

# Vietnam veterans to host library event

Herald 5-4-15

By **DAN COLTON**  
STAFF WRITER

On May 23, the original chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America is inviting the public to an educational event and book giveaway from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Rutland Free Library.

Andy Megrath, current president of VVA Chapter One, said the event is an

opportunity to let people know that Rutland is home to the nation's first Vietnam Veterans of America chapter. And maybe more importantly, it gives the chapter's vets a chance to open up and share their experiences, Megrath said.

Vietnam Veterans of America started in Rutland in 1980. VVA Chapter One in Rutland currently has

over 140 members. Vietnam veterans living in Hawaii, Alaska and Paraguay have joined Chapter One for the bragging rights of being associated with an original brand, he said.

Several members of the chapter will be speaking about their time in Vietnam during the war — Megrath says he himself was an artillery man — which will be

followed by a book-browsing period.

Jack Crowther is a VVA Chapter One officer. Drafted in 1964, Crowther spent four months in Vietnam, most of that time at a base near an abandoned rubber plantation. He came back with hazy memories of firing mortars towards the enemy during “harass and incite” nighttime missions.

But more than 50 years after his deployment to war, Crowther is spearheading efforts of a different kind — to educate younger generations about the misunderstood conflict.

“A lot of people weren't even born when Saigon fell,” said Crowther, referring to the 1975 loss of the

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# Buy a Brick of Honor

Sam's Good News 8-27-19



**Chris (Christina) Morgan, Executive Director of the Dodge House proudly stands with our flag at the FLAG OF HONOR MEMORIAL on the front lawn of Dodge House. The first hundred memorial BRICKS can be seen at the lower right. Put yours here with them. Photo by Don Chioffi.**

I was humbled and honored when Johnny Mazz----Mazzariello called recently to ask that we help with a project that his Board of Directors at the Dodge House in Rutland was working feverishly to complete. More than a year ago Dodge House Exec. Dir., Christina Morgan was looking for a way to bring attention and honor to all who had been touched by the dedicated service to country represented by our soldiers, and decided to start a memorial BRICK project to be coordinated with the Dodge House FLAG location at their entrance.

As a little reminder to any newcomers to our region, here is a bit of proud history of which Rutland can and should be tremendously proud. This goes all the way back to the 70s when Don Bodette, a Vietnam returnee put an ad in the Herald urging Vietnam Vets to come together as a healing effort after a brutal and disheartening war where those patriots who simply fought for their country at its request or as draftees were very shabbily treated, not with honor, but with disdain, by many in our country. He along with organizers Jake Jacobsen and Albert Trombley pulled together more like Andy Mcgrath, Mark Truhan, Bob Rummell and Tom Neary and together they founded VVA 1, the very first Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter in the



# Buy a Brick of Honor

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entire country. Think about it. There are not very many, if any, things so patriotic that Rutland Can boast of the preeminence of being the first and leading community in the entire country to step up.

This group started the Veteran's Assistance Office in 1991 through the efforts, again, of the VVA 1, which was struggling to find a permanent location for its efforts. Due to the diligent efforts of this totally unselfish group, finally in 1998 the official opening of the Dodge House on Crescent Street became a reality. (on a personal note, and also as a Vietnam Veteran, as owner of Kehoe's Corner Deli directly adjacent to the Dodge House, it was my honor and privilege to assist this group with tools, some labor, but mostly by feeding the hungry crews of vets with deli sandwiches and beverages for the long months they busted their butts rehabbing this old apartment building into the beautiful residence it is today) In August of last year the Dodge House celebrated their 20 yrs of Veteran's assistance to this community and that is when Christina started the DODGE HOUSE FLAG OF HONOR MEMORIAL.

With much help from the state Sons of the American Legion, the broken Flagpole was replaced with a magnificently anchored aluminum pole at the front of the building with a base structured for placement of more than 200 MEMORIAL BRICKS. The purchase of these bricks is self sustaining, with 100% of the costs going to the bricks themselves, with any excess funds going to provide bricks for any Veteran who cannot themselves afford the cost. To date there are 100 bricks in the array by the flagpole, as that is the minimum number necessary for an order. But recently, things have stalled and Chris is looking to finish up the project with another order for 100 more bricks. Since it takes about three months to process these laser engraved bricks, she is looking to have these installed at an early spring work party.

