

THE BUGLER

FALL 2019

Ideas & Ways to go the EXTRA mile... and SHINE

Scour the newspapers, Facebook, and other media outlets and send cards of best wishes to local high school students & youth for their achievements. Be sure to make contact with the guidance counselor beforehand to tell them of your intentions so mail can get delivered through the school.

Organize or collaborate with another group to take part in a cemetery clean-up day. If you can't do physical work offer to bring hot coffee, cocoa, or donuts and snacks.

Contact your local women's shelter or children's home and see if you can handwrite "lunch notes" to give children boosts of inspiration.

Contact a local nursing home and offer to run a "bingo night". Many homes have the supplies and you can provide the prizes. Collect prizes, quarters, and single dollar bills at a meeting

NEVER judge a book by its cover... or should you?

School has started, supplies have been bought, fall gardens are in full swing, the air has turned crisp. Gorgeous red, maroon, orange, and yellow falling leaves bring about harvests and family gatherings. Fall is my favorite time of year. It conjures up images of cozy afternoons by a window with a mug of tea or cider, wrapped in a blanket, and soaking in the pages of a good book. I would like to take a minute to address that book. What is on the cover? We have all heard the old adage to never judge a book by its cover, but I would like you to stop a minute and think about that. Although this adage refers to being shallow, in a business world, first impressions are everything. Your unit is like a book being judged by its cover. It is a reality.

I ran into someone who asked me what types of things our organization did, and I felt a little embarrassed because I had stop and really give thought... what does the MCLA do as a whole? I know what our purpose is, I know we monetarily support the VA hospitals, cemeteries, and other wonderful programs... but what types of activities are we doing in our community to make our presence known and what personal impact are we making in the lives of others? How would an outsider, someone who knows nothing about our organization "judge my book...my unit"? And if it was judged favorably would the contents be as satisfying? What would make that possible new member feel excited to want to learn more about membership with my unit or the MCLA?

With that being said, I know that we have varying units throughout the state with differing levels of community activity and unit member involvement. Let's face it, some units have more members, more resources, and more involvement from their members and their league. However, the biggest question I urge you to ask yourself is this: "How is my unit's outward appearance to others and are we doing things that are *intentional* and *purposeful* to make the biggest positive impact on our veterans and in our community?" Is there something you do every year that you can add a little something extra to really make it shine and sparkle? Please consider how your "book" is being judged and if the contents of the pages are worthy of the cover, or if the cover is worthy of its pages.

A disabled Marine receives equine training and the chance to interact with horses 100% FREE at a local, non-profit Michigan Farm dedicated to servicing veterans & their families.



*Braley Farm & Rescue,
Inc.
6587 S Meridian Rd
Bannister, MI 48807*

*Contact: Shannon
989-252-4596*

Service to Our Country; From the Battle to the Saddle.....

When Shannon's husband Mike walked into a recruiter's office 7 years ago to serve his country, he never thought he would be rejected due to his tattoos. However, he didn't give up on his dream. Rather, Mike, along with his wife Shannon and her two children, now ages 16 and 13, took that rejection and started exploring different ways they could make an impact and honor the men, women, and their families who have served our country.

Mike and Shannon decided to concentrate on their other passion of farming and horses. In March of 2013 they decided to start a non profit 501c3 military veteran organization that would provide an environment where veterans and their families would be able to build and establish strong and lasting relationships through equine interaction and training, "road rides", gardening, and farm work. Shannon, who has said she herself is the brains and her husband is the brawn, spent a lot of time researching statistics on veteran programs in the area and throughout the whole state. What she found was that there was a lack of free programs that serviced not only veterans, but also their families, and when it came to any farms that provided interactions and training for horsemanship there were very few and they required monetary payment, payment in kind, or insurances to be billed for therapy services rendered.

This spurred momentum in starting Braley Farm & Rescue, Inc. and their vision, fueled by their passion to serve their country's servicemen and servicewomen 100% free of charge, started to come to bud. Four years ago, they purchased a 5-acre farm in the Southwest corner of Saginaw County in Bannister. Two years ago, they purchased their first horse and currently have 3 horses available for use in their programs. Shannon and her husband Mike are financing the operation of the farm mostly with their own monies. They do receive some help from local businesses in their community and just recently found out that they are eligible from the State of Michigan to benefit 55% of the proceeds from the Charitable Millionaire Poker Party which will be held at Kimberly Oaks in St. Charles. However, having such passion to serve our veterans is not without its own sacrifices.

The Braleys recently decided for Mike to take a job working out of state for 5 months out of the year to help fund the services they offer at the farm. Mike also works on average 50 hours a week when home in Michigan. Shannon also works a full-time job of 45-50 hours a week. Mike and Shannon work hard to provide free opportunities for our veterans, but they do eagerly welcome help from volunteers, community businesses, and other organizations and donors. To date, Braley Farm & Rescue Inc is the ONLY place in Michigan where veterans and their families receive such services 100% FREE of charge, and much of the operating cost is currently financed by Mike and Shannon.

