



## Vietnam Veterans 'Moving Wall' Coming to Potter County



Potter County's Veterans Service Committee has arranged to bring The Moving Wall, a half-size replica of Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., to Potter County this year. Committee members Bill Simpson, Paul Heimel and Dawn Wooster are working on ceremonial elements and other programming for a local "Vietnam Veterans Weekend" that coincides with the wall's

appearance. Plans call for the exhibit to be set up just off Rt. 872 in the county's Mapleview property, next to the Potter County Veterans Center and American Legion Post 192, from Thursday evening, Sept. 13, through mid-day Monday, Sept. 17. Monday has been designated as Students Day with appropriate educational programming.

Other events in the planning stages are:

- Dinner/program to recognize and honor all Vietnam War veterans from Potter County.
- Memorial ceremony for the nine Potter County men who lost their lives in the Vietnam War (see page 2).
- Veterans benefits/services outreach.
- Veterans Gravestone Restoration Project demonstration.
- Educational activities in local schools and communities.

The Moving Wall lists the names of the more than 58,000 Americans who were killed in the war. It will be on display 24/7 with guides available to help locate names and other educational exhibits on the grounds.



Groundwork for Vietnam Veterans Weekend was laid in October when Potter County was accepted as a partner in the Commemoration of the Vietnam War initiative, a project of the U.S. Congress and the Defense Department. To earn the certification, the committee had to commit to a series of steps that will honor and thank Vietnam War veterans and their families.

## Potter County Vietnam War casualties

- **Capt. Edgar Erwin Nuschke** of Austin, a World War II and Korean War veteran, died as a result of enemy ground fire in South Vietnam on Jan. 21, 1967.
- **PFC Edward Ritsick** of Austin was killed in action on the perimeter of Saigon on March 11, 1968, 19 days after arriving in Vietnam.
- **Sgt. Bruce Maynard**, 26, of Coudersport was killed in action on June 6, 1969, in South Vietnam.
- **Sp/4 Donald L. Stiles**, a Coudersport native, was the community's first fatality in Vietnam. Stiles was killed by a land mine in Binh Duong Province, South Vietnam, on April 2, 1968.
- **Staff Sgt. Garreth L. Kibbe** of Roulette, died June 24, 1967, when lightning struck while he was working on a dynamo in South Vietnam.
- **Sp/4 Gerald Stonemetz** of Shinglehouse died in Vietnam on Jan. 8, 1969, of injuries suffered in a vehicle accident.
- **Pvt. Edwin Franklin Tubbs** of Coudersport had been in South Vietnam only five weeks before his death on Jan. 12, 1969.
- **Spc/4 Clark Douglas** of Galeton was killed in action Nov. 11, 1969, while serving as a medic.
- **Spc/4 Kenneth W. Lampman** of Harrison Valley was killed on March 5, 1967, when his helicopter crashed in Vietnam.



## What is the 'National Purple Heart Trail?'

You've probably seen the highway signs designating a certain area as a Purple Heart Community. What does it mean?

The National Purple Heart Trail was established in 1992 by the Military Order of the Purple Heart to be a symbolic trail that commemorates and honors all men and women who have been wounded or killed in combat while serving the U.S. armed forces.

It originates in Mount Vernon, Va., the burial location of General George Washington – and traverses across the United States through an extensive system of roads, highways, bridges and memorials as a visual reminder to those travelers that others have paid a high price for their freedom.

The tradition of the Purple Heart dates back to the Revolutionary War, when General George Washington created the Badge of Military Merit to honor gallantry. It wasn't until Feb. 22, 1932, when the cloth badge was replaced with a Purple Heart medal, honoring the bicentennial anniversary of George Washington's birth.



Its design is an enamel heart, colored purple and showing a profile of George Washington in Continental Army uniform within a bronze border. Above the heart is Washington's coat

of arms between two sprays of leaves. Nearly 2 million Purple Hearts have been awarded since the order was established.

Information on the National Purple Heart Trail, including instructions for county or local government participation, can be found on the website [purpleheart.org](http://purpleheart.org).

## Medal of Honor winners memorialized in Potter County

Two Medal of Honor winners with local roots are buried in Potter County. They are also recognized at the American Legion Post 192 military service honor roll, located in the Coudersport Arboretum.



