

Amazing Aging!

For Seniors and Those Who Love Them

A free publication of the Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
Advocacy, Action and Answers on Aging for Shawnee, Jefferson and Douglas Counties

FALL 2023



Our Mission

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. advocates on aging issues, builds community partnerships and implements programs within Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas counties to help seniors live independent and dignified lives.

- Is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
- Is funded by tax-deductible contributions, federal funds, under state general funds and funds through local governments
- Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability



**Katie Sherrow, 102, was thrilled with her personal concert by Bob Lockwood, seen at right in his full Elvis regalia.
(Story begins on page 3)**

A Message from Susan Harris, JAAA Executive Director

Welcome to fall! I enjoy the cooler temperatures, and the beautiful colors of nature as the leaves change. Fall is a busy time for Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging as we move into Medicare Open Enrollment, celebrate National Caregiver Month, and complete end of the fiscal year activities.

October 15th starts Medicare Open Enrollment, which runs through December 7th. This is the time that Medicare Beneficiaries are given the opportunity to shop and compare Medicare Part D plans as well as Medicare Advantage Plans. We encourage all Medicare Beneficiaries to take the opportunity to review their

current Medicare Part D plan or Medicare Advantage Plan to see if that plan is going to continue to be the appropriate plan for you with regard to cost and coverage. Plans can change annually what they charge in premium, as well as costs you will pay at the pharmacy counter...it is in your best interest to review your plan and compare coverage options and make changes if necessary. We have a team of individuals ready and able to help you through this process.

National Caregiver Month is in November. We recognize the challenges that family caregivers face and how they manage them day and night. Over half

of family caregivers are women. One out of every four caregivers reports diminished family relationships. Most caregivers work outside the home either part-or-full time in addition to their caregiving responsibilities. Over a million American young people, aged 8 to 18, care for an adult relative on a daily basis. Nearly 70 percent of caregivers report they don't see their doctor regularly because of their responsibilities.

This November, we will remember and celebrate the people who lovingly give baths, clean houses, shop for, cook meals for, and comfort the millions of older adults and ill people who are friends and loved ones. We encourage everyone to reach out to a caregiver for an older adult that they know and ask what you can do to help make their job a bit easier. Something as simple as going to the grocery store for them or offering to be with their loved one so that they can have a break can go a long way to helping caregivers reduce the

stress they can feel. As a caregiver, the healthiest thing you can do for yourself is to fit naps into your schedule. Round-the-clock caregiving is never easy, but when your loved one takes a break, don't do another task, you take a break too. It's important to not wear yourself down or who will take care of you?

2024 will be here before we know it, and Jayhawk will be conducting listening sessions in the early part of 2024. These listening sessions will be held throughout our three-county area. You will learn about the federal Older Americans Act funding received by JAAA for services and supports and you will have an opportunity to tell us what services and support you need to maintain your life style in the community. We will use the information gleaned from these sessions to shape the services we fund with the federal Older Americans Act dollars we receive. We want to hear from you! Stay tuned to our website and social media to learn where and when these will be held.



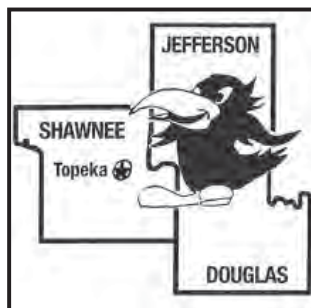
Susan Harris

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You are encouraged to write us at:

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Marsha Henry Goff, editor



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Amazing Aging strives to provide readers with the information they need to live independent and productive lives. We also seek to feature stories of seniors who are active as workers, volunteers or engaged in hobbies. If you know a senior you would like to see featured in a future issue, please contact editor Marsha Henry Goff at mhgink@netscape.net or write to her in care of JAAA, 2910 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS 66611.

Rosie the Riveter meets Elvis

By Marsha Henry Goff

On a recent hot August day, Rosie the Riveter met Elvis. Katie Sherrow is a genuine Rosie the Riveter, one who actually riveted on planes. She was one of the first women hired on Lockheed's mechanized line and helped build the first Constellation. Bob Lockwood, former KU coach of gymnastics and volleyball, is an amazing Elvis tribute artist with costumes made by the same people who made the jumpsuits that Elvis made famous. Dressed as Elvis with wig, sideburns, sunglasses and bejeweled rings on his fingers, from a distance you might mistake him for the king of rock and roll.

