

News

VIDEO Proceeds from second annual Honor Our Vets car show to benefit non-government funded programs for veterans

Published: Sunday, August 07, 2011

By Cecelia Martinez

The Record



ALBANY — Hundreds of people and nearly 200 vehicles turned out for the second annual Honor Our Vets car show at the Albany Stratton VA Medical Center in Albany. The event, which raised more than \$7,000 for area veterans last year, is the work of the Adirondack Chapter 79 and the Capital District Chapter 8 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, as well as a variety of sponsors and supporting organizations.

Peter Potter, the public affairs director of the VA Medical Center, said he was approached by VVA Chapter 79 President John Svandrlik two years ago, and that the event has only grown since then. Registration was up to more than 300 vehicles this year, and while the threat of inclement weather kept some of the car owners away, participation was still strong with an increase in foot traffic, said Potter.

“The funds raised go directly toward the programs that aren’t available through government funding, and may not exist otherwise,” said Potter. For example, some funds last year went toward a blanket warmer to comfort

patients undergoing chemotherapy and other treatments.

Veterans hospitalized at the Medical Center and the general public had the chance to view the cars of all different styles and eras, including historic military vehicles. Volunteers assisted patients throughout the event, representing what Potter calls the core of the volunteer-driven and donation-funded services at the Medical Center. There were five awards given to cars selected as Veteran's Choice. Other categories for awards included People's Choice, Kid's Choice, DJ Choice, Best of Show, Best Paint, Best Interior, Best Under the Hood, Motorcycle and Ladies Pick.

Food was provided by Sandie's Smokehouse Café and entertainment by DJ Andy Narzynski. New this year was a large ladder waving a giant American flag at the center of the show. Potter said the VA served as a perfect venue for the event not only for its large parking lot, but also to give veterans at the center access to the entertainment.

While the cars drew many people in, what took precedence for many was the opportunity to support area veterans and the VA Medical Center.

"That really takes the front seat," said Potter, adding that while the minimum registration for vehicles is \$10, many donated far beyond that. Funds were also raised through 50/50 raffles of donated prizes, and the more than 50 trophies awarded to top vote-getters in a variety of categories were sponsored by local businesses and organizations.

In addition to the funds raised, the event also benefits the VA Medical Center as a whole by increasing veterans' awareness of the services available to them at the hospital.

"The enrollment tables, that's one of the best parts of this event for us, the ability to sign people up for services that they're eligible to take part of for free," said Potter. "Many people don't even know that there's a VA here in their backyard."

In addition to medical services, the VA provides a broad range of programs including community clinics, community living centers and various other facilities. Also available are financial assistance like home loans, education assistance and life insurance coverage.

For photos of last year's events and more information about the car show, visit www.HonorOurVets.

CarShow.com. For more information about the Albany Stratton VA Medical Center, visit <http://albany.va.gov>.

Cecelia Martinez can be contacted at 270-1294 or by e-mail at cmartinez@troyrecord.com.