A native of Ireland, Thomas Cullen (1839-1913) spent time in the Irish Settlement area of Potter County as a child. Cullen was among the first recipients of the Medal of Honor. Its original honorees were largely those members of the Union army who captured a Confederate flag during Civil War skirmishes. Cullen, a corporal with Company I, 82nd New York Infantry, was injured in Battle of Gettysburg. He was honored for bravery in battle against an army from North Carolina on Oct. 14, 1863, at Bristoe Station, Va. During the heavy fighting, Cpl. Cullen braved the fusillade and the close-quarter combat to capture the flag of a North Carolina regiment. Cullen was later captured in the Battle of Jerusalem Plank Road and held as a prisoner of war. After the war, Cullen lived in Coudersport, where he died on Aug. 16, 1913. Cpl. Cullen is buried at Kinney Cemetery, sometimes known as St. Marys Cemetery.

James H. McDonald's heroics of May 23, 1939, have been the focus of numerous media accounts over the years. Born in Scotland in 1900, McDonald was a master diver and chief metalsmith with the U.S. Navy, summoned to the sinking of the U.S.S. Squalus. Not only did McDonald exercise leadership and devotion to duty in directing the rescue operations, he also participated directly in the dives that freed 33 seamen under the most hazardous conditions.

McDonald was aboard the USS Scupin when it picked up a distress signal. Under his leadership, a crew of four divers successfully employed a rescue diving bell, which had never been tested. McDonald and crew were the last Medal of Honor winners to be recognized for peacetime submarine rescue operations. Continuing his Naval service into World War II, McDonald became a commissioned officer. He retired after the war with a rank of lieutenant. He and his wife lived for a time on Sixth Street in Coudersport. Lt. McDonald, who died in 1973, is buried in Fishing Creek Cemetery, Roulette Township.



**Potter County Veterans News** is a publication of the Potter County Veterans Affairs Department. Copies are available for download from the county's website, [pottercountypa.net](http://pottercountypa.net). For more information, contact Paul Heimel at 814.274.8290, Ext. 203.

## Veterans' employment needs can be challenging

Eleven years ago, Mark and Tori Baird sank much of their life savings into a project to help veterans down on their luck. The nonprofit [HirePatriots.com](http://HirePatriots.com) is now connecting tens of thousands of U.S. military veterans with temporary and permanent jobs nationally. Here is the Bairds' story, compliments of Freedom Magazine:



One day a Marine knocked on our door. He said he'd just returned from war to find his wife and child sitting in the dark because their electricity had been turned off for non-payment. We offered him \$100, but his pride wouldn't let him take the money without earning it. Only after working for several hours at our place did he accept the money.

We thought that if he was in this situation, then others probably were, too. We started a job board for veterans looking for day jobs to make ends meet. Pretty soon we were getting 10,000 hits a week. That's when we knew there was a great need for what we were doing.

Vets are used to working in a structured environment with a game plan and a purpose. So many times when they come into a company and see chaos, it's hard for them to function. To keep turnover down, employers need to go the extra mile by creating a vet-friendly workplace -- one that provides someone for them to report to like the chain of command they are used to. Veterans also need to do a better job at picking companies that fit them instead of taking the first available job, which is often the case.

Hiring veterans is a wonderful move. It's not hard to do and will pay big dividends in the long run. They are typically top-notch people. Companies will find all kinds of gems in the veteran community if they hire from it.

Vets have a hard time finding jobs that match the pay they received while in the military and that's why you see so many divorces shortly after they separate from the military. The divorce rate among combat veterans is the highest in the country and a large part of the reason is economic.

There is a higher unemployment rate among veterans than most people realize. Many who were looking for work for four or five years no longer show up as unemployed in government indexes. They are losing their homes; they are losing their families; and they are losing their hope. It is important for veterans' service organizations and government organizations to reach out to our vets and to employers, setting those who served our country on the right path to finding employment quickly.

More information on these topics can be found on two websites, [hirepatriots.com](http://hirepatriots.com) and [patriotichearts.org](http://patriotichearts.org).

### Veterans ID on 500,000 driver's licenses

More than 500,000 Pennsylvania veterans have added a designation to their driver's license or ID card since the program began in 2014. The designation is an American flag with the word "veteran" beneath it.

The designation identifies the bearer as a veteran. In many cases, businesses or service providers offer discounts or other considerations for those who have served in the military.

Qualified applicants for a veteran designation must have served in the Armed Forces or the reserve component, and have been discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable.

There is no fee for the veteran designation. Forms for driver's license or ID renewals and duplicates have a box for applicants to certify that they veterans, and to have the designation added. Once the veterans designation has been added, it will automatically appear each time it is renewed.