I first met Katie when she was 95 years old and I was commissioned to write a magazine article about her service as a World War II Rosie the Riveter. My

editor warned me that I must call her before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m. because between those hours she would be working in the lawn. It was August then and hot, but she and her near life-long friend Pat Martin, 90, with whom she lives, had 12 acres to care for in rural Topeka and, while Pat used her Ford-N tractor to mow the fields, Katie mowed the large lawn with her John Deere lawn tractor and trimmed it with her trusty weed trimmer.

My husband Ray accompanied me on that first interview and before I had finished, the four of us were good friends. During the ensuing years we shared many lunches and visits, our friendships deepened and I had the opportunity to write more articles about Katie. On her 99th birthday, Ray and I took the ladies to Red Lobster. Not only did Katie order the shrimp



Bob puts on a personal show for Katie and Pat.

she especially liked, when I told our waiter she was a Rosie the Riveter who helped win World War II, he gave her a veteran's discount. It made her day!

May 2, 2021 marked her 100th birthday and Ray and I wanted to do something very special to celebrate her reaching the century mark. We rented a shelter at Lake Shawnee that would accommodate 120 guests and Bob, who often headlined JAAA's Guardian Angel fundraisers with a fabulous band dubbed 4Closure, agreed to perform in full Elvis regalia with his live band. Invitations were ready to be mailed and then Covid reared its ugly head and shut everything down.

The venue that could hold 120 held only 12 that day. We surprised Katie — and Pat, too — by persuading them to meet Ray and me at the shelter, but

we were not the only ones they met. Her brother and his wife from Florida and their daughter were there as well as Katie's niece from Kansas City. Pat's niece and great-niece from Topeka and our son and daughter-in-law from Blue Springs, Missouri, completed the guests. Lemonade and cookies, including one very large decorated cookie wishing her a happy birthday, were served as refreshments. Katie enjoyed the party but it was a far cry from the big celebration we had originally planned.

The Rosie/Elvis meeting was actually a long-delayed performance. Bob has heard so much from us about the ladies and had been anxious to meet them so we made it happen ... **finally!** Bob serenaded these two energetic and appreciative ladies for



A special performance by Bob is a good way to rehabilitate a cracked hip.

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Katie knew the words to most of the songs and often sang along. Here she sings along to "Peace in the Valley."

Rosie meets Elvis

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more than an hour, presented them with "Elvis" scarves and one of his CDs.

The performance was all the sweeter because Katie is recovering from a "cracked" hip and the ensuing surgery with Pat as her nurse. Once out of the

hospital and the stay in a nursing home for physical therapy which followed, Katie said she did much better with Pat's delicious cooking than that served at either medical institution. The ladies neither ask for nor expect people to help them although the many friends they have made along the way often try to help what they can. The



Pat, Bob and Katie pose for a picture at the conclusion of his performance. They are wearing the "Elvis scarves" he gave them.

fact is that Katie and Pat are usually on the helping end, rather than needing help.

Bob was casual Elvis the day of his private performance — sans wig, sideburns and Elvis costume — and instead wore a puffy shirt, flared pants and white boots, but Katie and Pat absolutely loved his living-room songfest. They especially

liked a song titled "I'll Walk with You in the Sunshine" for which he wrote both music and lyrics. They believe it would be a Number 1 hit if he'd just take it to Nashville.

Katie and Pat are kind, grateful for anything that is done for them, have great senses of humor and are as sharp as tacks. I hope they live forever!

Rising appraisals and property taxes are especially burdensome for seniors

By Marsha Henry Goff

Thirty-four of America's fifty states have limits on how much real estate property taxes and appraisals can rise. Some states limit either one while other states limit both. Kansas limits neither. The Senate passed a bill along party lines last session

that would have not allowed appraised value to rise more than 4% but the House did not have time to act on it. However, they may do that during the upcoming session.

Several Kansas legislators are working to limit the growth of taxes and recognize how much harder it is for seniors, with

fixed — but actually declining — incomes, to pay their taxes. They know many seniors will be forced to move from the homes they love and have lived in for decades. Legislators also know any bills they pass to lower taxes for Kansans may likely need to pass with a veto-proof majority.

