

HOMELESS VETERANS HOME REPAIR UPDATE



Cherokee County Homeless Veterans Program

13th Edition

Home Depot Grant Report

Team Depot Grant - \$10,000

TEAM DEPOT AND LOCAL VETERANS COME OUT TO DESIGN AND BUILD TRAVELING VIETNAM WALL

Since 2011, The Home Depot Foundation has invested more than \$85 million to provide safe housing to Veterans, and along with the help of Team Depot volunteers, has transformed more than 17,000 homes for Veterans. Another aspect of the Home Depot Foundation is to donate to bring special events for Veterans to life. In October of 2019, the Home Depot Foundation, working through Home Depot store team Captain Stephanie Darsey and local Veterans, to include many Vietnam Veterans, brought the Vietnam Traveling Wall to life in Blue Ridge Georgia.

The brainchild of Vietnam era Air Force Veteran and local Fannin County businesswoman Elaine Owen, chairman of the Special Veterans Project Committee, said the wall is a tribute to Veterans who served in Vietnam. Per the press release that her group put out to the public:

“All the names listed on this Traveling Wall make it a healing wall, and it gives those who come closure,” she said. She then said they want to make the visit of the replica wall to Blue Ridge a memorable event. The Wall will be set up on the grassy area beside the United Methodist Church, behind the Chamber of Commerce building.

Owen said the timeline for the Wall is to leave Florida early morning October 3 and arrive at the site for opening ceremonies by noon. Setup will begin as soon as the Wall is off-loaded at the United Methodist Church site and it will (hopefully) be open to visitors beginning at noon that day and 24 hours a day until October 7. Then the wall will be taken down to move to the next location on its tour.

Owen said they need to raise \$25,000 for the visit. She said they have paid the initial payment to reserve the dates and another payment is due 30 days before the arrival date.

The whole project was predicated on making the date, but work needed to be done ahead of time to make it happen. This is when the local Home Depot and Veteran volunteers stepped in to help. Owen and the Committee needed a platform that would honor the Wall and at the same time could provide access for the estimated 25,000-30,000 visitors to include those who were disabled. She turned to Stephanie Darsey, Blue Ridge Team Depot Captain for this help.

Stephanie reached out to local Veterans Groups to include Jim Lindenmayer and Roger Mickelson of American Legion Post 45 in Canton for design assistance. Within a couple of days of being engaged, Vietnam Navy Veteran Mickelson had come up with an overall design that would not only meet the design requirements provided, but also provide for a stage area for the planned ceremonies.

Starting on Monday September 16th, a crew of local Veterans, many from the Vietnam era, came out in 100 degree heat to start building the 26 platforms for the Wall to reside on. The location for the build of the platforms was under cover at the old Farmers Market bldg. which allowed the crews to work daily in the hot weather. One by one the platforms were built and then by Wednesday night and Thursday the completed platforms were ready for transport to the final planned site, only we had no way to get them there initially. Lucky for the project, Elaine knew Jim Sisson, a local home building company owner and reached out to him for help. Charlie Sisson, Jim's son, answered the call, but needed long extenders for his spider and flatbed trailer, which again the local Home Depot Store stepped up to loan so we could get the platforms over to the final installation site some 3 miles away.

Once the platforms were on-site, again local Veterans, with help from the Fannin County Public Works staff, helped put in and level the platforms to finalize the Wall site work. In all for the design and installation phase over 700 man-hours of volunteer help was put forward.

With the base platform now done all that was left to do was wait for the Wall to arrive and complete installation.



TEAM DEPOT AND LOCAL VETERANS COME OUT TO DESIGN AND BUILD TRAVELING VIETNAM WALL (cont.)

October 3 was another hot day, but was also the day that the Wall was to arrive and be installed on the pre-built platform from two weeks earlier. As with the initial work, Stephanie Darsey, Team Depot Captain was there to take charge of the Wall final installation with a large number of local Home Depot Store employees from around North Georgia as well as a number of local Veterans, to include many who had served in Vietnam. Many had reasons as to why they came to help, to include Canton Pro-Desk Manager George Towle, whose cousin was one of the Veterans whose name is on the Wall. With a timeline of starting the ceremony at 1400 hours looming, the team set out to get the Wall installed and open. It was not by accident that the Wall was finally turned over to Elaine Owen and her committee at 1359 hours clearly one minute early.

With the final volunteer push, and with the time taken to retire the Wall on October 7th, over 1,000 volunteer hours were donated along with the material grant received from the Home Depot Foundation.

Wall foundation to serve another role— When Roger Mickelson designed the Wall platform, he and Jim Lindenmayer had other ideas to repurpose the material Grant from the Home Depot Foundation. After the crowds were gone, Charlie Sisson moved 20 of the 26 pre-build platforms to the American Legion in Canton to be used for upcoming ramps for disabled Veterans. We have three already identified to build and we will use most of the materials from the platforms for these projects. The other 6 platforms and the stage materials were provided to the Fannin County American Legion so that it can be used to build a deck for the local Veterans Center. In all, according to Lindenmayer, “we expect to re-use over 95% of the materials in the Wall platform for mobility needs of local disabled Veterans.”





Giving a Hand Up—Programs that help our Vets

We are grateful to have the material support, and especially the team support, from the Home Depot Blue Ridge Store and the Home Depot Foundation. Through the efforts of people like Stephanie Dempsey, Fred Brown, Team Depot Captain, and the many volunteers of local Home Depot Stores such projects for Veterans like building the Wall are made possible.

The American Legion is proud to be able to help support these efforts and have enjoyed doing such projects for over 5 years. .



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Contact Us

Give us a call or send us an email for more information about the program.

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