



For Immediate Release
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Class of 2014 of Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame to Be Inducted Nov. 6 in Columbus

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame will induct the Class of 2014 in a ceremony at 11 a.m. November 6 at the Lincoln Theater in Columbus. The Ohio veterans' community and the public are cordially invited to attend and honor the 20 Ohioans in this year's class as they join the 443 others who are enshrined in the Hall.

The Hall is dedicated to recognizing Ohio veterans who, after their military service, put their skills and abilities to work in their local communities. They are veterans who have continued to serve others, and by their continued service and positive accomplishments, inspired their fellow citizens.

The Lincoln Theater is located at 769 E Long St, Columbus, OH 43203. A brief biography of each of the inductees of the Class of 2014 is included in this release.

It's not too early to nominate deserving veterans for the Class of 2015. The deadline for submission is June 30, 2015. Information and a nomination form can be found at:

http://dvs.ohio.gov/veterans_hall_of_fame.aspx

This year's inductees are:

James F. Albright, 69, of Orient, Pickaway County is a veteran of the U.S. Army who served in the Vietnam War. He has since actively served his community. Jim wrote a number of stories about World War II veterans that he contributed to the Circleville Herald and other local papers. He then published these stories in a book that he distributed to 400 veterans, families, and libraries. He organized a family readiness group for a deployed local Ohio National Guard unit, which earned him the Patrick Henry Award from the National Guard Association in 2010, the highest honor a civilian can receive. Among other groups, Jim is Treasurer of the Commercial Point Men's Foundation, which supports local sports, scouts, schools, churches, and 4-H. He serves on the board of the Commercial Point Racing Committee, which manages an annual go-kart race. He also speaks frequently about his wartime experiences to many different audiences. Jim was inducted into the Teays Valley High School Wall of Fame in 2012.

John F. Bankowitz, 60, of Tipp City, Miami County served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War and deployed in the Air Force Reserves to Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom. Today John is a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and has held many positions in the VFW. He also

instructs Air Force Junior ROTC and is Commanding Officer of the Miami Valley Young Marines. John has logged over 2,100 hours of community service. Among other endeavors, he has participated in monthly bingo at the Dayton VA Medical Center, Toys for Tots, flag ceremonies at schools, and community ceremonies honoring veterans. He organized a color guard to greet Dayton-area veterans returning to the airport from Honor Flight visits to Washington, D.C. He is also a Scout Leader. John's many civic awards include the Marine Corps League Marine of the Year for the Dayton Detachment and the Angel Award for Outstanding Volunteerism at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Michael J. Bennett, 65, of Anna, Shelby County is a veteran of the U.S. Army Reserves who was on active duty during the Desert Storm era and deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He chairs The Shelby County Vets to DC, which provides free trips by ground transport for veterans to visit their memorials in the capital. Mike expanded eligibility for the program from World War II veterans to Korea, Vietnam, and Vietnam-era veterans as well as those from surrounding counties. Under his leadership, the group established a sponsorship program, raised over \$270,000, and dedicated more than 19,000 volunteer hours, enabling more than 330 veterans to make the trip. He serves as Post Commander of VFW Post 4239 in Sidney, where he initiated a series of day trips for members and established the post's first-ever web site. Other civic work includes serving as training officer for the Shelby County Amateur Radio Emergency Services, which augments the county EMA as emergency communicators.

James P. Bowes, 65, of Lancaster, Fairfield County served in the Vietnam War in the U.S. Army. Today he serves veterans and the greater community. Jim has chaired the American Legion's Buckeye Boys State program in Fairfield County since 2006. He is a Past Commander and has held many other positions at American Legion Post 11 in Lancaster. He established a scholarship program that has helped over 80 local students attend college. Jim contributes to and supports Art Keiffer House, a local shelter for homeless veterans. Each month, he buys 15 tickets for residents of the house to attend the Sons of the American Legion all-you-can-eat breakfast. He serves on the board of the Charity Newsies and oversees their school clothing program, which provides clothes for over 900 children annually. He is a board member and current president of the county Information and Referral Center, which helps residents find aid from county and local agencies. Jim also is an annual volunteer at the Lancaster Music Festival.

David R. Cooper, 69, of Westerville, Franklin County served in the Vietnam War in the U.S. Air Force. He is a local business owner and civic and veteran advocate. Dave bought a struggling Columbus print shop, the Ink Well, in 1998 and built it up to be recognized in 2007 as Northland Business of the Year. He is serving his second term as President of the Northland Area Business Association, where he successfully obtained grants for area beautification. In 1985 Dave was a founding member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7883 in Westerville, and served in several leadership positions. He worked with local schools to identify students eligible for a President's National Service Challenge scholarship for 100 annual hours of volunteer service. His VFW post has twice been selected as a National Community Service Post and All-American Post, and Dave was named an All-American Post Commander. The YMCA of Central Ohio honored him in 2007 with the Silver Club Award for his many community achievements.