OTM (other peoples' money)

is far too easy for government bodies (city, county, state, school boards, townships, drainage districts, cemeteries, et al) to spend. Often you will hear a local elected official say, "But this is federal (or state) money." Federal, state, county, city and school money all

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Taxes

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come from the same pocket . . . OURS! For years — make that decades — local taxing authorities (e.g., Douglas County has 45 of those) have been able to hold the mill levy steady or even reduce it by one or two mills and say they were not raising taxes while they collectively reaped tens of millions of dollars more due to the dramatic rise in appraisals.

Legislators thought they had corrected that “honesty gap” with legislation requiring such governing bodies have public hearings when they were not holding taxes level. And so elected officials dutifully hold public hearings, sit there and politely listen to taxpayer objections and then vote to effectively raise property taxes.

Of the 45 taxing authorities in Douglas County, 38 held public hearings and raised taxes. Only seven didn’t exceed the revenue neutral rate. Contrast that to Liberty, Missouri, that in 2021 lowered the mill levy 10.5 percent in order to offset increases in assessed property values. The mayor noted that “the City Council has made a concerted effort to maintain a neutral impact on Liberty property owners over the past 13 years.” Only in 2023 did they consider raising the mill levy rate 18 cents per \$100 in assessed value to raise salaries for first responders and to replace very old park equipment.

I, along with a great many taxpayers, attended Douglas County’s public hearing and it

was an exercise in futility. The three commissioners listened politely to the many taxpayers who were each given three minutes to speak. I do not remember the Commissioners asking any questions or seeking clarification. Many of those taxpayers were seniors who pleaded with the commissioners to reconsider raising taxes and instead lower them. The county administrator advised the commissioners that they had ample time to take another look at the budget, but as soon as the last taxpayer spoke, a motion was quickly made to accept the budget as written and it passed unanimously.

The Douglas County commissioners usually meet on Wednesdays with occasional work sessions. For that service, they are paid \$44,283 annually. In addition to their salary, they are eligible, if they choose to access it, for health insurance and other benefits, they get a computer and other supplies, are reimbursed for travel and other expenses connected with their work as county commissioner, and are eligible for a KPERs pension. They will tell you they work much more than the weekly meetings and occasional work sessions, but most elected officials, unless their positions are fulltime, have a fulltime job in their profession. The elected position is far from a fulltime or even a halftime job.

I was thinking of that when one of the commissioners, after listening to the taxpayers asking for lower taxes, said that eleven months of the year, people come to the commission meetings asking for money and only one month of the year did taxpayers

attend asking them to reduce taxes. She suggested taxpayers need to attend those meetings where people were asking for money and speak against it.

My personal opinion is that it is not practical for taxpayers — most of whom are working so they can pay taxes — to allocate time to regularly attend commission meetings for which, unlike commissioners, they would not be paid. I still remember one woman who told me a few years ago that she was 80 and still working as a church secretary, “not because I want to but because I have to in order to pay property taxes and house and car insurance.” I think members of all commissions and boards owe it to the taxpayers to follow the example of Liberty, Missouri, and recognize their obligation to taxpayers — whose money they are spending — to halt rapidly rising appraised values and taxes and to limit their spending to needs that benefit taxpayers and local residents, not wants.

The graphic below shows you the 2024 budgets and amount per person to cover the budgets in the cities of Topeka and Lawrence and the counties of Shawnee, Douglas and Jefferson. The cost per person in Jefferson is higher because the county maintains all the roads, unlike Shawnee and Douglas where the townships maintain township roads and tax accord-

ingly. Linda Buttron, Jefferson County Treasurer told me that, after researching, they found it was less expensive for taxpayers if the county maintained the roads which saved townships the expense of buying heavy equipment and hiring additional people.

The commissioners in each county are eligible for a KPERs pension and health care if they choose to accept it. In the event they do opt for health insurance, the annual cost to the county per commissioner is: Jefferson: \$8,600; Shawnee: \$10,130.40; Douglas: \$74,803. The Douglas County number represents health insurance and benefits and is likely a collective number. But it seems a very high amount even if divided by three (\$24,394). I made several calls attempting to clarify the amount but my calls were not returned. County commissioners in Douglas and Shawnee Counties are reimbursed for expenses, but commissioners in Jefferson County are not.

