

GIVEN WITH LOVE



photos by Jon Stinnett

Representatives of the Quilts of Valor Foundation presented handmade quilts to local veterans Harry Krull (above left), Will Parrish (above right) and Andy Watkins (below). Based in Eugene, the "Pieceful Posse" prefers to make quilts for local veterans and deliver them in person.

Quilts of Valor bestowed on local veterans

BY JON STINETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove basked in uncharacteristic sunshine this weekend, and at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3473, a trio of quilts brought extra warmth to a touching ceremony to honor three local veterans.

Members of the "Pieceful Posse," a group of local quilters who piece together fabric to create original, handmade quilts for veterans, stopped by the VFW to present quilts to Harry Krull, Andy Watkins and Will Parrish. Bobbie Sanford, the western coordinator of the Quilts of Valor Foundation, told the gathered crowd Saturday afternoon that the Foundation got its start in 2003, when Catherine Roberts undertook an effort to make a quilt for her son, who was returning from active duty in Iraq. Over a decade later, Quilts of Valor has awarded more than 114,000 quilts to veterans, and Sanford said the care involved in making a quilt helps make the gesture a special one.

"Quilts take a long time to make, and they're made by people like us," she said.

"We take perfectly good fabric, cut it up and sew it back together."

About 10,000 quilters currently make items for Quilts of Valor, and they're all volunteers. Here in Oregon, Sanford said she and the area's other quilters like to make quilts for local veterans and deliver them face-to-face, and they've handed out over 300 such quilts in person over a three-year span.

"It's very rewarding for the veterans, and for a lot of them, it's a type of closure," she said. Sanford instructed each veteran to use the quilt they'd been given and not store it away.

"If it ends up in a plastic bag, it will perish," she said.

For Krull, who served with the United States Marine Corps in the Korean Conflict, receiving his handmade quilt seemed to double as a way to make new friends, and he enthusiastically embraced the members of the "Pieceful Posse." The event brought waves of emotion for Watkins, an Air Force veteran and fixture at the VFW who's lost a wife and son in recent years. Parrish, another VFW regular, took the occasion to thank his wife, Jan, for holding down the



homefront while he went away to fight.

During the ceremony, Sanford relayed an anecdote about the Quilts of Valor, cautioning the crowd not to refer to them as blankets.

"Blankets warm the body," she said, "and quilts warm the soul."

Congress gets recess, our kids get spring break — What about US?

BY NED HICKSON
News Media Corporation

If you're a student or educator, you are probably getting excited about the approach of SPRING BREAK! Wee-HOO! For students of all ages it means a week of crazy fun with little or no responsibility, whether you're a fifth-grader planning a Spongebob Squarepants marathon to Bikini Bottom, or a college student planning a bikini bottom marathon of a different kind. If you're an educator, it means a student-free week away from grading papers requiring so much red ink your desk looks like a sacrificial altar. Seriously, are they learning NOTHING between Tweets in class!?

Even Congress gets what is referred to as "recess." Let's be honest: If I performed as poorly at my job as they have, I would get what is referred to as "fired."

That being said, for the rest of us, spring break holds about as much anticipation as trash day or a release date for "Frozen 2."

This is particularly true for those of us with teenagers at home, many of whom will openly mock us each day by selfishly sleeping in. Then, in an added display of thoughtlessness, they will still be in their pajamas and deciding on breakfast when we come home for lunch! The audacity! Especially since they misspelled "audacity" on their last quiz!

No, the time has come to expand spring break to include everyone so we can all enjoy a week of unfettered fun. And naturally, when I say "everyone," I realize there are certain positions that are so important to our infrastructure they can't shut down without causing the nation to crumble. So I'm sorry: cooks and bartenders, you'll have to draw straws for President's Day.

For the rest of us, however, a week of relaxation during the nicest time of year is going to be fantastic! No longer will Cancun, Panama City and South Padre Island be the exclusive destinations for drunken college students and creepy professors offering extra credit assignments. No way! From

now on, they'll have to share those warm beaches with parents inflating 8-foot plastic sea mammals for their young children or, in some cases, their horrified teenagers.

"We're too old to ride a plastic Shamu!" they'll protest.

But Dad will continue undeterred, blowing into an air nodule located in a highly questionable area of plastic whale anatomy. This will of course be embarrassing to his teens, who are already mortified by the fact that Dad wore his swim fins to the beach and sand-whipped 30 sunbathers en route to a relatively quiet spot near a keg draped with bikini tops. That's when Mom and Dad will begin spreading suntan lotion on themselves as if creating a protective layer against the Ebola virus, slathering every crevice before putting on matching Panama Jack sun hats. They will then hand the lotion to their sobbing teens, assuming they haven't already run off to drown themselves in the surf.

What if your kids are already in college with spring break plans of their own? No problem! Surprise them at the beach! Chances are they used your credit card to secure their travel plans anyway; how hard can it be to get a room at the same hotel? Imagine the laughs you'll share when they realize the person yelling at everyone to stop staring at his daughter in the bikini contest is DAD! Or the reason that group of girls keeps giggling every time you get near them is because Mom is showing pictures of you pointing to your very first armpit hair!

Yes, I think the need to implement a National Spring Break Week is something we can all agree is long overdue.

For those who don't? I have two words for you: Summer school.

Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. His book, "Humor at the Speed of Life," is available online at Port Hole Publications, Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble. Write to him at nedhickson@icloud.com

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