

WALL from page 1A

The replica of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial was brought to Florence by Spruce Point Assisted Living Facility and its director of marketing, Kim Pruitt, who is also the daughter of a Vietnam veteran.

"My dad was in Vietnam for several years, and he didn't talk about it much with me. I was the baby of the family, but the one thing he did tell me was when he got off the plane, he was not welcomed home and

he was actually spit on," Pruitt said. "So, one of my goals, when I found out we had the opportunity to bring the wall here, was to finally welcome all veterans back home."

This sense of finally being appreciated for the time they spent defending the nation is a welcome shift from the reception received by veterans after returning from the war in Vietnam.

For Florence resident Tim Sapp, his service in Vietnam was not a subject he discussed with outsiders until long after

his service had ended.

"When I got back, my family treated me great, but the rest of the world wasn't too nice. In this day and age, you have a lot more people thanking us for our service," Sapp said. "It must have been 20 years before anyone thanked me. It's a lot different now than it was then."

Sapp had first seen the traveling wall in Kentucky and was involved in bringing an earlier model of the wall to Florence. He remembers the reactions that were created when he first

saw the granite memorial.

"The first time the wall came to town it was an emotional experience. I was a little more prepared this time," he said. "The thing I remember was all the guys that came and pulled up in their cars, but they couldn't walk up to the wall because of the emotional part of it."

"I'd go out and talk to them, and a lot of these guys would just break down and cry. Since then, I've talked more freely about my experiences. But until that point you didn't tell people you were a Vietnam vet."

Paul Gargis is one of the leaders of the unofficial local veterans' group known as the "Band of Brothers," which assisted with the presentation of the wall in Florence. Gargis and his grizzled group of veterans represent all five military branches and many of them will serve as guides during the weekend.

Gargis served two tours in Vietnam and says the interactions he has these days with the public are much different than when he returned from Southeast Asia.

"It is very important to me and other vets in town to have the wall come here. Every day I wear clothes that have some military connection. I served two tours in Vietnam... '68 and '69 with the 25th Infantry Division, then in '71 and '72 on an advisory team. When I returned, I never talked about my service or my time in Vietnam," Gargis said after pausing to check his emotions. "It is a lot different now, even young people will come up to us to thank us for our service, and that is something I never thought I would see in my lifetime."

The decision on where to place the replica was made with the idea in mind that the wall would not only heal but educate as well.

For Siuslaw School District Superintendent Andy Grzeskowiak, his approval for the visit was partially based on the



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

The public is welcome to view the wall at all hours through 2 p.m. on April 7.

opportunity for his students to learn in a manner which is outside the norm.

"Giving the students an opportunity to see the Vietnam Memorial Wall is important because it takes history from more than a topic in a book or a television program into reality for them," he said. "Being able to interact with veterans who served during the war, while they are on site, plus being able to engage with members of the community, allows them to see how much this means to that generation. It is something students can only get when you talk with people who lived through it."

The wall will be in town throughout the weekend.

Pruitt said she is appreciative that the community has contributed to the costs associated with bringing the replica to Florence. She also pointed out that Spruce Point was able to contribute to the effort, thanks to the generosity of sponsors and area residents.

"We had a garage sale at Spruce Point — we have one every year — and this year we decided we would have it little sooner and put all the money raised into bringing the wall to Florence. The wall costs \$10,000 and that doesn't include the insurance and renting the portable toilets. So, we raised just over \$1,200 and that put us over the top," Pruitt said. "I really want to say we couldn't have done this without the support of major

donations from sponsors and the public."

The volunteers and veterans manning the wall during the visit want the community to know the wall is available for viewing throughout the weekend, 24 hours a day, until closing ceremonies tomorrow afternoon at 2 p.m.

The decision to have that type of access is intentional, according to Pruitt.

"At night, we expect to get some of the visitors that still have a hard time dealing with the wall or seeing it. So, we have it open 24 hours a day so people can still see it, even if they don't want to be around other people. They can take their time and make their way to it and have their time alone," she said.

Two events are part of the wall's visit. The first is a remembrance ceremony, which is open to the public today at 1 p.m., and the closing ceremonies on Sunday.