Louis J. DeLoss, 70, of Medina, Medina County is a Vietnam War veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force. He has served veterans and his greater community in the years since. Lou volunteers for “We Honor Veterans,” a national program carried out locally by Hospice of Medina County, which provides a ceremony, certificate of thanks for service, and a recognition pin to veterans in hospice care. To date, he has pinned over 250 veterans. Lou volunteers weekly at the hospice as a companion to sit and listen to the stories of their service, often told for the first time to anyone. He also is an active recruiter of other veteran volunteers for this program. As a board member for the Medina County Drug Abuse Commission, Lou is valued for his input in making the best use of the commission’s resources among its various agencies. Lou also serves on the Citizen’s Advisory Board of the Medina County Juvenile Detention Center, and provides detailed feedback to its leadership to help the facility effectively fulfill its mission.

Richard Gandarilla, 58, of Gahanna, Franklin County is a veteran of the U.S. Navy. Today he is active in several civic causes. These include his volunteer service of 28 years with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Central Ohio, which earned him National Big Brother of the Year in 2003 and a Jefferson Award for community service this year. He led the agency’s efforts to hire more Hispanic employees, and implemented a Latino emphasis at their Hocking Hills camp, Camp Oty’Okwa. He was helped organize a local petition drive to honor the all-Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment, the Borinqueneers, with a Congressional Gold Medal, a recognition achieved this year. Rich was twice president of the Gahanna Kiwanis Club, and continues to help or lead numerous service and fund raising projects. Through Kiwanis, he raised funds for Honor Flight and a war memorial at Gahanna Lincoln High School. Rich also participated in or funded several mission trips as both a member and president of the St. Luke Lutheran church council.

Ruby C. Gilliam, 91, of Minerva, Carroll County served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. In the years since, she has served children, veterans, and her greater community. She was a leader with Girl Scouts and a Den Mother for Boy Scouts. Ruby was also a member of the Parent Teacher Organization until her children graduated. She is a member of WAVES, where she was President and Vice President of North Coast Unit 21 and regional representative to the national organization. Ruby has been a member of American Legion Post 357 in Minerva for 50 years and VFW Post 4120 in Minerva for 20 years. She was a member of a funeral honor guard until 2013, and continues to serve at funerals that are indoors. Community activities include serving as mentor to mentally disabled people at St. John’s Villa, where she arranged luncheons with elected officials to promote opportunities for residents. Ruby also served as Director of the Carroll County Board of Elections for several years and was a poll worker for decades.

Lewis J. Gottfried, 92, of Upper Sandusky, Wyandot County is veteran of the U.S. Navy who served in World War II. He has since lived a life of service at home and abroad. Lew took over the family farm from his father, and built it into a successful dairy farm. He participated in the International Foreign Youth Exchange Program with 22 families from the Netherlands and Denmark. At the age of 50, he and his wife Fran sold the farm and entered the Peace Corps. They served in the Dominican Republic, where Lew was an agricultural advisor. Returning home, Lew became a successful farm insurance agent and was elected

county treasurer. He held the post for 10 years and sent out the first county electronic tax bills. Lew served on the Salem Township school board for 12 years. Among other volunteer activities, he is a member of both the VFW and American Legion, and plays Taps at funerals and presents the flag to families. Lew has also written a book of stories of Wyandot County veterans who served in combat.

Mary Louise Gruber, 91, of Bay Village, Cuyahoga County is a veteran of service in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. Throughout her life she has been an active volunteer for veterans and civic causes. Initially she supported arts and crafts groups in her area, organizing fundraisers and managing and maintaining the grounds of a local gallery. Among other efforts, she bound used books as a volunteer at her local school library. Mary is a long-time member of the Marine Corps League and has held several Department of Ohio-level offices, including Treasurer and Past Commandant. She was an organizer of the first Women Marines Association chapter in Cleveland, has held every chapter office and remains active. Mary has volunteered at the Cleveland VA hospital for 28 years and with Toys for Tots for 34 years. Her work has earned Mary numerous awards, including the Marine Corps League Distinguished Service Award and the Legion of Honor Award presented by the Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

