

Local veterans awarded ...

QUILTS of VALOR

PHOTOS BY BOB STATZ, THE RIPPLE RIVER QUILT GUILD AND KAT ROBB

BY BOB STATZ

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Members of the Ripple River Quilt Guild of Aitkin presided over a surprise quilt presentation to four local Mille Lacs area service veterans last March staged at Beckams Bar and Grill in downtown Isle. The vets, who were presented honorary, handmade quilts included: Scott Judkins, Charles Snell, Keith Wiggins and Bob Statz, whose military credentials appear at the right of this page.

The event is part of a series of presentations by an organization called "Quilts of Valor" with chapters over the U.S., including the one based in Aitkin. It's purpose is to award active duty and veterans with Lifetime Achievement Awards for the dedication and sacrifices they made on behalf of the United States. The Aitkin chapter of "Quilts of Valor" is run through the Ripple River Quilt Guild and much of the funding for this project is the result of donations from local veterans organi-

zations and private citizens. The Aitkin guild has sewn and distributed over 800 quilts to deserving veterans since 2017.

Calling the surprised recipients of these honorary gifts up one-by-one before a gathering of friends and local well-wishers, Paulette Manemann, representing the Ripple River Quilt Guild, paid honor to each of the four veterans, saying, "On behalf of the Aitkin quilters, I would like to present each of you with a handmade quilt as a small token to let

you know how important you were and still are to us." Manemann continued, "Welcome home and thank you for your service."

She also mentioned that every member of the Aitkin guild had a hand in the construction of the quilts, including sewing the blocks, hand-stitching the lining as well as quilting and sewing on the labels and the fact that each of the quilts is unique. "We feel it (the quilt) is the best for the best," Manemann added. "We honor and respect you

for your dedication, sacrifices and the commitments you have given for us and the citizens of the United States of America. So, because of you we have a free, safe and great nation."

Following the presentation, two past quilt recipients Alena William and Jo Strong held patriotic flags on each side of the four new recipients in a photo session outside the restaurant (see photo below). Pictured above are recipients Judkins, Snell, Wiggins and Statz in back.

"Quilt of Valor" recipients, 2025, military credentials:

★ PV1 Scott Judkins — Army: MOS Calvary Scout 19D10. Date of service (DOS): Oct. 18, 1976-May 23, 1979. Mobilization(s): Korea. Awards: Expert Rifle.

★ SGT E-5 Charles Snell — Marines: MOS 0311 Infantry Grunt. DOS: 1968-1972. Mobilization(s): Asia/Vietnam, provided security for President Richard Nixon in California.

★ SPC Keith Wiggins — Army: MOS Infantry 11 Bravo. DOS: 1996-2002. Mobilization(s): Afghanistan.

★ Specialist Bob Statz — Army: MOS Communications. Mobilization(s): Served in Vietnam in 1971.



250 U.S. ARMY

THIS WE'LL DEFEND

The U.S. Army will celebrate its 250th birthday on June 14, 2025