Shannon, who prior to meeting Mike was in an abusive relationship and is a domestic abuse survivor, says that working with the horses has not only helped her gain inner peace in dealing with the PTSD she once faced, but she has seen the impact their farm has made on the veterans and their families who visit. Braley Farm & Rescue are constantly seeking to improve the farm to better service veterans with physical disabilities or limitations. Shannon is looking to obtain help in many areas to improve the farm. She is seeking anyone who wishes to volunteer their time and talents in labor, fundraising, or networking contacts, as well as in the form of funding towards building facilities that will enable year-round operation with an indoor riding arena and more equipment to service multiple riders in one session. She is hoping to build a pavilion in the near foreseeable future.

Shannon says, "The main purpose of Braley Farm & Rescue, Inc is for veterans to build and establish relationships with the farm and horses where she hopes the veteran will be able to have an outlet for PTSD or other emotional trauma, or reconnecting with their family and friends". Braley Farm & Rescue is meant to be a place for healing and hope. Their motto "From the Battle to the Saddle" says it all. "We are like your backyard farm; we do not have any fancy buildings or fancy horse stalls. We built this from the ground up, we are fun, loving, compassionate, and we want to be the best. I want to be the #1 farm for our veterans in the state of MI. We want our veterans be here, feel relaxed, and to just enjoy the benefits of being close to and interacting with horses."

The Braleys offer a true working farm experience to their clients and veterans. Not only do they offer equine education and riding, but they also have a community garden on their property. Anyone is welcome to dig their hands in the dirt, help bale hay in the field, maintain fencing, and other chores. They also recently purchased a tractor and have even had some veterans display interest in helping out with driving it for chores. In today's society it seems sometimes we all just need an escape and have a need to get back to basics. Braley Farm & Rescue offer that to those willing to embrace the opportunity.

The Braley Farm does offer horse riding classes to the public at \$25 an hour. Those paying clients also help fund the farm. Shannon estimates it costs about \$150 a week to provide feed, healthcare, and other necessities for the 3 horses they have at the farm. Due to Mike and Shannon's work schedule, if you are interested in visiting the farm for pleasure or volunteering, it is pertinent that you call first. Shannon said they will be as accommodating as their work schedules allow, and they even have and will provide transportation to those veterans who need it to visit their farm.

INTERESTED IN HELPING
BRALEY FARM & RESCUE?

Here's how you can help....

Volunteer opportunities:

- Baling Hay
- Weeding the garden
- Mending Fences
- Chores
- Spreading the word
- Helping with fundraising events

Financial opportunities:

- Monthly donations
- One time donations
- TSC gift cards
- Safety Helmets
- Saddle Pads
- Wood Posts for outdoor arena
- Buddy stirrups
- 50-75 gallon water troughs



Mike & Shannon Braley and family.

If there is anyone is interested in making a destination trip to the farm, Shannon has information on campgrounds and lodging in the area, as well as other local businesses and organizations she has collaborated with to offer as many things to do in the area on their visit as possible.

Search Braley Farm & Rescue on Facebook and like their page if you are interested in seeing how they are impacting veteran's lives and updates on the farm happenings.

“Almost everyone will make a good *first* impression, but only a few will make a good lasting impression.”

— **Sonya Parker**

Do you have a feature idea for our newsletter? I would love to take nominations on other veteran non-profit organizations throughout the state to highlight. I am also taking nominations on which MCLA member to highlight in the next newsletter. Contact Elizabeth at mrs.lapouttre@gmail.com or 989-545-8798 for more information.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR MCLA SISTER... VIRGINIA JOHNSON IN 10 QUESTIONS

Interviewed 8-20-19



- 1. How long have you been a member of the MCLA?** Since April 28, 1968; 51 years.
- 2. What and/or who prompted you to join?** My son went into the Marine Corps and I got this postcard in the mail inviting me to a meeting of Marine mothers. I was fascinated and wanted to check it out. So I went, and there were ladies there who I knew and their sons lived close to where I lived. They had this table (about 3 together) and they had it full of stuff they sold to make money for the veterans. So I thought it was quite nice and I stayed and talked to “Grandma Sue” and all the other Cochran ladies. They invited me back to another meeting. But I went home and I was talking to Grandma Sue’s son and he said to me... she will drag you all over the country. Well I didn’t think any more about it but then he said to me in the next month... “It’s meeting night tonight Virginia, are you going?” So I got ready and went. I got more and more interested because I went back again and again.
- 3. What is a favorite project you were involved in as a MCLA member?** Helping with the Young Marines program. My husband and I grew corn, tomatoes, and took it out to the camp. We did a pig roast fundraiser for them. I really enjoyed working with the Young Marines.
- 4. If you could give new members one piece of advice what would it be?** If I were to invite a new lady to come to a meeting, in my heart I would say, “don’t get too worried because there is a little tension. These ladies do a lot of good for our veterans, and you will enjoy it as you get more into it and especially if you enjoy helping veterans.” - I wouldn’t polish it up too much.
- 5. What one thing do you think your main MCLA unit does that makes the biggest impact in your community?** Years ago when we worked with the veterans and together with the Young Marines program. We were willing to give our time to work together with the league and Young Marines.
- 6. What one thing does your main MCLA unit do to touch veteran lives?** The biggest thing is working with the VA clinic. I got involved with the VA and I have been there 38 years and we were very close and it’s now kind of leveled off because of aging members and members having dementia and the young ones don’t want to or can’t find the time to help...but working with the VA is my favorite thing