Herbert M. Heilbrun, 94, of Cincinnati, Hamilton County is a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army Air Force. Today he is an advocate for racial diversity. Herb grew up in the same neighborhood with John Leahr, an African-American, but segregation kept them from knowing each other. In the war, Herb flew a B-17 bomber and John a P-51 fighter, but segregation again kept them apart. In 1997, Herb attended a Cincinnati reunion of Tuskegee Airmen, who had flown cover for his squadron, finally met John and discovered their common backgrounds. The two became friends, and they spent 15 years presenting talks to large and small audiences on the need for diversity. Herb continues the talks today. Their story has been featured on "60 Minutes," several documentaries, and in a book. Herb has received the Harvard Foundation Medal among other recognition. He also serves on the board of Charlie's $\frac{3}{4}$ House for recovering alcoholics. Herb is now presenting talks to the Hamilton County Veterans' Court.

Elaine M. Tisdal Herrick, 65, of Clayton, Montgomery County is a Vietnam era veteran of the U.S. Air Force and an advocate for veterans on many levels. Elaine's achievements include a leadership role in her county in establishing a Veterans Court to provide rehabilitation and peer mentoring in lieu of incarceration for veterans involved in the justice system because of substance abuse, mental health issues or trauma. Learning of 60 interments at the Dayton National Cemetery where no friends or family were present, Elaine created the Final Salute Society. She partnered with local veteran and family groups to provide presence, a prayer and firing party at burials so that no veteran is ever buried alone. Elaine led a local campaign in 2012 to make military service members aware of their right to vote that led to over 30,000 absentee ballot forms being sent overseas. She also works actively with the state and county Human Trafficking Task Force on behalf of female veterans who are drawn into prostitution.

Brian V. Jarvis, 59, of Beavercreek, Greene County is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He is currently serving as the Mayor of Beavercreek and has been an advocate for the military and his community in many other positions. Brian was first appointed to the Beavercreek City Council in 2009 and then elected

to two full terms. His current term began in January 2014, and he will serve the first two years as Mayor. He has made it a priority to foster cooperation with Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and to support activities on the installation. Brian is an active member of the Miami Valley Regional Planning Committee, the Beavercreek Chamber of Commerce, the Beavercreek Rotary Club, Greene County Optimist Club, and Honor Flight, among others. He represents Beavercreek on the Greene County Family and Children First Council. Brian is also active in the Miami Valley Military Affairs Association, which seeks to educate the public about the critical role of the military in defending the United States.

Robert A. Kincses, 67, of Centerville, Montgomery County is a Vietnam era veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. He has since been an active volunteer on behalf of veterans and his community. He performed volunteer work at the Dayton VA Medical Center and became involved with the American Veterans Heritage Center (AVHC), which preserves the history of the VA medical campus. Robert initiated and raised funds for the Patriot Freedom Festival the weekend before Memorial Day, a key event for AVHC that draws over 6,000 each year. He worked with music and recreational therapy staff at the VA to bring concerts by local and regional artists to the campus. He partnered with the Ohio State Extension Service to restore the medical center's Grotto and Gardens, along with establishing and raising funds for a Memorial Tree Program where each tree planted is dedicated in a veteran's name. Robert has also given his time to civic activities including the Other Place homeless shelter, Habitat for Humanity, and environmental causes.

James J. Leach (deceased) served in the U.S Navy in World War II and came to Ohio following his service, living for many years in Summit County and later in Orient, Pickaway County. He became successful in the car business in Akron, owning his own dealership and hiring the best talent, often women and minorities. Jim served many fellow Navy veterans in the Ohio LST/AMPHIBS Association, first as a board member, as vice president, and then as president for four years. He doubled its membership to number nearly 1,100, becoming the largest state chapter in the U.S. Jim also raised funds to place an LST Memorial at three locations in Ohio. As a member of Kiwanis, Jim volunteered at the Akron Soapbox Derby, where he worked with his Methodist church in Stow to anonymously donate derby cars to those without. In later years, he was an active participant in the Mt. Sterling Methodist Church Food Bank. Jim also planted a large vegetable garden each year, and distributed his harvest to those in need.

Ruben J. "Jerry" Lemons, 77, of Brunswick, Medina County is a Vietnam era veteran of the U.S. Air Force. Today he serves other veterans and his church community. Jerry is currently Chaplain of American Legion Post 234 in Brunswick, where he is also a Past Commander and held every elected office in the post. He is active as well in VFW Post 9520, VFW District 7, and the Medina County Military Veterans Coalition. Jerry has given many hours to the Legion's Gifts for Yanks and the VFW's Buddy Poppy programs. He is a member of the joint Legion/VFW funeral honor guard. Jerry is also a long-time volunteer at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center and with Honor Flight. As an active member of St. Ambrose Church, he regularly serves communion to the homebound and nursing home residents. Jerry is also active in Knights of Columbus, in which he had held a number of offices and is a past Grand Knight. In addition to other activities, Jerry teaches a class on flag etiquette in local schools.

