



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY CELEBRATES MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County is home to a large number of military personnel, both past and present, and towns and organizations throughout the county make sure to honor those servicemen and women at every opportunity. This year, both the county Veterans Affairs office in Uniontown and Touchstone Center for Crafts in Farmington held events in honor of Military Appreciation Month and Memorial Day.

Veterans Affairs Director Tom Boyd said each year, the office hands out American flags and grave markers to county organizations, which then place them in local cemeteries. This year, he said, his office partnered with volunteers from Uniontown Walmart to dispense those items.

"They've become a pretty good partner with us for that," he said, noting the volunteers distributed 30,000 flags and grave markers in the early part of the month. "They showed up. They helped us pass those out, and then they went out to each group and helped them put the flags in the graveyards."

Boyd said Walmart also provided supplies for the annual Veterans Appreciation open house, held May 22 at the Gallatin Building on West Main Street.

The event, Boyd said, was open to veterans and their families and offered both information and socialization.

"There were some folks from the clinic; there were some folks from the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, so state level," he said.

Boyd said there also were representatives present from the Private Industry Council to answer any questions attendees might have.

"But mostly, it was just a camaraderie thing – food, fun," he said.

Touchstone Center for Crafts held its own event in honor of the military. Veterans Appreciation and Arts Day was held on May 10 and featured "Veteran Obsolete," an exhibition of glass art created by U.S. Army Sgt. and combat veteran Geoffrey Bowton.

According to a press release, Bowton draws inspiration from his military background and deployment experiences in the Middle East. His work explores the complexities of war, post-traumatic stress, and mental wellness. Using symbolic materials, Bowton's sculptures act as navigational tools through fragmented memories of service and recovery.

“The narrative behind my work focuses on the aftermath of combat deployments and the mental health challenges faced by veterans,” Bowton said. “By using military gear as symbolic elements to depict the life of a veteran post-service, I provide a window into the struggles that many veterans endure, and the lasting effects of traumatic events.”

The exhibition aims to raise awareness, foster empathy, promote dialogue, support veterans, and offer artistic inspiration through powerful visual storytelling, the release said.

In addition to the appreciation event, Touchstone will host a public gallery reception and meet-and-greet with Bowton on June 7. The reception is open to the public.

Bowton also will offer The Therapeutic Art of Mask-Making, a five-day workshop exploring the therapeutic benefits of mask-making as a creative outlet for enhancing mental health through the medium of glass, June 23-27. Participants need at least intermediate experience in glass working. Participation is limited, and advance registration is required.

Boyd said his office plans to take a group of veterans to Bowton’s exhibit sometime in June. The exhibit is open through July 26.

Boyd said observing Memorial Day and appreciating our veterans is important to him, though he prefers to focus on the memories made with the friends and comrades in arms he’s lost, rather than the wars they fought or combat they saw.

“I think we put too much emphasis on how we lost them instead of the laughs and smiles we shared,” he said.

To learn more about Touchstone Center for Crafts, visit www.touchstonecrafts.org. To learn more about Fayette County, including the Veterans Affairs office, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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