Virginia Johnson is a Past National President. She served as a National President in 1980-1981. She is 94 years old and is the President of the Michigan Cochran Unit.

7. Why do you choose to make the MCLA a part of your life? Because my son and his friends, my cousins all sacrificed so I would live in a free country. Some never came back; some came back never to be recognized again... My friend sacrificed her only child and I thank God every day that I never had to do that. I make it my goal that every man, woman, and child walking this earth would thank a

veteran.

- 8. What is one memory you have from your activity in the MCLA that has touched your life the most?** The biggest thing and I really must say this from the bottom of my heart, is I have had recognition, but I have to say the greatest thing was at the convention when I received the honor from the Marine Corps League for my service to the veterans because I didn't do this alone... I had the help and support of so many people and especially my family. My goal when I started way back when was to make sure that every woman knew we had an auxiliary. I never turned down an invitation and I did it with my family's support and help. I was known as the traveling president. I missed funerals, weddings, and family events to travel the country and go to all the auxiliaries I was invited to. It was my journey and my journey brought me so many experiences and friendships that nobody can ever take away from me.
- 9. If you could say one quote or give one piece of advice to the MCLA as a whole, what would you want to them to know?** Be Yourself. Be You. When you talk about the auxiliary, talk about how you enjoy it, that it's not all sunshine that there are tears. But talk about what these guys have done for us and how it's our duty to do something for them. What the auxiliary has done for me personally, I am not afraid to go into a room and say to anyone to do something for a veteran, don't think you know it all, listen to the other guy, help them be a family, do something for that child that doesn't have a father, if you smoke cigarettes quit smoking and donate that money to help a veteran.
- 10. Lastly, just for fun, what is a unique thing about you, a hobby or talent that others might not know about?** I love to be with people. My hobbies over the year has been collecting friends. You can't imagine I was a young lady who had just a family, and I couldn't believe that I would drive to Detroit myself and I had never been out of the city of Grand Rapids. I just hope that some of this enthusiasm that I have for the auxiliary will be shared by others. I think I have gained more than I gave, from a little toad I have become a great big whale. I have had tears, people have hurt me, and I have shut doors and opened another one. But what I have in pleasure now at 93 9/10 not many people have walked in my shoes. It has been the most gratifying trip. If you would only believe in yourself then someone will believe in you.

AROUND THE STATE....

SEPTEMBER

21ST – 10AM FLAG RAISING & DRILL DEMONSTRATION BY LAPEER COUNTY YOUNG MARINES HOSTED BY MCLA FLINT UNIT @ MICHIGAN HERO'S MUSEUM, FRANKENMUTH, MI

OCTOBER

5TH – DOWNRIVER UNIT IS HOSTING AN ALL YOU CAN EAT SPAGHETTI DINNER, 1PM-5PM

12TH – FLINT UNIT IS HOSTING A MAKE AND TAKE CRAFT FOR CHILDREN @ FRANKENMUTH FARMER'S MARKET, 8AM-2PM

26TH – FALL STAFF MEETING @ GRACE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IN BAY CITY, MI

**Downriver Marine Corps.
Ladies Auxiliary Fundraiser**



ALL YOU CAN EAT
Spaghetti Dinner
Saturday October 5, 2019
1pm - 5pm



**VFW Post 9283
16200 Dix Toledo
Southgate MI.**

**Adults \$12.00
Kids \$5.00
(10 and under)**



Cash Bar



Help us help our Veterans

Don't forget to tell Elizabeth about any special projects or events your unit will be involved in so that it can advertised on Facebook or we can work on writing an article submission for your local newspaper!

THANKFULLNESS THIS FALL

Here's an idea that costs your unit 55 cents....

Show your THANKFULLNESS this Fall by contacting the nearest VA Hospital or Clinic to your Unit and send a handwritten note to

“Voluntary Services c/o TO A VETERAN”

Make it a fun girl's night at your meeting, contact your homebound members and ask them to participate by doing this every month, get your children/grandchildren involved or contact your local girl scout troop and host a card making night with them. Have fun with this project and be purposeful!