

# Veterans group recognizes those who help the military

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GREENLAND — For those who served, both at home and abroad, it's such a relief when someone can help fix a broken car or even a broken spirit through acts of generosity.

Members of the Military Officers Association of America - New Hampshire Chapter presented the Granite State Warriors Award to Dr. Gerald and Delores Carrier, of Christmas Can Cure, and Col. Rick Greenwood and Gregory Whalen, of Veterans Count.

Since 2011, the association has recognized individuals or organizations that provide "significant contributions" to the members of the U.S. military, according to Bruce Avery, president of MOAA's N.H. Chapter.

"This is our chance to honor those who went the extra mile to support our troops," Avery said.

Gerald Carrier explained they began Christmas Can Care in 2008 to help wounded veterans and

their families "have a perfect Christmas" through a "broad-based community effort" that has spread from the Mt. Washington Valley to throughout New Hampshire and across the region.

Carrier said the organization uses "The Polar Express" as a theme to make dreams come true by inviting a family of a severely injured service member to enjoy the holidays in the White Mountains.

"Thus we decided to make Christmas part of the healing process to our wounded veterans," Carrier said, adding participants can meet Santa on a scenic train ride, enjoy winter sports and visit North Conway.

"We had no idea it would become such a tradition," Carrier said, adding 97 area residents volunteered their time or services in the past year.

U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., said Christmas Can Cure has helped several families from across the country and has even expanded to work with another family in Utah.

"Thank you both very much and especially the volunteers who help you do what you do," Shaheen said.

Greenwood, who serves as vice president of the Seacoast Chapter of Veterans Count, said since the organization began in 2007, it has provided about \$1.5 million to help more than 2,350 families of service members with a variety of matters, including providing heating fuel and paying for car repairs during deployments.

"The whole concept of individual care really makes

this program unique," Greenwood said, adding Veterans Count often fills the gap between families in need and existing programs which help veterans.

While the program currently focuses on families of post-9/11 veterans, Greenwood said the organization is expanding to help veterans of previous wars, especially Vietnam, work through their struggles.

"Our work is just beginning," Greenwood said.

Whalen, who serves as president of the Seacoast

chapter, said helping military families is a calling for many members who don't want to let anyone fall behind.

"We believe in this - it became our passion," Whalen said, adding the organization works with Easter Seals to serve as "the philanthropic arm" of the Deployment Cycle Support Program.

Shaheen, who feels Veterans Count is "a critical ally to service members, veterans and their families," said she and fellow Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., have both promoted

the organization.

"We think it's a model for the rest of the country," Shaheen said.

While Ayotte was unable to attend the event, Steve Monier was present to represent her and pass on how fortunate it is to have so many organizations like Christmas Can Cure and Veterans Count in New Hampshire.

For more information, visit <http://www.moaa-nh.org/>, <http://christmascancure.org/> or <http://vetscount.org/>.