Purchase of these bricks, which will memorialize either you or anyone you choose to honor, will offer a lifetime memory on the site of a very historic and meaningful building which has been HOME to countless veterans when they needed one the most. The cost is very reasonable for such a permanent memorial. For \$50 you can place three lines of 20 characters per line (including spaces), or you can put the Branch Logo for your service Branch and three lines of 12 characters per line for \$75. Come on VETS---especially Viet VETS---and become a part of a very historic effort to memorialize patriotic service to our country. We need your help getting this order for 100 more bricks sent in soon.

You can stop in to the DODGE HOUSE, almost at the corner of Crescent and Grove Streets, view the bricks presently in place and get an order form, or contact CHRISTINA MORGAN at [dodgehousevao@comcast.net](mailto:dodgehousevao@comcast.net) or call 802-775-6772.

As a special treat, join the folks at the DODGE HOUSE on Saturday, September 21 from Noon on for a great pot luck celebration of their 20 years of service to our country and a proud Rutland Community.

GODBLESTHE UNITED  
STATES OF AMERICA

Dine In or Take Out

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New Menu



## Megrath Honored for Service to Vets

Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, honored its longtime president, Adrian "Andy" Megrath, Wednesday, July 13, with presentation of a marble miniature of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial sculpture and expressions of appreciation for his service.

Megrath, a combat veteran of Vietnam who served in an artillery survey unit, has been president of Chapter 1, the first VVA chapter in the country, since 2004, and was previously treasurer of the chapter. His work on behalf of Vietnam veterans and veterans generally has included service on the State Council of the VVA and the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council and the board of the Dodge House for homeless veterans in Rutland.

He has presided over a number of Chapter 1-sponsored events, including the chapter's 25th Anniversary celebration in 2005, attended by Gov. James Douglas and VVA national President Thomas Corey. He generously shares his time with

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## Megrath

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school children and others interested in first-hand information on the Vietnam War.

A dedicated Harley-Davidson owner and rider, Megrath has taken part in numerous veteran rallies and escorts. He regularly handles nitty gritty details of veterans activities, coordinating the installation of the new marble sculpture at the Vietnam memorial in Rutland last November, replacing the memorial flags as needed, and even cooking hamburgers at an annual picnic at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington.

The inscription on the plate attached to the marble miniature reads: "Presented to Andy Megrath, president of Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, on June 13, 2018, in recognition of his many years of service to the chapter and to Vermont veterans." The miniature was carved by West Rutland sculptor Donald Ramey, who also carved the much larger sculpture at the memorial.

For further information, contact Chapter 1 Secretary Jack Crowther at 775-1182 or [jack\\_cr2@yahoo.com](mailto:jack_cr2@yahoo.com), or President Andy Megrath

at 775-1745 or [vtvogman@gmail.com](mailto:vtvogman@gmail.com)





PHOTO BY JACK CROWTHER

Andy Megrath (center), of Rutland Town, president of Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, is flanked by Peter Mayhew, of Leicester, and Tracey Foor, of Bethel, Sunday during placement of a memorial wreath by the Patriot Guard Riders, a motorcycle troop that provides escorts for veterans who have died. The event took place Monday at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rutland.



# Local veterans look to preserve legacy

By **GORDON DRITSCHLO**  
STAFF WRITER

The leadership of Vietnam Veterans of America — Chapter One is unsure how much longer the group will continue.

“The basic thing is, we’re a one-war organization,” Secretary Jack Crowther said Tuesday, putting the membership at around 140. “If you served less than 40 years ago, you can’t join the VVA.”

With the current leadership aging and unsure how much longer they want to lead, and no new generation in place to take over, Crowther said the organization is looking at how to make sure the memorial it placed in Main Street Park is maintained after they are gone.

Crowther said he has been secretary for more than 10 years and he believed President Andy Megrath had been in office for 12 years.

“If he wanted to step down, I’m not sure



ANTHONY EDWARDS / STAFF PHOTO

**The Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial is located on South Main Street in Rutland.**

anyone would want to take his place,” Crowther said. “There don’t seem to be people who are anxious to take charge of the organization.”

Crowther said the VVA and city leadership are in talks about the future of the marble memorial.

He said the plaques have all been replaced at least once and the honor roll of Rutland County residents who served in Vietnam is updated periodically.

Board of Aldermen President William Notte said he plans to ask

“I think that’s the least we can do for this organization,” he said.

Notte said Tuesday that he had no cost estimates.

“I can’t imagine it’s too much,” he said. “I’ll want to get a handle on that, but the last thing I want to say to the Vietnam veterans of Rutland is, we’ve looked at this, and it’s too expensive to maintain your memorial. ... It’s, quite frankly, something the city should take on.”