It is important for taxpayers to know for what their money is going. Kansas Legislators of both parties realize they need to do something to relieve the tax burden on taxpayers. They know that Safe Senior, already law, fails to help many seniors age 65 and over whose incomes are low enough to qualify but

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City/County	2024 Budget	Population	Per Person
Topeka	\$371.9 million	125,963	\$2,952
Lawrence	\$472 million	95,264	\$4,955
Shawnee County	\$138 million	178,264	\$774
Douglas County	\$190.7 million	119,363	\$1,598
Jefferson County	\$39.8 million	18,411	\$2,162

Caregiver Support

There are many local resources available for caregivers

By Michele Dillon
JAAA ADRC Supervisor

The Caregiving Specialist Department has lots of exciting things going on. I have started a Care for All respite program for caregivers in Lawrence. It is based on a national model called Respite for All, a ministry that was started in a small church in Montgomery, AL. Based on a volunteer driven model, the program matches volunteers with those living with dementia. The caregivers drop them off at 10:00 a.m. and pick them up at 2:00 p.m. We exercise, enjoy brain games and recreation, and share a meal together. We can rely on volunteers due to the non-medical set up.



Michele Dillon

We have partnered with Grace EPC church in Lawrence and have received wonderful in kind donations of meals from Bridge Haven, Care Patrol, A Helping Hand Home Care, Specialized Home Care and Hospice, Meadowlark Estates and Brandon Woods. It is my hope that we can soon set up this program in Topeka as well. If you are interested in volunteering in Lawrence or Topeka or providing a donation please call me at 785-235-1367.

After a successful caregiver conference back in April in Lawrence, we will celebrate Caregivers' Month with a conference on November 8th in Topeka. The Conference will be held at Trinity Presbyterian Church from

9:00 a.m. to 3:00. There is no cost for this event. The Topic will be "Independence and Dementia."

Lunch will be provided by Aldersgate and speakers include Kansas Advocates for Better Care, KU Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Agewise, The Alzheimer's Association, The Center for Bioethics, Adult Protective Services, Harmonic Connections Law Firm and Stevens and Brand Law firm. Reservations are required so call 785-235-1367 to reserve your spot.

We have several caregiver support groups to help you gather together with other caregivers. There are three at the Topeka Library. One is at 2:00 p.m. on the first Monday of every month, the second Monday at 3:30 p.m. and the third Thursday at 2:00 p.m. We also have a support group the first Wednesday at Baldwin Methodist Church at 1:00 p.m., the second Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. at First United Methodist in Lawrence, the fourth Monday at 3:30 at the First Southern Baptist Church in Lawrence and the third Thursday at 3:00 pm at Homestead of Eudora. It is our hope that one of these will meet your needs and help you find the support you need.

If you are caring for anyone, let me help you find resources, set boundaries, and provide information. We have short term grants available and long-term sliding scale programs. Give me a call.

JAAA gets around! Look for us!

Caregivers' Support Groups

Shawnee County

Topeka and Shawnee Public Library

First Monday of each month, 2:00 p.m.

November 6 December 4 Holiday

Topeka and Shawnee Public Library

Second Monday of each month, 3:30 p.m.

November 13 December 11 January 8

Topeka and Shawnee Public Library

Third Thursday of each month, 2:00 p.m.

November 16 December 14 January 18

Douglas County

Baldwin Methodist Church

708 Grove, Baldwin

1st Wednesday of the month, 1:00 p.m.

November 1 December 6 January 3

First United Methodist Church

946 Vermont Street, Lawrence

2nd Tuesday of the month, 10:00 a.m.

November 14 December 12 January 9

First Southern Baptist Church

4300 W. 6th Street, Lawrence

4th Monday of the month, 3:30 p.m.

November 27 Holiday January 22

Homestead of Eudora

2725 Church Street, Eudora

3rd Thursday of the month, 3:00 p.m.

November 16 December 21 January 18

Events and Presentations

Grey Wolves in Meriden, United Methodist Church,

Third Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m.