(Editor's Note: The significance and public impact of The Wall That Heals within the community has had a ripple effect that continues well after the deadline for today's edition. For that reason, we will be following today's article with more coverage in Wednesday's edition, which will include personal stories shared by local veterans regarding the wall and their experiences in Vietnam.)



FRAA ART CENTER

120 Maple Street
Phone: 541-997-4435
Hours Open: Wed-Fri 10am-4pm,
Sat 10am-5pm, Sun. 10am-4pm

Classes, Workshops & Events

NEW! Watercolor with Emily Rosinbaum

Make your own watercolor Mermaid. Saturday, April 20th, 1-3:30 pm Watercolor supplies are provided. Pre-registration req'd at FRAA or w/ Emily, studios.epr@gmail.com.

Acrylic Pour Art with Pam Nedder

Saturday, April 6, 2-4 pm Saturday, May 4, 2-4 pm Make your own acrylic pour painting. All materials provided. Pre-registration req'd at FRAA or w/ Pam, pam.nedder@gmail.com.

Felting 1 with Ginny Kliever

Learn the art of Felting. making a coin purse, Friday, April 12, 1-4 pm Pre-registration req'd at FRAA or with Ginny, 541-521-3513.

FlorenceFest '19

This event is in its 3rd year and just keeps getting better. Come enjoy the juried art show sponsored by FRAA while sipping wine and listening to Jazz music. Friday, April 26th, 2-8 pm and Saturday, April 27th, 2-10 pm.

NEW! Ed Gunderson Show & Demo

Ed will be hosting a one-person show demonstrating his airbrush techniques and showing his finished works. Sunday, April 14th, 11 am - 3 pm

Big Wave Poetry 1st Tuesday Open Mic

Tuesday, May 7, 2019 at 7:00 pm. Admission is free and refreshments will be available.

Writers on the River - Creative Writing Workshop with Catherine Rourke

Coming Soon - Date TBA! Memoir Writing: From Real Life to Real Story. Contact: CJReditor@gmail.com. 541-708-2120

Painting with John Leasure

Saturdays 9 am - 12 pm No painting experience required. Contact: jnleasure@hotmail.com or 541-991-2754 for details and fees.

Quarterly Members' Meeting

Tuesday, April 16th, 3:00 pm. Come learn about what we have been doing, upcoming events, provide suggestions for our future.

For more information about classes, visit fraaoregon.org. To register for these classes, please call or visit FRAA at our Art Center on Maple Street.

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS

SERVING THE CENTRAL OREGON COAST



(18114B) 2014 JEEP LATITUDE

\$15,995



(18U63B) 2007 CHEVY IMPALLA

\$5,995



(18127A) 2016 RAM 1500

\$21,995



(19U12) 2015 FORD FOCUS SE

\$12,995



(18U76) 2014 FORD FOCUS SE

\$11,995



(17T77A) 2014 FORD FUSION SE

\$14,995



(19U02) 2017 FORD EDGE

\$25,995



(19U15) 2018 Dodge Grand Caravan

\$21,995



(18U86A) 2013 FORD EXPLORER

\$19,995



(18131A) 2015 MAZDA CX5 GRAND TOURING

\$19,995



(19U03) 2015 FORD C-MAX HYBRID

\$15,995



(18T68A) 2016 CHEVY EQUINOX

\$22,995



(19U04) 2016 FORD F-150 XLT

\$27,995



(18U87) 2010 FORD RANGER

\$17,995



(19U09) 2011 FORD F-250 6.7 DIESEL

\$33,995



(19U17) 2018 FORD FUSION

\$17,995



(18U62) 2017 LINCOLN MKC

\$27,995



(19T13A) 2001 DODGE 2500

\$13,995



(18U74) 2016 FORD EXPLORER

\$29,995



(18U66) 2015 FORD ESCAPE

\$19,995



(18U91A) 2014 FORD EXPLORER LTD

\$25,998



(17U79) 2015 FORD EDGE

\$25,995



(18T73C) 2012 FORD MUSTANG

\$15,995



(19U19) 2018 FORD FUSION

\$17,950

JOHNSTON
MOTOR COMPANY

We come highly recommended!

Ask about low APR financing. Manager on duty. Financing through major financial institutions.

(541) 997-3475 • 2150 Hwy. 101, Florence

Browse Our Current Inventory online at: www.johnstonmotorcompany.com