

Local veterans awarded ...



QUILTS *of* VALOR

PHOTOS BY BOB STATZ AND THE RIPPLE RIVER QUILT GUILD

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 on May 27, staged at Nitti's Hunter's Point Resort on the eastern shores of the Mille Lacs Lake.

The vets, who were presented honorary, hand-made quilts were Robert Whiteford, Roy Shetka, George Nitti and Denny Russell, 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. Its 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 organizations 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 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. Welcome home and thank you for your service."

Manemann 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 she said that "Each of the quilts are unique and "we feel it (the quilt) is the best for the best."

Manemann concluded, "We honor and respect you for your dedication, sacri-

fices 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 of a quilt to each recipient, the four gathered outside Nitti's main lodge on the shores of Mille Lacs for a photo session, pictured above, from left: George Nitti, Dennis Russell, Roy Shetka and Robert Whiteford.

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

★ SGT E-4 Robert Whiteford — Air Force: MOS Aircraft Mechanic. DOS: March 2024, 1969-Jan. 2, 1993. Good Conduct Award, Vietnam era veteran, Desert Storm 1990-1991.

★ COL Roy Shetka — Minnesota Air National Guard, the Ariel militia of the U.S./State of MN, a reserve component of the U.S. Air Force and the Minnesota Army National Guard. MOS Air Operations Officer. DOS: May 18, 1969-March 31, 2007. Meritorious Service Medal, Vietnam era veteran, Desert Storm 1990-1991, Operation Enduring Freedom 2001, Operation Iraqi Freedom 2001, Tours-Kuwait.

★ Denny Russell — Navy: MOS Ordinance. DOS: 1957-1962. Served in Japan and was on the U.S. Hornet aircraft carrier during the Vietnam Campaign, Vietnam veteran.

★ E-5 Specialist George Nitti — Army: MOS Artillery Mechanic. DOS: November 1968-September 1970. Vietnam veteran.

