

Veterans

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Honor Flight New England, Harbor Homes recognized for support of veterans

By MELISSA PROULX
Sunday News Correspondent



Joe Byron, founder and executive director of Honor Flight New England, was one of two chosen recipients of the annual award. (Melissa Proulx/Sunday News Correspondent)

GREENLAND - This year's recipients of the Granite State Warrior Award were honored Saturday for their work supporting service members and veterans.

Joe Byron, founder and executive director of Honor Flight New England, and Nashua-based Harbor Homes were the 2016 recipients of the award from the New Hampshire Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America.

"It's an incredibly special honor for us, for me," Byron said of the award.

His program brings veterans, primarily those who served in World War II, to Washington, D.C., to visit the war memorials at no cost. Since 2009, more than 1,600 veterans from across New England have traveled through the program.

The trip is meant to serve as an experience for the veterans, allowing them to relive their memories -both good and bad - with those who understand what they've been through and to thank them for their service, Byron said.

"This is our way to let them know that America will never let them forget what they've done for us," he said.

Barry Conway, who was to receive the award on behalf of Harbor Homes, was unable to make the ceremony.

The organization provides vital support for veterans and their families throughout the state, according to MOAA-NH President Peter Burdett. Workers there help veterans in

need with things like transitional or affordable housing, homeless veteran reintegration and family services support.

They've helped more than 1,000 homeless veterans regain their independence, and 650 find jobs, Burdett said.

The annual ceremony recognizes a New Hampshire organization that's worked to enhance war-fighting capabilities and a resident who has provided unique support services for military members and their families.

The ceremony was started in 2011. Past winners include the Union Leader's Joseph McQuaid, publisher and then-president, and photographer Bob LaPree in 2011 for their embedded coverage of the New Hampshire National Guard's Charlie Company in Afghanistan; Veterans Count - a Portsmouth-based organization that provided nearly \$1.5 million in financial assistance to more than 2,350 military families - in 2013; and Matthew Albuquerque, founder and president of Next Step Bionics and Prosthetics, in 2015 for this work providing high-tech artificial limbs and prosthetics to veterans and others.