LOCAL NEWS

Knowledge Point Network: Bringing Value to Veterans and their Childrens Lives

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Busy as bee kids working on their projects at the recent KPN Scrap Fabric Art Class, held Labor Day at the School of Live Music in Montgomery

When it comes to improving the lives of Combat Veterans and their children, Knowledge Point Network, a local non-profit charity, is focused on providing purpose to those who have had setbacks in their lives due to circumstances beyond their control. KPN is well known for providing support to Veterans with outdoor events such as dirt biking on local trails, or even maintaining the trails themselves, which provides the Veterans and their children with a purpose to show them that

there is much more to life than just cell phones and video games. Other aspects of KPN involve helping Veterans and groups with grant writing efforts to fulfill the needs to improve individual lives of severely Disabled Veterans and groups that support Veterans in the community.

KPN is unique in that they are well versed in sustaining the effectiveness of their charity. They help other charitable organizations in reviving their abilities to increase capacity and maintain their services. All of this is the brainchild of Ed Ponikvar, a man who spent a long career in grant writing, achieving well over a half-billion dollars in grants for his clients, and now uses his charity to help Veterans and their families with his programs to help bring some joy and laughter to his clients.

KPN has a cadre of volunteers, Veteran and otherwise, that will drop everything to help Veterans in need on a moment's notice, which they happily did during storms earlier this year. When heavy storms damaged eighty-five miles of trails this year that KPN uses for their programs for Veterans and their families, the organization was informed by forest service officials that the trails would be closed until 2026. That's when Ponikvar and the KPN team went into action, and in a matter of months had restored nearly half of the trails to function, including the replacement of many bridges that had been knocked out along the way. KPN's relationship and trust with the foresters has brought about a system that effortlessly washes away red tape, so that the job at hand can get completed at the earliest possible point. Ponikvar's Dozer Dog program, which puts tractor driven machines in the hands of severely Disabled Veterans, allowing them to do meaningful work in repairing the trails that KPN utilizes. Ponikvar started the Dozer Dog program back in 2006, and works with Texas Parks and Wildlife, of which KPN has unique access to their facility to use equipment for the repair of trails.

"We've deployed our Veterans and our volunteers in response to the trail closures," said Ponikvar. "And we now have some hiking and equestrian trails open, and hope to have the trails for dirt bikes open within the next couple of weeks."

The maintenance and upkeep of the trails allows KPN to offer the use of their dirt bikes for Veterans and their children, and the use of Track Chairs for severely Disabled Veterans. The electric bikes allow for quieter riding so that riders can communicate more easily. Ponikvar and his team are big believers that the deeper riders go in the forest the closer they get in their relationship with God, as well as improving their ties with family members and friends. All of it is intended to bring about worth and satisfaction in lives to replace prior despair.

Another aspect of KPN is what Ponikvar calls his Dreamcatcher Collaborative. It is the grant writing portion of his charity that is geared towards Veterans, and even other charitable organizations. The free service for Veterans allows them to write a short essay of how they want to improve their lives such as changes to their homes, or by helping other Veterans or the community. KPN takes that information and expands on it, using words and phrases that will be

favorable to foundations offering grants. One Veteran, Jeff Miles, a U.S. Army Veteran who lost his arm in an accident 17 years ago, is looking to make improvements to his home to assist better with his activities of daily living. He also plans to use a portion of the grant to bring about his idea of starting a co-op growing chickens and vegetables.

“I’m hopeful to receive funds to make much needed repairs to my home,” said Miles. “Ed has been such a help in getting the process started.”

Other KPN sponsored events are specifically geared for the children of Veterans. A ‘Scrap Fabric Art Class,’ was held this past Monday at the School of Live Music in Montgomery, hosted by SofLM owner Moree Simon. Children from ages 2-15 participated in decorating thin canvases with scrap fabric with all sorts of designs from the unplanned to the well thought out. It was all in good fun, as the children used their Labor Day Holiday to enjoy the event, meeting and making new friends, and making some great art, ending with lunch, and receiving door prizes prior to its conclusion.

“It was very fun,” said 10 year old Autumn of her fabric project on mushrooms. “We are redecorating my room, and it is going to be mushroom themed.”

The event organizer, and Navy Veteran Elise Cook, was amazed with the talent the children displayed, with each child having a keepsake to take home in memory of the event. Several kids did patriotic themes with the fabrics available, while others concentrated on fish (one great white shark), mushrooms, hearts, cats, dogs, and other designs.

“I made a big great-white shark,” said Beckett Kragenbrink, 8, dressed in fishing attire. “I love to fish with my family.”

One child named Brenda, 12, drew several designs on white fabric when she couldn’t find the exact representations she was looking for, which showed her talent in art. Combat Veteran, Amos Savell, the founder of Veterans & Patriots United, a Huntsville based non-profit charity dedicated to helping struggling Veterans, brought his young son Malachi, to participate in the art project.

“It was a beautiful event,” said Savell. “And with KPN known for dirt bikes and trails and helping Veterans. To just have an event for kids, with fabric, and glue, and all the designs, It’s just wonderful what Ed and his team are able to put together.”

For more information and to consider donating, go to Knowledge Point Network’s website: KPNUSA.com

School of Live Music: schooloflivemusic.com

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