



2016 Veterans' Voices Awardees Why They Were Nominated

On the Rise

Kelsey Besse. *Air Force and Air National Guard. Eagan*

Kelsey Besse is an Air Force and Air National Guard Veteran from Eagan with ten years of service. Following two deployments to the Middle East and one deployment as a military spouse, Kelsey became interested in improving the health and well-being of military members and their families. As a recent graduate of the Masters of Public Health program at the University of Minnesota, her studies have focused on issues common among the military and Veteran community including mental health stigma, alcohol misuse, deployment reintegration, domestic violence, and combat stress. Her current volunteer work includes serving as a research assistant for the Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research at the Minneapolis VA, an abstract reviewer for the American Public Health Association Women's and Violence Prevention Caucuses, and a board member for the Minnesota non-profit, Women Veteran's Initiative. In her civilian career at the National Marrow Donor Program, her work is focused on improving access to bone marrow transplant for underserved populations.

Jessica L. de Kozlowski. *Air Force and Air Force Reserve. Edina*

Jessica L. de Kozlowski is an Air Force and Air Force Reserve Veteran from Edina and has served for over 11 years. During her time in the Air Force she earned the Air Force Achievement Medal and the Outstanding Unit Award. In 2012, after transferring into the Air Force Reserves, Jessica deployed to Qatar with the 340th Special Mission Aircraft Maintenance Unit where she earned the Meritorious Unit Award in support of Operation New Dawn. During this deployment, she suffered a spinal injury that ended her Air Force career. Jessica continues to support the Minnesota Veteran community through the Wounded Warrior Project as a Volunteer Outreach Coordinator. She is a member of Team Red, White, and Blue and volunteers with the Minnesota Women's Veterans Initiative. Jessica remains engaged with her community through her volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity and Feed My Starving Children. Jessica plans to return to school in the spring of 2017 to pursue her Doctorate of Chiropractic—turning her injury into good—with hopes to serve her Veteran comrades and civilians through alternative medicine.

Jolaina Falkenstein. *Army Reserve. Carver*

Jolaina Falkenstein is an Army Reserve Veteran from Carver who currently serves as Senior Non-Commission Officer assigned to the 88th Regional Support Command as a lead training officer for the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. As part of her 18+ years in service, she has collaborated with nationally known speakers, government officials, and other military members to develop quality curriculum and critical supports that better assist service members and their families in preparing for and returning from deployments. She has mentored and educated hundreds of mental health and community providers about re-integration issues. Jolaina is also a

licensed marriage and family therapist. Along with her military experience, she uses these skills in her role as a mental health professional for Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota where she works with Veterans and their families through the C.O.R.E. (Case Management, Outreach, Referral, and Education) program. Honoring and supporting the military community is the “heart beat” of Jolaina’s stewardship in enhancing the well-being of others.

Daniel Fanning. *Army National Guard.* Duluth

Daniel Fanning, a Veteran currently living in Duluth, enlisted in the Army National Guard after September 11, 2001, out of a sense of patriotism and duty. His six years of service included a year-long combat deployment to Iraq and Kuwait as part of the 1158th Transportation Company. Described as a “thoughtful leader who is constantly finding ways to engage his community,” Daniel continues to serve. Upon returning home, he enlisted in AmeriCorps and served a year helping underprivileged youth in two Duluth public schools. Daniel also served as Deputy State Director for United States Senator Al Franken, where he helped honor fellow Veterans and secured their overdue service medals. He was then appointed by Duluth Mayor Don Ness to serve as the city’s Communications and Policy Director. In that role, he served on the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Committee and helped advocate for the 148th Air National Guard Fighter Wing through the Duluth Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee. Daniel volunteers for many community causes, including Mentor Duluth, participating as a youth soccer and football coach, and serving on the Board of Directors for several local non-profit organizations.