November 14 December 19 January 16

November is Caregiver's Month



*Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging
is celebrating with a Conference on
"Independence and Dementia"
and you are invited!*

Trinity Presbyterian Church
4746 SW 21st Street in Topeka
November 8 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

This event is free of charge and features speakers from Kansas Advocates for Better Care, KU Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Agewise, The Alzheimer's Association, The Center for Bioethics, Adult Protective Services, Harmonic Connections Law Firm and Stevens and Brand Law Firm.
Lunch will be provided by Aldersgate.

Reservations are required. Please call 785-235-1367 to reserve your spot.

who have lived for decades in homes where the appraised value has risen so high and rapidly that they cannot qualify. Both Republicans and Democrats have plans that will either limit how much your home's appraised value can rise per year or shift the tax burden to commercial and agricultural land, but Richard Auxier, senior policy associate for the Tax Policy Center, told legislators that a better policy would be to target specific groups like seniors.

Social Security beneficiaries will get a 3.2 percent cost of living raise in their 2024 monthly payments, making them fall even farther behind because Medicare insurance deducted from your Social Security check is going up 6 percent in 2024 and the annual deductible for Part B will increase from \$226 to \$240. Nearly all workers (teachers, municipal and state, auto, etc.) are getting raises from 5 to 10 percent.

Unless they are living under a rock, everyone knows that a 3.2 percentage raise will not cover the increased cost of food, gasoline and fuel for heating. You may be interested to know that those three items are not considered when figuring the

rate of inflation. Why? The government explains that is because the prices of groceries, gasoline, electricity, natural gas and propane are volatile and you cannot do without them.

Many states freeze taxes on seniors' homes when they turn 65; other states cut the appraised value in half (and therefore the taxes) on seniors' homes. Six states (Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and South Dakota) either have no real estate tax on the homes of seniors 65 and older or exempt a good portion of their homes' appraised values. Cutting appraised property values in half or freezing taxes at age 65 (make it retroactive for those who are older) is something the legislators could pass and, unless the governor vetoes it, it would be placed on the ballot for Kansans' approval. It should easily pass because even those who are not yet seniors have seen their parents and grandparents struggle to pay their real estate property taxes.

If you have read this entire article, good for you! You are better informed and hopefully will be inspired to contact your legislator and urge him or her to vote to put an amendment on the ballot that will relieve the tax burden on seniors whose productive lives have built the Kansas we know today. Now is the time to act. What are we waiting for?

SOS – Save Our Seniors

Legislators, please reduce real estate property tax for seniors so they can remain in their longtime homes where they are comfortable and content.

Medicare PART D Open Enrollment

SHICK can help you save money

It's that time of year again: Open Enrollment for Medicare Part D from October 15 to December 7. Even if you visited JAAA last year and had help choosing the best plan for you, this year you may find a different plan that fits you better and saves you money. Best of all, the help is free and each year SCHICK staff and volunteers save our clients thousands of dollars collectively. Who can't use a little extra money in their pocket each month?

SHAWNEE AND JEFFERSON COUNTY

JAAA's SHICK (Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas) contract covers Shawnee and Jefferson residents. Call JAAA at 785-235-1367 or 800-798-1366 to schedule an appointment Mondays through Fridays and some Saturdays. **Appointments fill up fast, often by the beginning of October, so don't delay.**

DOUGLAS COUNTY

The Senior Resource Center offers in-person appointments at 745 Vermont, Lawrence; 800 7th Street, Baldwin City; 1638 Elm Street, Eudora; and 620 Woodson Avenue (handicapped entrance), Lecompton. Phone and ZOOM meetings are also available. For an appointment, please call 785-727-7872.

FOR THOSE DIYers WHO ARE COMPUTER SAVVY

Go to <https://www.medicare.gov> and answer a few simple questions. You will have the opportunity to add the prescription drugs you take, choose the pharmacies you would like to use and compare plans and costs. If you cannot get a SHICK appointment and are not computer savvy, ask a trusted family member or friend who is computer savvy to help you.

**WHATEVER WAY YOU CHOOSE TO USE,
IT PAYS TO CHECK OUT NEXT YEAR'S PLANS!**

John Musgrave's Return to Vietnam

By Marsha Henry Goff

If you had the chance to travel halfway around the world to visit the exact spot where you were almost killed over a half-century ago, would you do it? John Musgrave of Baldwin City has done that twice. His most recent — and far more healing — trip to Con Thien, Vietnam, was made last May accompanied by his sons Daniel and Rye. His trip was made possible by a benefactor who paid for the entire trip, including first-class tickets because his disability required that he have room to move around to avoid the risk of blood clots had he been seated in a cramped position in coach.

