans will also host a special event on Aug. 6. They will host the first annual Stars and Stripes 3K/5K Fun Run/Walk.

Stars and Stripes will begin at 7 a.m. with registration and the run will begin at 8 a.m. The day will be filled with prizes, raffles, lapghan presentations to veterans, and more.

This event will take place at Belvidere Park-Kiddieland Shelter, located at 1006 W. Lincoln Ave. in Belvidere.

To learn more about the Stars and Stripes 3K/5K Fun Run/Walk, or to register for the event, go to sgt slapghans.org.

If you would like to join Sgt. P's Lapghans for Veterans, or if you would like to donate money or supplies to their cause, please contact the organization at sgt lapghans@gmail.com.