Josh Herman. *Marine Corps.* St. Paul

Josh Herman is a Marine Corps Veteran residing in St. Paul. Josh began his military career in 2009 at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego and served in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and other areas around the world until 2013. After his service, Josh moved to St. Paul to finish his bachelor’s degree at the University of St. Thomas. While a student at St. Thomas, Josh saw a need and nearly “single-handedly restored the University of St. Thomas’ Veterans Association,” taking on the role of Veterans Association President. This group was at risk of not being recognized as an entity at St. Thomas until Josh and other members of the group decided it was too important to go away. Because of this group, Veterans, who are the smallest minority on campus, now have a place to meet others, talk about transition related struggles, and give back to the community through various volunteering channels. He also serves as the campus outreach coordinator for Bunker Labs, which is an organization that offers consulting services to Veteran entrepreneurs. Josh has always been motivated to help others and is providing financial strategies to those in his community through his holistic financial planning work.

Christopher Jon Hvinden. *Marine Corps.* Little Canada

Christopher Jon Hvinden is a Veteran from Little Canada who served in the Marine Corps for eight years. He served in Iraq, Africa, and Ukraine, and assisted with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts as part of the Marine Wing Support Squadron. Christopher is dedicated to serving Veterans with mental health issues, who are homeless, and those who have addictions or are in crisis; he gives back through his volunteer work with Operation 23 to Zero, MACV StandDown, Alcoholics Anonymous, WCCO’s Suits for Soldiers drive, and Toys for Tots. He participated in a tpt (*Twin Cities PBS*) documentary, *Crossing the Threshold*, about Veterans transitioning back home from war. Christopher also shares his experiences as a VAMC Job Club speaker. He is a 2015 graduate of the Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court and in the fall will attend the College of St. Scholastica, pursuing a

social work degree to serve his fellow Veterans. Christopher recently was a judge in the second annual St. Cloud VA games and is a certified personal fitness trainer and boot camp instructor.

Lina Knox, MA. *Army National Guard. Coon Rapids*

Lina Knox is an Army National Guard Veteran from Coon Rapids who continues to serve in the Minnesota National Guard with the 2-135 INF, 1135th CSC. She served two combat deployments in Iraq from 2008-2010. Lina has worked with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Brooklyn Park Vet Center since 2011 as an Outreach Specialist. Her commitment and focus is to the underserved Veteran population. Lina is described as a “tireless doer” who is dedicated to the wellness of Minnesota combat Veterans. She served as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Working Group Chair for Readjustment Counseling Services for the past four years and created a Veterans group website for Veterans to participate in wellness activities with other Veterans called, Twin Cities Veterans Club. Through the Vet Center, she manages a co-ed Veterans’ softball team, bowling league, Veterans committee group, and volunteers to make bag lunches for the homeless Veterans at the CRRC. Lina recently shared her military story by performing in *The Telling Project* at the Guthrie Theater. Lina is currently in her second year at the University of St. Thomas, in the Masters of Social Work program, with a focus on military practice.

David Peters. *Marine Corps. Cottage Grove*

David Peters, a Marine Corps Veteran from Cottage Grove, is dedicated to raising awareness and solutions for Veteran’s suicide. David enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2005, served in the Military Police, deployed to Djibouti and Afghanistan, and completed Military Police Investigator School. As the current Director for the non-profit Operation: 23 to Zero, he works to raise awareness throughout the Upper Midwest about Veteran and military suicide and the staggering rates at which these are taking place. Through his work with Operation: 23 to Zero, David provides peer support to Veterans and military members who have experienced troubles, mentoring and offering guidance to those who may be going through similar experiences. Operation: 23 to Zero additionally offer resources through the community to help those in the military family who are in need. He has raised awareness for the work of Operation: 23 to Zero through statewide events designed to reach out to both Veterans and civilians about options to assist Veterans suffering from combat stress. Currently, David is a platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, Support Company, 4th Law Enforcement Battalion.

Amanda J. Piersak. *Air Force Reserve. St. Paul*

Amanda Piersak is Veteran from St. Paul who has 15 years of service in the United States Air Force. She currently serves in the Air Force Reserve as a flight nurse out of the 934 Airlift Wing. She has deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, New Dawn, Freedom's Sentinel, and Inherent Resolve. Amanda believes in giving back to the community and is setting an example for others to follow. Using her love for running and staying active, Amanda has completed multiple races to raise money for charities to include Team for Kids, Catch a Lift Fund, and the Salvation Army. She also participates as an athlete in the I RUN 4 Michael non-profit organization, which pairs athletes with children and adults with physical, mental, and developmental special needs. Amanda has a passion for mentoring others, especially young women. She is part of Big Brothers Big Sisters America, where she teaches her “little sister” about giving back to the community. They have volunteered together for the Habitat for Humanity and the Salvation Army.

