

### **1) Uniqueness of the idea on a national and international level.**

Our funeral home has an annual tradition of honoring our local veterans who have served here and around the globe. Over the years, our programs in collaboration with the Senior Center have ranged from luncheons to USO Dinner Dances. We wanted to find a fresh and broad-reaching way to show our appreciation to our heroes. Inspired by Honor Flights around the country, we decided on a bus tour of our city's 9 war memorials and monuments. As a personal friend to Commander Gregory Matyas of the US Coast Guard Air Station Traverse City, Peg presented the idea to include the Coast Guard facility. The Commander agreed, making the Air Station host to our Hometown Heroes tour and luncheon. Events of this nature are rare at the Air Station making this a unique venue and a first of it's kind in Traverse City.

### **2) Quality of implementation.**

The quality of all of our events are always excellent in terms of implementation. In 2016, we decided to do something very special to recognize our local heroes, to express our appreciation of their service, and to give them an experience to remember. We wanted to make this a widely inclusive event, richly woven into the community.

In partnership with the Senior Center Network, Reynolds-Jonkhoff planned, coordinated, sponsored and managed the Hometown Heroes event. Involving more than 20 community organizations, 122 veterans and guests, we toured Traverse City's 9 war memorials highlighted with ceremonies, entertainment and lunch at the United States Coast Guard Air Station Traverse City.

Planning for the event spanned over six months. The last 2-3 months consisted of weekly meetings usually held at the funeral home with the police department, transportation authority and veterans being key players. The planning of the event involved several RJFH staff members ranging from day to day coordination efforts, graphic production, set up of flags and audio equipment, to bus tour guides and luncheon hosts. The interaction of our staff with veterans, community organizations and officials brings a tremendous value to our place in the community and a sense of pride to each member of our RJFH work family.



9&10 News

October 18, 2016 · 🌐

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More than 100 veterans traveled around Traverse City for the first Hometown Heroes Veterans Appreciation tour.



## Traverse City Area Veterans Honored for Hometown Heroes Veterans Tour

It's a special day thanking the brave men and women who served our country.

[HTTP://WWW.9AND10NEWS.COM/STORY/33421146/TRAVERSE-...](http://www.9and10news.com/story/33421146/traverse-...)

The day started out at the USCG Air Station with registration and boarding of 4 full size busses provided the Bay Area Transportation Authority, and equipped with brochures and tour guides. The buses left the Air Station with a Traverse City Police Department motorcycle escort. With sirens wailing, the motorcade drew lots of attention and cheers of appreciation to our Hometown Heroes.

There were several stops on the tour and a rest stop at the local VFW Cherryland Post 2780. To the Heroes' delight, the members had gathered a number of combat vehicles including a tank, an ambulance and a jeep. Oakwood Cemetery provided some history with a gathering at the Civil War monument. The grand finale was a stop at the Veterans Memorial Park. There, the veterans were joined by friends, family and the public. Our heroes were honored with the pledge of allegiance, a presentation of colors by the VFW and American Legion, an address by Commander Greg Matyas and a performance by the Shoreliners Quartet.

The bus tour concluded back at the Air Station with lunch provided by the USCG canteen. The veterans gathered for photos around one of the helicopters in the hanger where lunch was served. All branches of service were recognized with their theme songs played by a live bugler and each veteran was presented with our annual Veterans Challenge Coin. Commander Matyas addressed the group, recognizing many individual veterans from WWII to the present day. All community organizations and individuals who participated were presented with certificates of appreciation. The Hometown Heroes event was covered by local television, radio and the Prime Times. It was a huge success to be repeated again this year on October 11, 2017 with a few tweaks and new tour stops.

### **3) Overall benefit to those served.**

Priceless as the many photos that follow convey. The veterans beamed with pride as they were saluted and gifted with their 2016 veterans pin from Anne, Peg, Richard or John and boarded the bus for a tour like none other. There was no charge for the veteran or their guest for the tour or lunch as it was all sponsored by Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home. They were addressed by the



## Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home

July 4, 2016

As the Blue Angels return to the sky in Traverse City this 4th of July, we especially remember Capt. Jeff "Kooch" Kuss, #6 Blue Angel. Our thoughts and prayers are with Jeff and his family along with the entire Blue Angels team.

A month after returning to the skies, we are proud and honored you are here in Traverse City.



Commander Matyas, our City Mayor Jim Carruthers, John Block who both created and explained the POW MIA table, the VFW and American Legion posted the colors and the Cherry Capital Mens Chorus sang a few songs. The veterans were also presented the annual Challenge Coin by Anne, Peg, Christy, Rodney, Richard, Kyle, Judy and John. They so enjoyed being together as a group with all branches of the military present, appreciated and thanked by so many. After months of planning, this unique veterans appreciation event was both educational and inspiring for participants as well as staff and volunteers too.

#### **4) Overall benefit to the funeral home.**

We were all so proud to sponsor this unique, first time event in Traverse City. We were seen as truly appreciative of our local veterans and the leader in thanking them for their service to our country. Our local veterans do so much to enhance our family's funeral services with their military honors ceremony, on-call status seven days per week regardless of location or time of year and we just can't thank them enough. The media covered this event so associated publicity was of benefit to our funeral home too. BATA buses drove around town prior to the event which was of huge publicity benefit too - WOW! Very importantly, all work family involved with this event sincerely enjoyed their participation and pursuit of veteran appreciation excellence!

#### **5) This idea could easily be replicated or modified by another funeral home.**

This idea could easily be replicated by another funeral home with the right leadership and passion for veterans as well as active duty personnel. Any funeral home could modify this to their local city working in collaboration with like minded supporters who truly appreciate that our

“Freedom is NOT Free”! Just do it - God Bless America!



**Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home** added 2 new photos.

February 18, 2016 · Traverse City · 🌐



Have you ever seen a coin on a Veteran's marker?

A penny left on a headstone lets the deceased soldier's family know that somebody stopped by to pay their respect.

If you see a nickel it means that person who left it trained at boot camp with the deceased soldier;... [See More](#)





Welcome Hometown  
Heroes at the Coast  
Guard Air Station  
Traverse City.

Peg and Anne in the  
hanger ready - we are  
so going to do this  
with countless others!



What an impressive  
lunch location and  
helicopter photo op.

Military uniforms were on display inside the VFW post along with refreshments.



Pete Bostwick, one of the Grand Traverse Memorial Garden owners boards the bus.



Pete and the guests review the photos as appear on the next page.





Traverse City police escort the bus tour around town.

Yes the lights were flashing and sirens blaring for all to see and hear!



Students at Central Grade School all cheered as the busses passed by.



Top: Oakwood Cemetery Sextant, Brandon Morgan addressed the crowd.  
 Bottom left: A special moment with Peg and Richard Rizzio. Bottom right: Commander Matyas and special Veteran - this photo says it all! Thank you for your service!

