

## **05-08-04 Summer Camp for Vets**

On Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, the American Legion Riders and Auxiliary of Gold Star Post 820 in Monroeville rose early, excited and hoping for good weather. The Riders and Auxiliary Team had been invited to a coffee and donut, parking lot style brunch with our Veterans hospitalized in the VA Medical Center at Highland Ave. Although pleased to know the invitation resulted from past, positive efforts, the Riders and Auxiliary of Gold Star Post 820 still wanted to do more, and had planned accordingly.

Months before, the Riders and Auxiliary learned of a program to send hospitalized Veterans to summer camp. For a week, the Veterans could hike, swim, cookout, fish, relax and become reacquainted with a few small pleasures that many take for granted. Once the program was reviewed, a business meeting discussion took only a few seconds before a motion, second and unanimous vote approved use of funds to send twenty-five Veterans to summer camp! The plan was then forged to deliver the funds during the previously scheduled, May 8<sup>th</sup> brunch.

On the sunny morning of May 8<sup>th</sup>, twenty-four representatives of the American Legion Riders and Auxiliary of Gold Star Post 820 gathered in their Monroeville parking lot, ready for the ride to Highland Avenue. Arriving in a picture perfect, staggered column, the Riders and Auxiliary Team exchanged handshakes and greetings with the Veterans. While sipping coffee and sharing camaraderie, a guitar and harmonica appeared and the Vets, Riders and Auxiliary joined for an impromptu sing along.



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Everyone had a great time. The coffee was good and the donuts great however, nothing could beat the company!

Near the end of the event, hats donated by the Post were passed out. As a finale, a check was presented for summer camp and the Riders and Auxiliary departed for their home Post. While reflecting on the day, the Riders and Auxiliary Team concluded that each person came away from the day's event with far more than they gave, knowing they helped renew a small, brief, and summer pleasure for those who served!

The American Legion Riders and Auxiliary Team of Gold Star Post 820 would like to thank Lori Kerr, Ken Azzarello, all staff members of the Highland Ave. VA Medical Center and all the Veterans for the special invitation, the opportunity to spend time together, and most importantly, for reconfirming that we live in the greatest Country in the world, free to do as we please.... only because of the extreme sacrifices made by our Veterans!

05-08-04 Riders and Auxiliary Representatives:

Ed Balas; Bob Banaszak; Terry Banaszak; Cliff Bish; Nancy Bish; Jane Brenkus; Tom Brenkus; Bob DeMarcki; Mike Lang; Bob Lewis; Dot Lewis; Ellen Lewis; Willy Lewis; Bill McConnell; Butch McGary; Kathy Menzietti; Tom Menzietti; Bill Miller; Dan Rojas; Tim Rojas; Matt Seaman; Jay Smith; Nat Smith; and Rachela Sulkowski.

**ALR-(05-08-04)-DSCF0032:** American Legion Riders' Veteran's Liaison, Mike Lang, presenting the summer camp funding to Ms Lori Kerr and Mr. Ken Azzarello.