Paul L. Riedner. *Army. Minneapolis*

Paul Riedner is an Army Veteran from Minneapolis who served as a deep sea diver in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, France, and Germany. After serving, Paul earned his M.B.A. from the Carlson School of Management and studied audio production and engineering at the Institute of Production & Recording. Through various artistic mediums, he now connects the public with Veteran perspectives. Currently, Paul is the Executive Director of the Veteran Resilience Project, which offers a powerful trauma therapy called EMDR, for free, to any Minnesota Veteran struggling in the aftermath of war and military service. He hosts a podcast, ResilienceMN, which interviews resilient Veterans. In 2014, Paul co-founded the MN Veteran Arts Experience, which included a weeklong art retreat for 25 Minnesota Veterans. His keen personal and professional interest in moral injury has shaped one of his goals—help the community understand their role in the events that lead to war and how the community will benefit from fulfilling its promise to returning warriors. He also founded a research and innovation firm called Shadow Culture, which illustrates a more humane appreciation for the needs of all people.

Robert J. Rivera. *Air Force. Edina*

Robert Rivera, a Veteran from Edina, served in the Air Force as a Database Analyst and was the recipient of an Air Force Achievement Medal for creating a database that pinpoints maintenance requirements for F-16s. After his service he was the former Assistant Director of Hamline University's Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching, where he forged partnerships between schools and colleges and non-profit and for-profit organizations, to create educational equity. As a first generation immigrant from Nicaragua, who grew up in South Central Los Angeles, Robert knows first-hand the struggles of urban students and their families; he is dedicated to creating opportunities for success. He forged a partnership between North Hennepin Community College and Robbinsdale School District and created the first American Indian Civil Rights Tour of Minnesota. Robert also designed the first Family and Community Engagement plan in Minnesota for his school district. He is currently the Director of Family and Community Engagement for Robbinsdale School District, where he advocates for students and families of color and helps them navigate the education system.

Jacob Thomas. *Air Force and Air Force Reserve. Minneapolis*

Jacob Thomas, an Air Force and Air Force Reserve Veteran from Minneapolis, served as a network engineer and sexual assault survivor advocate over eight years. He is a first generation leader in the post "Don't Ask Don't Tell" military and is committed to creating a more just and equal society. Throughout his service he advocated for the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) service members, creating Grand Forks AFB's first LGBTQ history booth during the annual Multicultural Fair. Believing "the personal is political" he has engaged in direct actions and community organizing with Organizing For Action, Can't Convert Love, Black Lives Matter, and others. As a theatre artist and activist, Jacob traveled across seven states in the Deep South discussing LGBTQ rights surrounding the Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage. His own coming out story as a gay kid who grew up in Georgia has been viewed online more than 137,000 times, helping people across the world know they are worthy and loved. Jacob continues to compel others to serve and better their communities as a board member of Gay For Good and the Development and Communications Associate with OutFront Minnesota.

Mike Waldron. *Marine Corps.* Esko

Mike Waldron is a Veteran of the Marine Corps from Esko who served for four years. Immediately following his service he obtained a business degree and went on to manage U.S. courthouses and federal buildings throughout the Midwest. After winning his battle with combat stress, Mike returned to college at Purdue University to grow his skills in entrepreneurship so that he could help other Veterans in their battle against combat stress. In 2015, Mike launched Duluth's chapter of Team Red, White, and Blue and has since grown the team to 450 members who can choose from nearly 40 events every month in the twin ports. Last July, he gave up his career with the federal government to begin 23rd Veteran, a local non-profit organization that empowers Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to lead successful lives. His work with 23rd Veteran not only assists Veterans with PTSD transition to civilian life, but provides education for the community to understand Veterans returning home from war. Mike has created a local solution to the troubling problem of Veteran suicide, building a community of support that "brings levity and joy" to a serious issue.