In 1967, John had just turned 19 and was a Marine private fighting in Vietnam when a machine-gun burst to his chest proved nearly fatal. Indeed, three times in triage, he was shunted aside as a patient who could not be saved. And yet, although severely disabled, he survived. After he was seen at two battlefield hospitals, was a patient in ICU at hospitals in Japan and the Philippines and endured five surgeries, he was flown to Great Lakes Naval Hospital in Wisconsin.

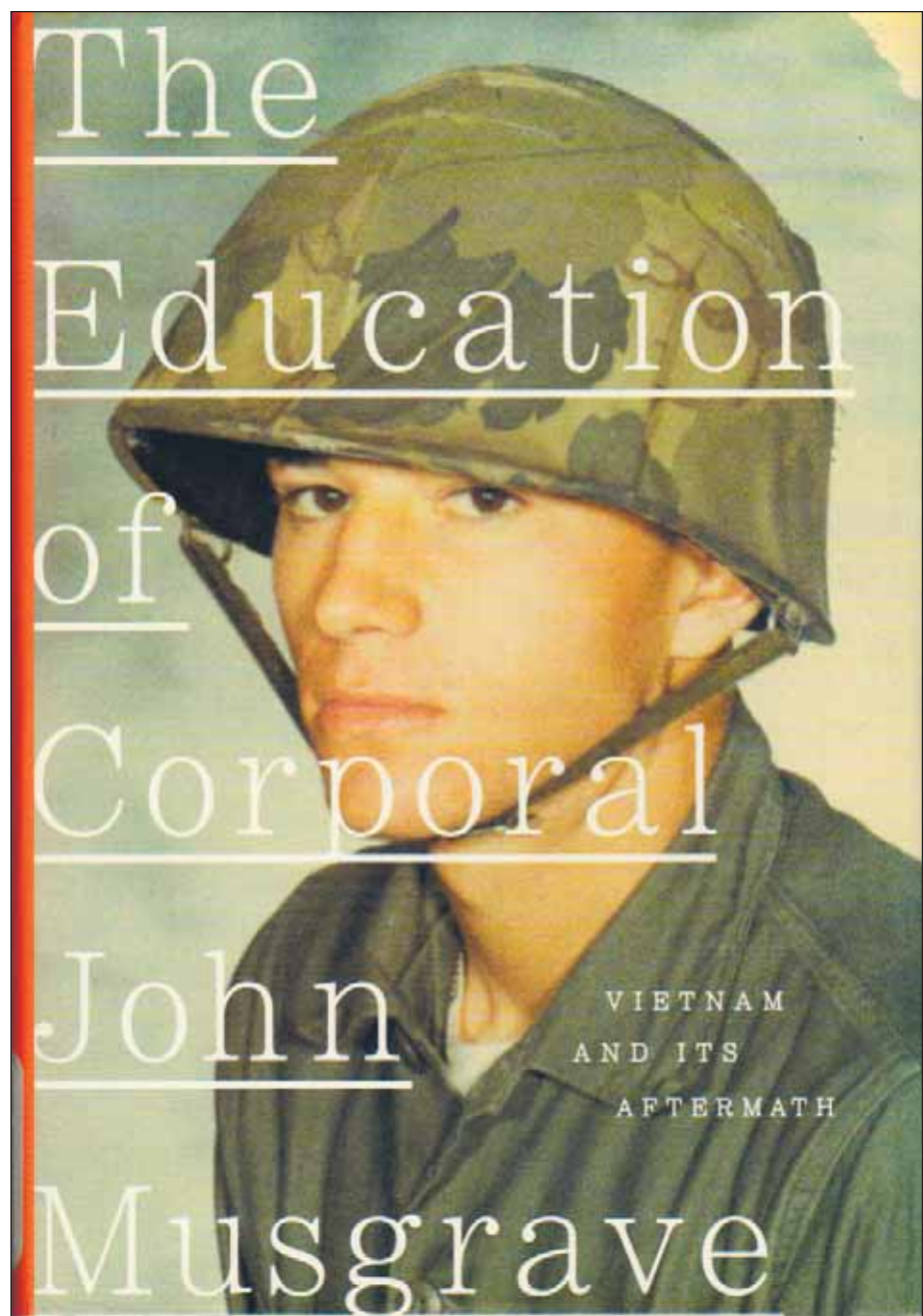
The plane carrying John and other wounded Vietnam veterans landed after midnight to avoid the crowds of Americans who — unable to differentiate the young warriors from the war they opposed — came to shout profanities and throw objects at the wounded soldiers being unloaded from planes on

stretchers. John's father was a pilot in WWII so John had long been aware of the hero's welcome his dad and other WWII warriors received when they returned from war. He soon realized that he had returned to a very different America than the one he had left 11 months and 17 days before. There would be no hero's welcome for him.

When he was dismissed from the hospital, he was sent to Washington, D.C., where he worked very hard in therapy determined to stay in the Marine Corps. But it was not to be; he was medically discharged at 20 years of age. He enrolled at Baker University and graduated with what he jokes were "two unemployable degrees: political science and social work."

On his first trip to Vietnam in 2018, he was accompanied by his wife Shannon and son Daniel. Con Thien looked so different from what he remembered and, according to his son Daniel, "Last trip he had so much trouble adjusting to the way the landscape had changed, let alone the people. And he was experiencing some really vivid flashbacks and memories, which made it so he was doing all he could to just get through the experience. Both rejecting it and being flooded by it at the same time." John agrees with Daniel's assessment of that first trip and that may very well be the reason he was determined to return. On the 2018 trip, he was not able to get into all of

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If you can only read one book about the Vietnam War, this would be the book. It is the compelling story of a patriotic young man who almost lost his life in combat, was medically discharged from the Marines, became disillusioned with the war and finally made a life helping other soldiers who teetered on the brink of suicide.

**Please visit us online
at www.jhawkaaa.org.**

Musgrave

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his battlefields. “I couldn’t get inside,” he says, “and I needed to get inside where I lived and fought.”

The long flight to Vietnam was in three legs: KCI to Chicago; Chicago to Taipei; and Taipei to Hanoi. They were met at the plane by members of Vietnam Battlefield Tours, a business run by former Marines, themselves Vietnam War veterans, who promised to get John into every battlefield where he fought. They were true to their word. “I recommend them hands down,” John states, “They got us everywhere I wanted to go, to each battleground where I fought. They remembered me from the series [*The Vietnam War*] and the leader of the group was my tour guide.”

Although the two week trip — “I wish I could have stayed two more weeks!” — allowed them to travel to a few historic sites, most of the time they stayed in Quang Tri Province, primarily Dong Ha, so they could visit the places he lived and fought. Although visiting the battlegrounds was of paramount importance to John, a highlight of the trip was a Memorial Day visit to a Montagnard village.

The Montagnards are indigenous to Vietnam and were considered allies of American and other countries’ military forces who fought the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The Montagnards were estimated to have lost 200,000 men during the Vietnam War. When the Musgraves’ group leader asked John and his sons if they would like to buy a couple of pigs and take them to a Montagnard village, they jumped at the chance

and also took along other items such as toothbrushes. The houses in the village were raised with space for their livestock underneath to protect them from nighttime predators.

The children in the village and wherever they went in Vietnam were delighted to interact with them — taking selfies with them and practicing English — and John, in turn, loved to interact with them. “I’m a dad,” he explains, “and I love being around kids. Both my granddaughters are gifts from God.”

At each battlefield they visited, John picked up a little dirt which he labeled and saved. “We had lived through horrible circumstances,” he remembers, “bloody battles and I needed to be inside where I could touch the earth . . . where I was able to experience it.”

This trip he did not expect Con Thien, where he almost lost his life, to be the same big, muddy, three-topped hill it was when he was in combat. John is confident that he found

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John and Bill Stillwagen scan maps at Dong Ha for locations of battlefields that John wants to visit. Stillwagen, also a Marine combat veteran of the Vietnam War, served as the group’s tour guide. Son Rye and Lindsey Foat (barely visible) are also in the picture. (Photo: Dan Musgrave)



John and son Rye at The Citadel in Hue City. (Photo: Dan Musgrave)

Musgrave

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the exact spot where he was wounded at Con Thien. The group used GPS coordinates to locate the spot where he was shot. He notes that the Vietnamese are reclaiming battlefields: "It is beautiful. They are bringing it back to beauty. They have tried to create peace by bringing back the beauty of the earth."

John did more than pick up a little dirt from Con Thien. He called Lieutenant Magee, the officer who had held John in his arms and cried after he was wounded. He also called some of his buddies who had fought there alongside him.

Navigating the battlefields was not easy. Dan says that, "Our guides (Vietnam Battlefield Tours) are used to bringing veterans there, and even they noted that of all the disabled vets they'd hosted, he might

have been the toughest considering the places we needed to go."

John and his sons were accompanied on the trip by Lindsey Foat, whom he met during the airing of *The Vietnam War* when she worked for KCPT in Kansas City. She is a trusted friend with whom John has done several programs. She presently works as Content and Communications Director at The Rabbit Hole. When John told her he was taking a trip to Vietnam, she said, "I'm going, too!" And she did, paying her own way. While many of the tours range from 16 to 20 people, John's custom tour consisted of only four: himself, his sons and Lindsey.

One of the most rewarding parts of the trip for John was sharing it with his sons. "Those boys worked very hard to help me. We broke one wheelchair." Daniel Jay bears the names of two of John's closest buddies from Vietnam. He teaches English at the University of Min-

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Do you know?

In 1986, KU was the first college to build and dedicate a memorial to its 59 students who died in the Vietnam War. It is engraved with a battlefield cross (rifle, boots and helmet) and reads: LEST WE FORGET THE COURAGE, HONOR AND SACRIFICE OF OUR FELLOW STUDENTS. John Musgrave was co-chair of the effort to raise money to build the memorial. It joins the WWI Memorial Stadium, WWII Memorial Campanile and Korean War Memorial. The latter two and the Vietnam Memorial are located on Memorial Drive and overlook the stadium.

WANT TO READ MORE ABOUT JOHN MUSGRAVE?



LOOK FOR THIS MAGAZINE

John Musgrave's story of combat was prominently featured in Ken Burns' and Lynn Novick's documentary of the Vietnam War. He suffered a near-fatal ambush and fought desperately, but unsuccessfully, to stay in the Marines. He dedicated the rest of his life to working with veterans, saving their lives when he could.



**Call Kevin at
(785) 841-9417 to place
your display ad in the
WINTER 2024 issue of
Amazing Aging!
Deadline is January 15.**

Musgrave

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nesota-Morris. Rye, three years younger, is also named after one of John's closest friends. He is a crisis intervention counselor for homeless in Lawrence, working with the police and city government.

He is proud that both are poets. "Rye recently had two or three poems published," he says. John, a poet himself, has had three books of poetry published: *Notes to the Man Who Shot Me: Vietnam War Poems*; *On Snipers, Laughter and Death: Vietnam Poems*; *Under a Flare-Lit Sky: Vietnam Poems*; and *The Vietnam Years: 1000 Questions and Answers* (co-author). He notes that, "Both boys are wonderful ambassadors for this country and each is a citizen of the Osage nation on their mother's side."

Everywhere they traveled in Vietnam, John's party was greeted with kindness and generosity. He feels he was given the welcome there that he never received in America. "If the Vietnamese asked if I had been in the military, I told them I was and that I likely fought, and perhaps killed, their grandfathers. They said they understood; I was a warrior and did what I had to do."

Because of his disabilities, John lives daily with reminders of the Vietnam War. But after his recent trip back to the battlefields of his youth, he is at peace. "It is so incredible how much that trip changed me and helped me. I don't have nightmares about it anymore. I have seen it at peace. And I'm not scared when I see young Vietnamese, the age of the soldiers I fought."

It took 56 years for John Musgrave to find the peace he sought.



It is hard going for John, closely followed by son Rye, as he walks to the site of the last ambush where he was nearly killed. (Photo: Dan Musgrave)



Using GPS coordinates to find his way to the last ambush at Con Thien, John stops to visit with Vietnamese workers. (Photo: Dan Musgrave)



John and son Dan use a map to plan battlefield trips. (Photo: Rye Musgrave)