

## Guitars for Vets support by WICMOAA

We invited Melissa Johnson, Chapter Coordinator and Guitar Instructor, Guitars for Vets, Oak Harbor WA to our WICMOAA chapter meeting in June of 2022 to tell us about all the great work she was doing with PTSD veterans. Melissa Johnson – founder of chapter: Guitars for Vets chapter in Oak Harbor, WA.



Melissa told us about her program. The focus for her program is helping veterans with PTSD. Melissa told us that getting veterans to focus on learning to play the guitar instead of war time issues has proven to help many veterans. Through the teamwork and camaraderie of Guitars for Vets, they can join a community where they learn to play the guitar and find solace in the songs they love as well as the songs they have yet to write. Melissa said the program would appreciate donations as they try to provide the graduates with their own guitar so they can continue with the music after completion of the program. She moved many of our members and the chapter wanted to do something to help.



Melissa Johnson (360) 320-4595, [wa.oakharbor@guitarsforvets.org](mailto:wa.oakharbor@guitarsforvets.org),  
<https://www.facebook.com/g4voakharbor>

While Whidby Island Chapter (WICMOAA) had grown a bit since the first of the year from an all-time low of 62 members, we were still a very small chapter with less than 70 members, and we were already donating to try and support our scholarship and two JROTC units.

MOAA advertised that there might be funding provided by MOAA foundation sometime after Melissa's presentation. As president of the WICMOAA chapter, I sent out a note to our board members asking someone to step up if we received some funding. Bill Goodman stepped up.

Bill and I both grew up with music, both played guitars, and had our own rock bands in high school. I promised to help him when needed.

Eventually the MOAA Foundation came through with a \$600 grant. Guitars for vets really needed three guitars by fall to keep the program on track. \$600 was not enough!

Bill and Melissa worked together with the owner of a local music store, Click Music here in Oak Harbor. The owner's son Herschel Rostov took a significant reduction in price and sold Bill the three guitars for \$600 plus tax. We could do that!

Bill picked up the guitars and set up Melissa to bring the student to receive the guitar to our November chapter meeting at the Whidbey Golf Club.

At the chapter meeting, Bill awarded two Guitars to Melissa Johnson to be used as practice guitars for new students and one guitar to the newest graduate of Guitars for Vets, Audura Philips. Ms Philips was accompanied by her husband Don Philips. The chapter picked up the cost of lunch the lunch for all three.

We had hoped that Ms. Philips would be able to play a song or two for us, but that was not something she felt comfortable with.

WICMOAA appreciates the fact that MOAA foundation provided most of the funding for this effort and as a result, I have established a small monthly contribution to the MOAA Foundation that will eventually return the dollars they donated back to the foundation so they may help others.

Terry Sparks  
President WICMOAA  
President WSCOC

