

## 2019 Region 6 Deputy Director Candidate



My name is Rick A. Talford; I am 49 years old and a Wisconsin resident. I am a non-veteran that has military in the family. My Grandfather was a gunner in WWII on the USS Saratoga, my father was a veteran during Vietnam and my son was a US ARMY Sgt. in Afghanistan prior to his passing at 24 years old. The time I spend with Veterans is heart filling and a way I can honor my son's service to his country. I am an Associate of the Vietnam Veterans of America – Mike Voth Memorial – Chapter 5 in Eau Claire, WI. This is the oldest/active chapter in the country and works with veterans of all generations, to work towards a better future.

Areas that I assist our Veterans in are as follows;

- The Highground Veteran Park in Neillsville, WI. As a greeter and general worker, we spend our time assisting veterans when they visit the park. The Highground was created thirty years ago by the Vietnam Veterans. One thing we watch for is a soul that might be fighting with PTSD. There are many resources available to help them through this very rough time in life. There are monuments from WWI to the Persian Gulf on site. This site is one of very few in the country that has a monument for the Native American Soldiers of Vietnam. ALL Veterans are welcome.
- The Disabled American Van service is another area that I volunteer. We provide a service to local veterans to give them a ride for the Eau Claire County Courthouse to the Minneapolis, MN VA. While driving them to and from appointments, we take the time to listen to their stories, and in many instances, we learn about the history they encountered.
- Vietnam Veterans Day Committee is a group that I assist with secretarial duties, to put together an event annually for the local veterans to get together and enjoy each other's commonalities. This year will be the 9<sup>th</sup> annual event and it has grown to be a successful gathering. There is always a special key note speaker, veteran service organizations and a meal to keep people interested in attending.
- The Chapter 5 Color/Honor Guard is an area that gives me great honor as a non-veteran, as these men and women chose me to be the coordinator for the duties these details. We are active in parades and events throughout the year, from Memorial Day, funerals and for special Stone Laying at the Highground. This past year, we even worked with the WI State Honor Guard in a Co-op for a service at the Highground. This was an experience I will never forget, leading this group of men while shaking in my shoes.
- Our Chapter AVVA spends time serving citizens at a local Pizza Ranch in order to raise funds that we use to assist different programs in the area. Providing meals at the veteran transition residence (Klein Hall) in Chippewa Falls, WI is one of the areas we

enjoy assisting. We bus tables and speak with customers while informing them of why we are there is rewarding. The restaurant provides ten percent of the total sales to our organization as well we keep all tips/donations for the four to five hours we work. The associates and veterans both work together for this cause which has been very successful for us.

- In Chapter 5, I also assist with the fundraiser committee, in which many hours a year are spent at fairs, stores, etc. to sell our raffle tickets to raise the funds we use throughout the year on different programs, scholarships, etc. Recently, I have become a member of the scholarship committee, in which I am hopeful to be able to help select the well deserving individuals that are wishing to further their education. In the past three years, I have put in 1500 VISTA Hours while working with Veterans.

One experience I have encountered in my time with the AVVA is the traveling wall that Chapter 5 had brought into Eau Claire. I was able to assist this by planning the security of the Vietnam Veteran Traveling Wall while it was in our town. I assisted with taking photographs of escorting the wall into town, setting up on site, securing and taking down the wall. In all, I spent 80 straight hours on site to ensure that no harm came to the wall. There were many that assisted in this process, and I was honored to be part of this.

The AVVA is an important part of my life and I believe the right direction is ahead of us in making sure the organization stays strong moving forward. Ensuring we have good communications and mentoring between all membership and officers will make this goal an easy success. I would like the chance to work with membership of all nine states in Region 6, to bring the ideas, hopes and plans of all together for us to become a beacon of the AVVA. I expect there to be lots of new things to learn, but I am very willing to give the time it needs to be the best I can in this position. As our veterans leave us, it is incumbent upon us, as AVVA members, to continue fighting for them and future generations of veterans to ensure they are given the honor and respect they deserve by all Americans.

God Bless

Rick A. Talford  
Chapter 5 AVVA Representative  
Eau Claire, WI