

Local

Captain America's visit

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Since 2009, he's been on a mission, walking across the continental U.S., volunteering to help homeless veterans in any way he can, while raising awareness about the issues regarding homelessness. "On my 5,000 mile walk (on back roads from Jacksonville, Mississippi to Manhattan, New York, a walk that took a year to complete), I've seen a lot of homeless Vietnam veterans," he said, explaining that the majority of homeless veterans he encountered served during that war.

Mullins said that part of the inspiration for this journey came from observing that, while a "thank you for your service" to a homeless veteran, or verbal support of some sort is appreciated, it isn't enough. He relayed a story about seeing some homeless veterans camping underneath an interstate bridge, noting that a motorist pulled up to thank one of them for having served, a veteran in poor physical condition with inadequate clothing, without offering further help.

"To hell with this verbal support. It doesn't do anything for them. I need to physically do something for them," Mullins said.

He said that he's found religion along the way, and started reading and studying the Bible, a copy of which he carries with him along with his other gear. He said it became clear to him that verbal support is self-righteousness, according to his understanding, and it doesn't accomplish much, and that his true calling is to help homeless veterans.

In 2009, Mullins, from Dalton, Georgia, sold his home through auction, donating the proceeds to the Wounded Warrior Foundation, and purposely causing himself to become homeless in the process. Prior to that, he worked as a house framer for 10 years for a company called Jack of All Trades, and said his boss, a veteran himself and a "big Christian," gave a major helping hand to many homeless veterans by providing a job at a competitive wage.

In January 2010, after completing his 5,000 mile journey that ended in Manhattan, Mullins walked

from Manhattan to Nashville, Tennessee, in order to begin a "state capital" trek across the U.S., completing that particular mission in 2014.

His current walk, which includes all state capitals once again, landed Mullins in Baker City, during Miner's Jubilee last weekend, on his way to Boise, Idaho, the next state capital on his list. "I don't want anything for doing this," he said, explaining that he doesn't receive money from the VFW or another entity for this walk, it was solely his idea, and that he's reluctant to accept any donations for himself for food, unless there is a donation also made to VFW Post 4217. He said representatives of VFW Post 4217 provided him with 500 envelopes at first, addressed directly to the post, and they weren't exactly convinced his idea would bring in much in donations, but they became more encouraged once they saw the continuing response.

On his journey, he's been to VFW and American Legion posts, where he's discussed homelessness issues and volunteered, and received food donations, for example, in addition to receiving some help with his own basic needs while out on the road.

Since he lacks funds to offer homeless veterans, one of the major ways he's helped is by "being their sign for the day," something he's done hundreds of times, which helped increase donations from motorists and others to the veterans at street intersections, for example, he said.

It hasn't been an easy journey, and he hasn't been accepted everywhere, he said.

He wears a Captain America costume every day (one of two he owns), including the blue mask, because of the message of associated patriotism, and the high visibility, and he carries an American flag.

He doesn't currently carry a shield, because they've been stolen on at least 30 different occasions, he said.

One theft occurred while he held the shield in his arm and was sleeping, though the fact that someone was able to get that close to him while he slept bothered him more than the act of taking the shield.



Submitted Photo.

Bo Hansen with son, Zane, got to meet Captain America on Wednesday at Clark Auto Electric.

He talked about the issues out on the road. He's been arrested 32 times for "parading without a permit," he's dealt with extremes in weather, he's been hassled, he's been flipped off, and he's been cursed at, he said.

In Texas, a motorist tried to hit him, and when he tried to jump out of the way, he fractured his left foot. Last year, he had a heat stroke in California, and he has a scar above his left eye where someone had hit him with a glass bottle.

He wears sneakers, and he said that a pair usually lasts one to two months, his walk averaging about 100 miles a week (he averaged about 25 miles a day before his foot fracture). He said he's lost height and weight, formerly at 6'2" and 245 pounds, and now, he sits at 6' and 196 pounds.

On a more positive note, Mullins said that surprisingly, experiences out on I-84 with the Oregon State Police (OSP) have been

encouraging. He had a liter bottle of water and a breakfast bar given to him earlier Friday morning by officers of OSP, and he said, "They've actually been watching my back." He said OSP officers have told him to inform them if he encountered any problems while out on the interstate, and they've even donated to his cause.

The Best Western/Sunridge even gave Mullins a room, and Flagstaff Sports arranged a bicycle for him. Mullins said he plans to make it back to Chattanooga, Tennessee sometime this year, to start a family with his girlfriend of three years, a certified chef, and to lay to rest his mother, who is on life support.

To learn more about Mullins' cause, including updates on his progress, log onto his blog at captainwalkingwithamerica.wordpress.com.

Donations can be sent directly to VFW Post 4217, Commander T. Calhoun, P.O. Box 872, Warm Springs, Oregon 97761.

In full bloom



Submitted Photo.

Cindy Fuller of Baker City submitted this photo of what she called a "volunteer sunflower." The plant simply sprang up in her yard and now has over 145 buds on it. She counted 50 flowers in either near- or full-bloom.



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