



## A Place to Remember: THE VICTORY CENTER MILITARY STORE



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**T**he Victory Center Military Store is a “one of a kind” store in the Indian River Mall as well as the Simon Mall chain. It opened in 2011, the culmination of an idea created by mall operations leadership and County Commissioner Joe Flescher, and executed by the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 1038. They designed a place for veterans to meet and share stories of wartime. The creation of a merchandise store was a combination of individuals skilled in all aspects of merchandizing and the generosity of Doris Jorgensen, who loved the concept and wanted to help veterans. Her picture hangs on the wall behind the cash register for all to see how one person can make a difference in the community.

The store runs on an all-volunteer staff. No one has ever been paid for their services and this core group has been there since the beginning: John Darling (Army), Paul Diaz (civilian), Pete Sayles (Marine), Bill Beyerle (Seabee) and remarkable store manager/head organizer, Sandy Koehn (Navy spouse).

The local Knights of Columbus 4th Degree (Patriotism) have staffed Saturdays since the beginning.

Half of the profits from the store are sent to the Veterans Council for the purchase of the next Veterans 30 passenger bus, and the rest is distributed to various organizations whose representatives are sales staff and managers. Personally, while I am proud of my 30+ years in the U.S. Air Force, I am equally proud to have been involved in the creation of the store, which has made a substantial impact on the community and its subsequent status as a 501(c)(3) charity. The various Walls of Honor commemorating the fallen, those who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the current War on Terror, are there because of numerous people who are proud of those who served.

Martin J. Zickert served in the USAF for 30+ years including Thailand, Philippines, Germany and numerous stateside locations. After retiring from the Air Force, he became involved in the financial services field, returning to Germany to work with the U.S. military for the ING insurance company. He remained in the financial services field until he retired in 2014. He has been involved in Veterans organizations including Vietnam Veterans of America and the Military Officers Association of America. He was president of the Veterans Council for three years, establishing the Upward American Veterans, helping financial distressed families and Veterans Outreach, which serves to integrate veterans who were involved in the War against Terror. During his tenure, the Veterans Council procured two buses used to transport Indian River County veterans to the VA Medical Center in West Palm Beach. The council also established The Victory Center Military Store. He has been the liaison for the Blue Angels for the 2014, 2016 and 2018 air show. He was instrumental in helping United Way set up their VITA tax program to prepare taxes for those people with limited funds.