## Omaha Federal Credit Union gives thanks for Vets Basket event

Many smiles and salutes were given to veterans and their spouses and family members during the third annual Vets Baskets campaign, which covered nursing and assisted living homes in Washington and surrounding counties in support of Veterans Day this Novemner.

The third annual Vets Baskets donation, a grassroots community service campaign created by Julie Gasper of Omaha Federal Credit Uunion, and Ed Lautrup, Veterans Service Officer of Washington County, was created in order to give back to veterans in Washington County, as well as Douglas, Burt and Sarpy counties in Nebraska, and Harrison County in Iowa.

"Our mission is to honor our Veterans and let them know we have not forgotten them and we never will," Gasper said in an email with the Enterprise. "The reason we are a free nation is because of those service men and women who stood up for us. When our country needed them most, they sacrificed some of — or all of — their hopes and dreams and pushed back many of their life plans to instead go, secure and fight for America's interests."

In May 2021, the campaign started with five Blair nursing homes and one in Fort Calhoun, were 100 goodie bags filled with treats and necessities for veterans and their family members. The next year, a Douglas County nursing home was added, as well as the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home, located in Bellevue.

This year, two Har-

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community and meet-

rison County nursing homes were added, as well as one in Tekamah and the American Legion Jackson-Peck Post 274 in Herman.

"With our Credit Union recently chartered to serve Harrison County, we knew that we wanted to serve the vets there as well as the nursing homes that we've done in the past two years," Gasper explained. "We had a donation goal to accomplish that, but we well exceeded that because of the graciousness of our supporters."

In total, 204 baskets were delivered to veterans across the everexpanding service area.

'We want to personally connect with our Veterans, our members and others in the communities where we live and work, because these communities have given so much back to us and have supported us for many decades. I feel that these close connections and touch points are the real success indicators behind what we do, and we cannot do it without the ongoing support of donors and volunteers and their deep belief in this service to our nation's Veterans as well as our communities.

"Getting out into the

ing the various homes' staff and administration helps with our personal connection to them and to the Veterans they take care of on a daily basis," Gasper said. "These folks know their Vets inside and out. They care for them deeply and protect them like they are family. We also get to hear the great stories and battles that these Vets have experienced."

Gasper said those interested can become involved by providing monetary donations or giving ideas as the team prepares for Veterans Day in 2024.

"If someone has a talent they'd like to contribute or items they'd like to donate, or monetary donations they'd like to give, or ideas they'd like to share, we are open to the possibilities that each person can bring to help us ultimately be successful each year," Gasper said. "Folks should not hesitate to call me direct at 402-951-8728, or Ed Lautrup at 402-426-6838. The other thing folks can do in the months prior is to

COURTESY JULIE GASPER

look for sales or deep discounts on little things for the Veterans that might be fun or useful. patriotic, or help them pass the time. It's the little things that go a long way. We welcome donations and input all year long."

Gasper said there is an ongoing list of supporters who help grow the Vets Day baskets each year.

"We couldn't do this without the ongoing support of the communities, homes and vets that we serve, our Credit Union members and future members, our employees, our Board of Directors, our volunteers, area Vets clubs, Veterans' Service Officers, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Douglas County and WA County Service Offices, vendors, businesses, the WA County Chamber, Greater Omaha

Chamber, Sarpy County Chamber, area American Legion Posts and AM Vets, just to name a few," she said. "Ed and I have a great back-andforth working relationship and we enjoy doing community service work together, such as project management activities

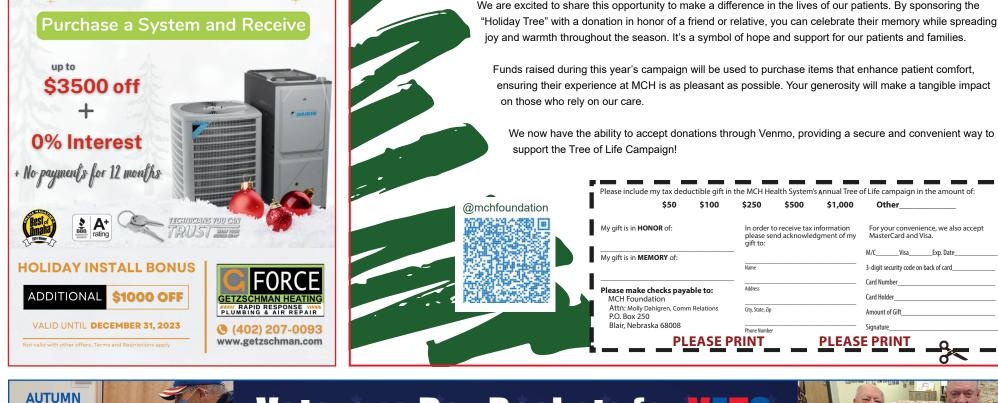
and time spent fundraising and ultimately planning the next event and what it may look like or evolve into in the months and days leading up to the big event."



Memorial Community Hospital & Health System Blair • Fort Calhoun • Tekamah

## Tree of Life Campaign

In 1956, the Memorial Community Hospital Auxilary began a holiday money tree drive to purchase needed equipment for the hospital. The tradition continues today with the Tree of Life Campaign. The tree is a symbol of friends and loved ones who hold a special space in our hearts and minds.



## Veterans Day Baskets for VETS

## 200+ Baskets Delivered 11-07-23 and 11-09-23 to 9 nursing and retirement homes in 8 cities across 4 counties

A special THANK YOU to all of the donors and volunteers that supported our 3rd Annual Community Service Event for **VETS**! We greatly appreciate **YOU**!

Washington County Chamber of Commerce, Blair, NE

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