Legacy

Bob Boone. *Army National Guard.* Cambridge

Bob Boone, a Veteran of the Minnesota Army National Guard from Cambridge, served for 38 years and held every noncommissioned leadership position in the Army during his tenure. He has received numerous military awards including the Legion of Merit and was inducted into the Minnesota Army National Guard Court of Honor. Bob has a passion to give back not just to Veterans but to his own community. During his 34 years at Cambridge-Isanti School District, he was a teacher, coach, Dean of students, and Assistant Principal. During that time he also served on a Township Board, City Council, Community Center Task Force, Church Council, and Church Scholarship Committee. Bob chaired the Isanti County Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Task Force for seven years and currently co-chairs the annual Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Gold Fundraiser, which raises thousands of dollars for military service members and their families in need. He is an active volunteer on the Isanti County Safety and Rescue Team, and he also teaches a de-escalation course for the Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute instructing law enforcement officers on de-escalation techniques for use when interacting with Veterans and citizens with mental health issues. *Bob will be accepting his award at a later date; he is in Colorado today.*

Matthew C.G. Boucher. *Army National Guard.* Ramsey

Matthew Boucher, who currently resides in Ramsey, is a Veteran of the Army National Guard, serving as an Infantryman and a MTSO for 12 years. Deployed after September 11, 2001, Matthew continues to draw on the leadership lessons he learned in the military in his role as a Middle School Principal in the Fridley Public Schools. Whether it is soldiers or students, he believes those entrusted to our care deserve to be developed in a positive and productive learning environment that fosters both individual and collective growth. For the past 21 years Matthew has served the students, staff, and families of the Minneapolis and Fridley Public Schools. At Fridley Middle School, Matthew created an annual Veterans' Day program that helps students understand and respect the dedication and sacrifice of military service members. He is passionate about creating a college-bound culture in the schools he works in, and believes it is never too early to challenge students to consider what they will do after high school. Matthew is particularly committed to developing the future aspirations of students who, like he, may be the first in their family to secure a college degree.

Brigadier General David Hamlar, Jr., M.D. *Air Force.* Inver Grove Heights

Brigadier General David Hamlar is an Air Force Veteran from Inver Grove Heights who serves in the Minnesota National Guard. General Hamlar has committed his military and medical career to improving the physical and mental lives of his patients and providing opportunities for people who are under-represented. After receiving his B.S. from Tufts University, he attended Howard University College of Dentistry with the help of a military scholarship. While attending medical school at Ohio State University, he joined the Ohio National Guard 121st Fighter Wing. A facial plastics and reconstructive surgery fellowship brought him to the University of Minnesota where he eventually transferred to the 133rd Air Wing. He deployed numerous times and earned multiple commendations, including the Air National Guard Flight Surgeon of the Year in 2007. He was promoted as the first African-American Brigadier General in the Minnesota National Guard in 2014 and holds the position of Assistant Adjutant General-Air. His medical practice includes caring for Veterans at the VA Medical Center, in addition to patients at both Regions Hospital and the University of Minnesota. General Hamlar trains medical students, residents, and fellows, and holds research and administrative positions. His expertise includes treating patients with craniofacial deformities, traumatic injuries, and skull base cancers. He is team physician for the Minnesota Wild and consultant for the Minnesota Vikings and Timberwolves. General Hamlar was named a "Top Doc" by *Mpls/St Paul Magazine*, and "Best Doc" by *Minnesota Monthly Magazine*. *General Hamlar will be accepting his award at a later date; he is attending 9/11 ceremonies at a military conference in Washington, DC.*

Fletcher Hinds. *Marine Corps.* Duluth

Fletcher Hinds, who hails from Duluth, is a Veteran of the Vietnam War where he served as a Marine Corp infantry soldier with the 5th Marines in the late 1960's. Since his return, he has been dedicated to the successful integration of all service members—past and present—into American society. Fletcher believes that when a country asks people to serve and go to war, it is everyone's service and everyone's war. Through his work with the Minnesota Veteran community, he strives to create an environment of acceptance and support while providing a culture of encounter and dialog between military service members and civilians. He is a founding member of Northland Vietnam Veterans Association. Fletcher is also an advocate for improving services to Veterans in the criminal justice system and is working with the 6th Jusicial District to establish a court-based mentoring program for St. Louis County Veterans. Through Minnesota Veterans for Progress, he travels to Southeast Asia to conduct humanitarian projects for disadvantaged women and children in Vietnam and Cambodia. Fletcher's involvement with the University of Minnesota Duluth Chancellor's Task Force makes the campus more friendly for Veterans and current service members.

