

Bruce Angstadt

Veteran Volunteer

Total Volunteer Hours: 350

Communications Technician "O" Branch,
U.S. Navy 1965 - 1974

Personal Background

Bruce joined the Navy in 1964 because of his desire to serve on a submarine. Unfortunately, due to a health issue with his ears, he was unable to serve in submarines during his service time. Bruce attended basic training at Great Lakes, Illinois and the Naval Security Group Communications "A" School at Pensacola, Florida. He toured in Morocco, Africa, Oahu, Hawaii, and Sabana Seca, Puerto Rico with the Naval Security Group Command Stations. He attended training again for Naval Technical Instructor "C" School at Norfolk, Virginia, and toured as Instructor at Naval Security Group Communications "A" School at Pensacola, Florida.

Near the end of his service, Bruce was contacted to re-enlist. He had been married nearly eight years and his son was an infant. The service offered any aircraft carrier in the fleet, but Bruce declined because he did not want to be away from his family for a long period of time. The Navy offered a warrant officer commission to him, but Bruce preferred the booming computer industry over the aircraft carrier.

Bruce started as a technical writer for Bell Labs in New Jersey, then moved to documentation specialist for Harris Corporation in Florida. During his time in Florida, he received a promotion to senior instructor. He used his vacation time as a consultant to teach Computer Software Configuration Management. Bruce eventually went to Xerox as a training manager, then to GEICO as a technical instructor and from there fully retired.



Inspiration for Volunteering

Bruce says he volunteers as a DAV driver out of the Crawford VA Clinic to pay back for all of the medical care and for the retirement check he receives from the VA.



Bonnie Blare

Veteran Volunteer

Total Volunteer Hours: 1,050

Personal Background

Bonnie is from Scottdale, PA in Westmoreland County. She attended Latrobe Area Hospital School of Nursing and was an active Registered Nurse until her retirement in April 2022. Her last full-time employment was at the Erie VAMC as the Oncology Nurse, retiring after 23 years of service.

Bonnie began volunteering 2 weeks after her VA retirement because of her dedication to serving the US Veterans. Being the daughter of a WWII Veteran and the spouse of a Vietnam Veteran, Bonnie holds a deep love for our Veteran heroes.

Bonnie is widowed and has two adult children and one grandchild and resides in Fairview Township. She joined the American Legion Auxiliary in 1992 and has held many Unit, Council and Department of PA offices. Currently she has the honor of being the Dept of PA VA & R Chairman and continues to volunteer weekly at the Erie VAMC.

She was invited by the National ALA Organization and attended the American Legion Washington DC Conference held February 26 to March 1, 2023 where she will be walking the Hill, meeting with the PA Senators to advocate for continued and the betterment of Veteran services.



Richard Mark Evans

Veteran Volunteer

Total Volunteer Hours: 550

Personal Background

Richard currently resides in Warren with his wife Pat and two dogs, Murphy and Tessa. Richard moved from England in 1976 to train at the United Refining Company, initially working as a carpenter and rigger until moving into operations work in 1982. He worked in operations for 34 years, leading units for 22 years before retiring in 2015. On February 28th, 2003, Richard became a U.S. citizen, and says it was the most important and proud day for him.

In 1977, Richard established the indoor soccer program at the Warren YMCA for boys and girls aged 6 to 13. In 1978, he started the Warren outdoor adult soccer team, and in 1979 he established the Interstate Soccer Association. This was the first adult soccer league in the area and included Oil City, Franklin, Titusville, Meadville, Jamestown, and New York. Richard not only served as president and treasurer, but played with the adult team and with various indoor teams until he retired as a player at age 52.

In 1992, Richard co-founded the outdoor Warren YMCA youth soccer program. The league, still in operation today, started with 220 youths and expanded to 1,200 youths. After the foundation of the Soccer Association of Warren County (S.A.W.C.) in 1994, Richard served as vice president and president. Two years later, in 1996, the S.A.W.C. funded the W.A.H.S. girls' team, and then funded both boys' and girls' teams at Eisenhower High School. Soon after this, the Kinzua Soccer Club formed, acting as the governing body for all traveling soccer teams. Richard served in various positions on both boards, including president, vice president, coaching coordinator, and referee coordinator.

Notably, Richard was Volunteer of the Year for the Warren YMCA in 1992. He also received recognition from the Warren YMCA for his volunteer service from 1992-1996. He was elected the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, Warren Chapter, in 1996 for his service to soccer in the community. Currently, Richard is on the board of the Crary Art Gallery and a member of the exhibitions



committee. He was a volunteer at the gallery before joining the board in 2016. He also is a member of the Warren Camera Club and currently serves as the treasurer. Richard also volunteers as a beer canner at local brewery, Bent Run.

Inspiration for Volunteering (as written by Richard)

I thought of my father, who served in the British Army during World War II, and of my Veteran coworkers when making the decision to become a volunteer DAV driver.



Thomas Duska

Veteran Volunteer

Total Volunteer Hours: 500

Second Class Petty Officer, U.S. Navy 1965-1971
USS VAN VOORHIS

Personal Background

While still in high school, Thomas enlisted in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War at age 17, entering boot camp right after graduating. He served for six years from 1965 to 1971, four years of active duty and two years of inactive reserve. After boot camp in Chicago, Thomas was sent to Machinist Mate school, then requested to be put on a destroyer. His father, who passed away in the Erie VA hospital when Thomas was 12 years old, served on a destroyer in World War II.

Thomas was assigned to be a E-3 Machinist Mate on the USS VAN VOORHIS DE 1028, an anti-submarine (ASW) destroyer. After two years, Thomas became an E-5 MM2, and at 20 years old served as top watch in the engine room and throttles as his GQ station.

Thomas married his high school sweetheart in 1968, and they have been happily married for 54 years. In September, 1969, their first daughter was born in the Newport Naval Hospital. Thomas left duty in 1970 and he and his wife had two more children.

Twenty-five years ago, Thomas attended Clown College and became Wing Nut the Clown. After many classes and on-the-job training, he became a Hospice clown. The Hospice part of his clowning experience is where his passion lies. He started with the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) as a Hospice Clown, and continued to do that for many years. He sometimes visited two patients a week along with their family members. He has clowning for the Shriners Hospital and Erie Clowns.

After retiring from his job as a tractor trailer mechanic contractor at GE, Thomas wanted to expand his clowning to visit the patients at the Erie VA Hospital as a Doctor character clown. He started clowning at the VA in 2010 and has enjoyed every minute of it. Thomas says he enjoys just talking, visiting, and laughing with so many Veterans, and it is a joy to him to be able to make Veterans stay



happier if even for a minute. Thomas has had the privilege of setting up for the Erie VA weekly Catholic Mass, serve as a Eucharistic Minister, and escort patients outside in nice weather. He has made many friends while doing this, and when a new Veteran finds out that Thomas is also a Vet, they are able to relate and share stories.

Thomas says, due to COVID, all of his visiting had to stop. He now enjoys working the front welcome desk on Fridays during the week and fills in at other times. Thomas can't wait till the day when Wing Nut and his trusty dog, Puddles, can return to personally visit the patients.