Rutland’s was the first chapter of the VVA, founded in 1980.

On the organization’s 25th anniversary, in 2005, Megrath — who could not be immediately reached for comment Tuesday — said the national group had existed, loosely organized, prior to 1980, and Rutland veteran Don Bodette convinced founder Bobby Muller to convert to a local-chapter model.

As of 2005, the organization had 525 chapters with 50,000 members.

The Rutland chapter has raised money for local organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club and Dodge House and worked with other groups to support the families of local Guardsmen and reservists deployed overseas.

The memorial was begun in the early 1980s by sculptor John Reno of Fair Haven.

A veteran himself, Reno wanted to thank the local VVA chapter for helping him with drug addiction and depression, but he died in 1982, the statue unfinished.

Years later, West Rutland sculptor Donald Ramey was brought into finish the project.

The memorial was dedicated in 2000.

Ramey repaired the statue when it was vandalized in 2006 by a local teenager who drew an eyepatch on it with a marker.

*This article was published earlier this week in the Rutland Herald digital editions.*



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## Vietnam Veterans seek "Home" for sculpture

Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, of Rutland is seeking a home for a marble bust of a soldier, a portion of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial that was recently replaced.

The sculpture was begun by John Reno, a Vietnam veteran, but completed by Don Ramey of West Rutland following Reno's untimely death and the abandonment of his sculpting effort. The completed sculpture, weighing several thousand pounds, formed the centerpiece of the Vietnam memorial from 2000 until 2017, when it was replaced by a similar though somewhat changed version.

The original had shown signs of deterioration due to the inferior quality of the stone it was made from.

Because of its sentimental and historical value, Chapter 1 decided to preserve a portion of the original sculpture and had Gawet Marble & Granite of Center Rutland saw off a 220-pound piece incorporating the head and shoulders of the original, older sculpture. The sculpture may be trimmed further to accommodate a new location.

In action on January 9, the chapter agreed to seek a home for this remnant of the original sculpture, hoping that an organization

or Rutland County municipality might wish to preserve and display it as a piece of military history from the area.

The remainder of the sculpture, as it now exists, weighs 220 pounds. It could be further trimmed to about 150 pounds, but is able to stand upright as a more or less "finished" piece. (A small chip from the rim of the soldier's helmet has been reglued.) The sculpture is white marble with some grayish streaks of color. It is 31 inches wide by 19 inches tall with a thickness that varies from 2 to 6½ inches.

A group or municipality interested in acquiring the

sculpture should apply to Chapter 1 by contacting President Andy Megrath at 775-1745 (email [vthogman@comcast.net](mailto:vthogman@comcast.net)) before March 13.

Chapter 1 hopes that anyone acquiring the sculpture will be able to put it on permanent display as a tribute to the men and women from the area who served in and during the Vietnam War and in honor of all veterans. A viewing of the actual sculpture can be arranged.





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ANTHONY EDWARDS / STAFF PHOTO

Members of the Brandon American Legion Post 55 Firing Squad blast their guns in honor of America's fallen soldiers during the town's Veterans Day ceremony on Monday.

# 'For the fallen ones'

## Region marks Veterans Day by honoring those who served

By **JOSH O'GORMAN**  
STAFF WRITER

**V**eterans, their loved ones and well-wishers marked Veterans Day on Monday with prayer, quiet observance and the updating of a local memorial.

At Christ the King School in Rutland, students and staff — accompanied by a number of veterans — marked the day with a prayer ceremony to remember those veterans who have died and to honor those who are still among us.

The American Legion Post 55 held a ceremony to remember their fellow veterans in downtown Brandon at the Soldier's Monument. And in Main Street Park in Rutland, a dozen veterans and their families gathered at



ANTHONY EDWARDS / STAFF PHOTO

**Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1 President Andy Megrath, left, and member Jack Crowther update the Honor Roll containing the names of those who served in the Vietnam War during a ceremony held at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial.**

the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial to update the memorial with additional names of soldiers who served in the war.

The event drew Vietnam vets from around the county, including William Higgins of Castleton, who served in the U.S. Army.

"I'm here to support the group like I always have, mostly for the fallen ones," Higgins said.

The memorial includes a marble sculpture of a soldier laid to rest, with the names of the 18 Rutland County soldiers who were killed in action. The memorial also includes three placards highlighting some of the veterans' stories, and a fourth that lists the names of those who served in country.