Louis King. *Army.* Lake Elmo

Louis King is a Veteran of the Army where he served for 10 years. The Lake Elmo resident has devoted his post-military career to opportunity building in the North Minneapolis community. His work has focused on stabilizing families by ensuring that parents earn the wages needed to adequately support their children. Louis is President and CEO of Summit Academy OIC, an educational and vocational training institute that empowers poor Twin Cities' residents to become self-reliant and employed. Louis recently began to address the significant education gap that prevents adults from getting the proper skills they need to access well-paying jobs by launching a unique GED Training Program that integrates into Summit Academy's no-cost Construction and Healthcare Training Programs. He believes that "the best social service program in the world is a job." He serves on the Boards of the Minneapolis Club, St. Thomas Academy, and the Robins Kaplan Miller Ciresi Foundation, and he chairs both the Northside Community Response Team and the Network for Better Futures. He has also served on the

Abbott Northwest Hospital Board and the Fairview Healthcare Foundation Board. Louis founded and co-chairs HIRE Minnesota coalition, which works to create jobs that reduce racial disparities and lift people out of poverty.

Gordon W. Kirk. *Army.* St. Paul

Gordon Kirk is a WWII Army Veteran and long-time resident of St. Paul who advocates for Minnesota's Veteran community. Gordy bravely served on the front lines as a Quartermaster with the 3rd Army, 4th Armor Division (*Patton's Vanguard*) in the European Theater from 1943-1945 when U.S. service members were segregated. He landed on the beaches of Normandy, with campaigns in Northern France, the Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. After WWII, Gordy "remained committed to fighting for the rights of all Veterans." Gordy was involved in creating the Twin Star VFW Post 8854, which he joined on February 10, 1964, and is a life member. He is the first VFW member in Minnesota of African-American descent to attain the high office of Department Commander. He rose through VFW leadership ranks and was elected State Commander of the Department of Minnesota, VFW. Throughout his VFW leadership terms, Gordy has worked to bring diversity to Minnesota's Veterans' organizations, ensuring that all Veterans are welcome. Gordy has been the VFW's Hospital Representative since 1997 where he advocates for Veterans who need assistance at the VA Medical Center. Gordy is described as a "leader and advocate for the Veteran community and the state he calls home."

Sheila Pike Laughton. *Air Force.* Newport

Sheila Pike Laughton is an Air Force Veteran from Newport who is the "go to" woman for advice on treating Veteran trauma and "moral and spiritual injury." A career intelligence officer, she deployed to Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia during the First Gulf War. After retirement, she established the Welcome Home Program at the Loyola Spirituality Center where she works one-on-one with Veterans of all eras and their families to address the spiritual dimensions of reintegration, moral injury, and other life issues to make post-deployment reintegration easier. She is currently Board Chair for Minnesota Women Veterans Initiative, which meets the needs of women Veterans by insuring knowledge of and access to government and appropriate civilian resources. Sheila also serves on the VA Hospital Consumer Advisory Board. She is a facilitator and facilitator trainer for Healing of Memories Workshops, providing one step on the healing journey for Veterans and families who have experienced trauma or moral injury. Sheila, who was the first woman ROTC graduate at the University of Minnesota, is a 'serial' student with an emphasis on how personal experiences, spirituality, and mindfulness affect resilience and quality of life issues.

Geraldine Longfellow. *Army National Guard.* Burnsville

Geraldine Longfellow is a retired Veteran living in Burnsville with more than 31 years of service in the Army Reserve and Minnesota Army National Guard. Since retiring in 2008, she continues to support, and advocate for, military and Veteran issues—putting service into action. A self-described "professional joiner," she volunteers at the Armed Forces Service Center, serves on the City of Burnsville's Steering Committee for their Beyond the Yellow Ribbon initiative, is a member of the Consumer Advisory Board at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, and is a founding member of the Women Veterans Initiative. She coordinates the Sister-Assister "battle buddy" program, supporting women Veterans during their medical appointments in the VA Medical System, and co-hosts the Women Veterans Coffee Talk group. Geraldine coordinates the distribution of quilts for children of deployed National Guard personnel and organizes the annual Women Veterans Habitat for Humanity Build. Her volunteer work has been recognized by a Brevet promotion, receipt of the international 'GIVE BACK AWARD,' and induction into the Military Court of Honor at Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

