



NEWS

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Montgomery County Officials and Veterans Groups Observe POW/MIA Day

Norristown, PA (Sept. 15, 2017) –Montgomery County Commissioners Ken Lawrence, Jr. and Joe Gale were joined today by members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter 25, the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 349, and American Legion 901 at a ceremony to recognize POW/MIA Day at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in front of the Montgomery County Courthouse.

POW/MIA Day was established by Congress in 1998 as part of the Defense Authorization Act. The day is observed every third Friday of September and is one of only six days the POW/MIA flag can be flown. POW/MIA Day serves as an important reminder of those who were captured while serving in conflicts and those who remain missing, and of the government’s commitment to account for these veterans and repatriate their remains.

“It is critical to remember these men and women, as well as their family and friends, who have sacrificed so much for our nation so that we can preserve our freedom,” said Ken Lawrence, Jr., Vice Chair, Montgomery County Commissioners. “That is why POW/MIA efforts are a top priority of national and local Veteran Service Organizations, most notably the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Disabled American Veterans.”

In 2016, the ceremony culminated with the dedication of a POW/MIA chair donated by DAV 25 and VVA 349. The “honor chair” has become a common fixture at non-veteran organization facilities as a way to show support for POW/MIAs.

“The empty chairs represent Americans who were or are missing from each of the services – Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard – and civilians, all with us in spirit,” said Bill Keyes, Commander of DAV 25 and Vice President of VVA 349.

The POW/MIA chair, donated by DAV Chapter 25 and VVA 349, was used in this year’s ceremony, and can be seen on display next to the grand staircase in the Montgomery County Courthouse as a permanent memorial.

“We must look to honor them not only symbolically, like we are doing today with this ceremony, but in our everyday lives. As grateful citizens, we can show our support of veterans in various ways,” said Commissioner Joe Gale. “Symbolically, we can proudly display our American flag. Respectfully, we can stand for the National Anthem. Personally, we can shake the hand of Veterans and thank them for their service. Charitably, we can support Veterans organizations such as those here today. And spiritually, we can keep those who served and those currently serving in our thoughts and prayers.”

Chapter 25 of Disabled American Veterans has a proud 75-year history of service dedicated to all U.S. military veterans and the community. Disabled American Veterans works to empower veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. The Vietnam Veterans of America seeks to promote and support the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans, and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans. VVA Chapter 349, led by Ralph Nealman, sponsors The Central Montgomery County Veterans’ Honor Guard.

The Montgomery County Veterans Affairs Department also provides information to Montgomery County veterans, their dependents, and survivors regarding their rights and the various county, state, and federal benefits they may be entitled to receive and assists them to apply for these benefits. They also run a shuttle service for veterans seeking to go to Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare facilities. The free service transports veterans and caregivers from four county locations to three healthcare centers operated by the VA. Due to logistical barriers, many of those veterans would have gone without access to those healthcare programs without the shuttle.

“So far this year, we have collectively helped 360 veterans or their dependents receive more than \$2 million in VA benefits awards,” said Ken Lawrence, Jr., Vice Chair, Montgomery County Commissioners. “We have also provided housing assistance to 13 homeless veterans as well as three dependents, and prevented 16 veterans and dependents from entering homelessness. Our veterans’ shuttle service has also provided roughly 350 rides to veterans seeking care at a VA medical center this year.”

Veterans in need of assistance may call the Montgomery County Veterans Affairs Department at 610-278-3285.

Cutline

IMG_4232: Commissioners Joe Gale and Ken Lawrence, Jr. observe POW/MIA Day as Bill Keyes, Commander of DAV 25 and Vice President of VVA 349, describes the Table of Honor, at which an empty chair is placed to symbolize those who were or are missing in action.