"The memorial was put together back in 2000. We started out with 125 names and we now have 330," said Andy Megrath, president of Chapter 1 of the Vietnam Veterans of America. "The family members want their

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# Region

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husbands or brothers to be added onto our honor roll. It's been a couple of years since we updated the names. We're here to, I won't say celebrate Veterans Day, but to thank everyone who served."

In addition to replacing the honor roll placard, the veterans also replaced the other three, which were sun-faded and

weather-beaten.

The honor roll lists the names of those who served in Vietnam between 1959 and 1975, and who entered the military from Rutland County. To be eligible, a soldier must have actually served in country.

"That was one of the rules that a lot of the guys who put this together said, that you needed to have boots on the ground in order to get up there," Megrath said. "There are some people who are upset

because they served during the Vietnam War but didn't actually serve in country. If we put everybody's name up there from Rutland County, we wouldn't have enough room."

Founded in 1978, the Vietnam Veterans of America includes 650 chapters with 70,000 members across the country. Chapter 1 is among the original 33 founding chapters, of which only 13 remain.

Sal Clarino, of Rutland, served in the Viet-

nam War with the U.S. Coast Guard.

"We, the Vietnam veterans, support each other because we all came home and nobody did (support them)," said Clarino. "We're a tight community simply because of the hardship we went through, both over there

and coming back home."

Clarino said he and his fellow veterans continue to help each other heal from the scars of the war.

"There's a group of us who get together every Tuesday night and help each other through PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and

whatever else life's throwing at us at the time," Clarino said. "It's a bond of brotherhood."

For more information about Chapter 1 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, visit [www.vvachapter1.com](http://www.vvachapter1.com).

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# Veterans expo highlights services

11-9-15  
By CALLIE GINTER  
CORRESPONDENT

His road name: Big Heart. His real name: Larry Fredrickson. Who is he? A burly, tough-looking veteran who is the secretary of a motorcycle club and trying to help out his fellow vets.

"The club is about brotherhood, we go out riding, we are just doing what we can to help," he said.

Fredrickson's booth was one of approximately 15 at the first Veterans' Community Expo at the American Legion Post 31 on Saturday

in Rutland.

The Expo featured more than 15 agencies offering help to veterans with issues including housing, drug and alcohol counseling, health benefits and hospice care.

Fredrickson said many vets either aren't informed of the benefits and services available to them, or they are too prideful to ask.

"To be honest, some of us are just too proud. It's hard to ask for help," he said.

Andre Wing, Vermont veteran outreach team leader, thinks this lack

of knowledge of services is partly because the vets don't pay attention when the armed forces gives an exit briefing, because all they want is to get out. Wing explained how his job is to "bridge that gap," from when they leave the service to when they get home.

"The armed forces does a good job with the exit briefing and the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs also sends vets a welcome home letter as well as a pamphlet with all the benefits," Wing said.

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ANTHONY EDWARDS / STAFF PHOTO

**Members of the U.S. Veterans Motorcycle Club Vermont Chapter, from left, Larry Fredrickson, Rollie Renault, Dave Hoisington and Dave Young gather at the American Legion in Rutland on Saturday.**

## Expo

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veterans are still falling through the cracks, making Saturday's event so necessary, officials said.

Kristen Hixon of Rutland Regional Medical Center advertised a program about healthier living.

Lt. Col. David Leonard represented the Vermont veterans outreach program and talked about how his organization is proactive in finding veterans in need, saying it reaches out to veterans "instead of waiting."

Ann LaRocque, Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice bereavement coordinator, said one in four of the people who died in the past year were veterans.

"We've seen more vets come into hospice," said LaRocque. "We've had one vet as a patient for over a year, he's so isolated, it

has taken a while, but he's accepted volunteers, a social worker, a nurse."

Doug Kittredge, a certified peer specialist with the Veterans Administration, said he directs veterans to resources yet acknowledges that they are trained to be independent and that it's not easy for them to accept the help.

He said he was happy to see so many veterans breaking that trend and seeking help.

"It's a good turnout so far, there's a vet from WW II, definitely vets who fought in Korea, Vietnam-era vets," said Kittredge.

Casey Maynard, a prospect of the motorcycle club, said he found what he needed after returning home: camaraderie with his fellow vets.

"I've been looking for something like this, you couldn't ask for more support," said Maynard. "It's an outlet. Riding a motorcycle is one of the freest experiences ever."