Mathew M. Meyer, Esq. *Marine Corps. Shakopee*

A Marine Veteran and litigation attorney from Shakopee, Mathew Meyer has volunteered hundreds of hours of pro bono legal services to Reserve Component service members with civilian employment law needs as an ombudsman with the Department of Defense Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program. After serving as a Marine infantryman and Embassy Guard for six years, Mathew received his bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and his juris doctorate from Cornell Law School. As an ombudsman, he mediates disputes between service members and their civilian employers under federal employment laws, especially the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). He also provides continuing education courses for attorneys, human resources professionals, employers, and service members so they can understand their rights and obligations under USERRA. Mathew serves as the ESGR liaison for local reserve units, including the MWSS-471, 4th Marine Law Enforcement Battalion, and the Navy Reserve units. He also served as Chair of the Military and Veterans Affairs Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association and has advocated for Veterans' issues at the Minnesota state legislature.

Michael Mills. *Army and Army National Guard. Freeport*

Mike Mills, who is a Veteran of the Army and Army National Guard from Freeport, was medically discharged after 21 years of service. Mike was severely injured by an IED on June 14, 2005 and spent a year in Texas healing and going through rehabilitation. Acceptance of his limitations and the adjustment to his "new normal" did not come easy. He knew defeat was not an option. As he became stronger and stood taller, he vowed that no other Veteran would know that pain. Mike is described as a "beacon of hope and inspiration" to Veterans who are struggling with injuries. Mike's mission is to reach out to other Veterans and their families, the general public, and government agencies to raise awareness of the problems our military men and women face when they return home. He is committed to volunteering with organizations that improve the lives of Veterans—the DAV Chapter 9, Operation Never Forgotten (www.operationneverforgotten.org), Camp Bliss (www.campbliss.org), and his own web site, FOR THE VETERAN...BY A VETERAN (www.fortheveteran.com). Despite his own trauma, Mike continues to serve Veterans and inspire others.

Chibenesi, Dr. James Northrup. *Marine Corps. Sawyer.*

In Memorium April 28, 1943 - August 1, 2016

Born on the Rez.

Lives on the Rez.

Will probably die on the Rez.

T'Was a lot that happened in between but it was just details and from those details I make my stories.

Jim Northrup, July 27, 2016

Jim Northrup was a Vietnam War combat Veteran and community leader from the Fond du Lac Ojibwe Reservation in Sawyer. Described as a "true Anishinaabe leader and warrior," Jim made significant contributions to his community and his country through his military service, artistic storytelling and spoken word, and traditional teachings of his native Anishinaabe nation. He was an internationally recognized and award winning poet, writer, playwright, and storyteller. His book *Walking the Rez Road* includes poetry about the Vietnam War and his Anishinaabe traditions. The Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College granted him a Doctorate of Letters for his work to preserve Anishinaabe culture, traditions, and language in Minnesota tribal and non-tribal communities. He also organized and coordinated, along with his wife Pat, an Ojibwe language camp. Jim was a

respected Ojibwe elder, mentor, and carrier of Anishinaabe culture and language that he shares through his poems and stories.

Colonel Donald G. Patton. *Army.* Edina

Don Patton is an Army Veteran from Edina who served in the U.S. Army for 30 years, which included 13 years in command positions with two battalion commands. He served as Commander of Unit as custodian of Nuclear Weapons for the French Air Force. After graduation from the Army War College in 1985, he organized, with Dr. Harold Deutsch, the WWII History Round Table, which includes oral histories from WWII Veterans. Since retiring as a Colonel, Don works tirelessly to preserve the factual history and study of WWII. Don's work through the Round Table includes organizing and leading tours of European battlefields and American cemeteries to educate and pay tribute to American Veterans. The WWII History Round Table has organized over 300 programs that recognize, honor, and tell the stories of over 1,000 Veterans. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal five times during his military service. Recently, Don was awarded the Minnesota Superior Civilian Service Award by the Adjutant General of Minnesota for his work with the Round Table and raising awareness of Veterans' contributions. He is currently serving on the Committee for Commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor.