

Chapel flies legion of 'Old Glories' to honor vets

Steven M. Grazier

Published in the Massillon Independent November 1, 2018



TUSCARAWAS TWP. Dale Kurzen was an electrician in the U.S. Navy who spent 10 months in Vietnam during parts of 1967 and 1968.

Stationed along the South China Sea close to Da Nang Air Base in southern Vietnam, Kurzen worked as a shop repairman to help keep engines, utilities and machinery operational at wartime. He remembers plenty of long days and nights.

"It was pretty hectic," said Kurzen, 72, of his time serving in the Vietnam War, recalling that the post he was assigned to would occasionally take enemy fire. "We did a pretty good job protecting ourselves and our base."

More than 100 U.S. military veterans, including Kurzen, are being recognized by the membership of Newcomers Chapel, 11789 Sarbaugh St. SW. The church is going all out for Veterans Day — and the days leading up to the holiday — by flying 130 American flags, each of which honors a military vet, alive or dead.

"It's touching to have a flag in your memory (or honor) out there," said Kurzen, who's a township resident and 15-year member of the church. "It means a lot to us, and makes you proud to be a veteran."

Shirley Toland, the veterans events coordinator for Newcomers, said the relatively new tradition got going last year when 110 U.S. banners were posted around the church. A symbolic, or replica,

dog tag hangs from each flag pole, listing the name of a veteran, his or her rank, branch of service and number of years served.

"The men and women deserve it. They need to be recognized," said Toland, who works full time at the U.S. Veterans Administration office in Canton.

Flags fly through Veterans Day

Of the 130 flags, about a dozen represent female veterans, according to Toland, who said all flags, which stand about 6 feet high, are slated to fly until Veterans Day or a bit longer, weather depending. The dog tags and flags were bought by church members and local families around Massillon, Dalton and Lawrence and Tuscarawas townships.

Cheryl Katz, of Beach City, is one of the female veterans with a flag of honor at the church. She served in the U.S. Navy as a financial clerk in the mid-1960s.

Katz was one of seven area veterans who met with The Independent on Thursday at the church to talk about the flags.

"This is special," she said. "You take a little bit of pride with it."

Veterans who fought in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom are honored with flags at Newcomers Chapel.

In addition to Veterans Day, the flags and dog tags are also posted at the church for Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day, Toland said.

Newcomers church also is hosting a free veterans luncheon Saturday and breakfast on Veterans Day, which is Nov. 11.