Charles A. Lococo, 79, of Sandusky, Erie County is a veteran of the U.S. Navy. He has since served his hometown in business and as a volunteer in youth and veteran activities. Chuck worked in his family's business and eventually became the owner of their two restaurants. He coached 8th grade football and established the St. Mary's Catholic Youth Organization for 5th- and 6th-graders. Chuck served as Trustee of the AMVETS Baseball Little League, was a member of the Sandusky Parks and Recreation Board, and is still, after 44 years, the non-paid St. Mary's Central Catholic Junior High Athletic Director. He has volunteered for 55 years at various local agencies. In 2009 he received the Mac Morrison Award from the Ohio High School Athletic Association Northwest District. The City of Sandusky proclaimed April 13, 2009 as "Chuck Lococo Day" in his honor, and in 2012 the Sandusky St. Mary's Central Catholic Schools Football Field House was renamed Charles A. Lococo Football Field House.

Howard W. Osterkamp, 85, of Cincinnati, Hamilton County served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He has since been a veterans' advocate, community volunteer, and speaker at many veteran-themed events. Howard served as Chapter Commander of Chapter 3620, Military Order of the Purple Heart, from 2003 to 2005, and was largely responsible for a growth in membership from 26 in 2003 to 103 in 2005. His chapter has been presented the Order's National Americanism award, given for achievement in helping veterans, more than any other chapter in the U.S. He also held every statewide office in the organization. Howard has coached youth sports and served as President of Our Lady of Victory Athletic Association. Today he collects clothing for homeless veterans, volunteers at the Cincinnati VA hospital and continues a long-held tradition of being a speaker at school and community programs that honor veterans. Howard balances these activities with serving as the primary caregiver for his wife Mary Ann.

Jose R. "Rafi" Rodriguez, 59, of Beavercreek, Greene County is a recent veteran of the U.S. Air Force who retired in the Dayton area and serves the greater community. A small business owner, he is an advocate with state and local leaders in the field of economic and workforce development for Hispanic businesses. Jose is Past President of the Ohio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, where he instituted a scholarship program for Hispanic students, which receives matching funds from the League of United Latin American Citizens. He was recently elected President of the Dayton Chapter of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisers, and established a mentoring program for new college graduates in the financial services industry. His many activities include serving on the board of United Way of Greater Dayton and being a founding member of the Beavercreek Kiwanis Club. A recent project with Kiwanis was "Feed the Creek," which provides food to 300 children in the Beavercreek school district.

DeFord R. Schwall, 93, of Wauseon, Fulton County is a World War II veteran who served in the U.S. Army. Since then he has held local office and volunteered in a number of ways. DeFord served two and a half years on Wauseon City Council. He was President of the Fulton County Inter-Church Laymen's Association. DeFord was a member for many years of the Board of Directors of the Wauseon Chamber of Commerce and was a Past President. He served as Co-Chair of the DeEtte Harrison Detwiler Memorial Hospital fund drive. DeFord was also Master of the Wauseon Masonic Lodge. He was active in Wauseon American Legion Post 265 for over 60 years, serving as Americanism Chairman from 1968-1994. He

established the post's Memorial Day program, implemented the Americanism and Government Test in the high school, and gave presentations on the flag at local schools for many years. DeFord also collected oral histories of Wauseon veterans, which he donated to schools and the public library.

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame was established in 1992 by former Gov. George Voinovich to recognize the post-military achievements of outstanding veterans. Charter members of the Hall's Class of 1993 included the six Ohio military veterans who were elected President of the United States and all Medal of Honor recipients from Ohio. Honorees of the past 19 years include astronauts, government officials, police officers, community leaders, and veterans' advocates.

The Hall of Fame Executive Committee, comprised entirely of veterans, serves as advisors for the Hall of Fame and selects no more than 20 inductees annually from nominations provided by all citizens of Ohio. Men and women chosen for induction into the Hall come from all eras, all branches of service and all walks of life. The members of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame are honored in a permanent display on the second floor of the Riffe Center in downtown Columbus.

Additional information and profiles of past inductees are available at:

http://dvs.ohio.gov/veterans_hall_of_fame.aspx

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