

VET NET Newsletter  
December 2024



# VETERANS' OUTREACH



Serving our veterans in Ohio, Kentucky, Alabama, Florida, West Virginia & New York since 1994

## Pearl Harbor Changed the World Forever: The Legacy of Sgt. William Gordon Ely

By John Ely  
Veterans' Outreach President Founder

History isn't just a series of dates and events—it's the sum of human courage, sacrifice, and resilience. Among the countless heroes who shaped the course of the 20th century, my father, Sgt. William Gordon Ely, stands as a beacon of bravery. A Pearl Harbor survivor and lifelong advocate for veterans, his story is deeply personal to me, but it also carries a profound historical weight.

### Humble Beginnings in Ohio

My father's journey began in 1921 in Gallipolis, Ohio, a small town nestled along the Ohio River. Life on his family farm instilled in him a tireless work ethic from a young age. By eight, he was plowing fields and driving a tractor. But even as a child, Dad seemed to find himself near history. One day, while riding his bicycle down a dusty country road, he stopped to give directions to two men in a Model T. He later learned they were Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone.


The Great Depression brought hardship to families like ours, but it also forged resilience. Dad faced these struggles head-on, even enduring the tragic loss of his older brother, John, to drowning. By 17, compelled by a sense of duty and adventure, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, lying about his age to serve his country.

### Paradise Lost: Pearl Harbor

Dad's service eventually brought him to Pearl Harbor. In letters home, he described the island as paradise. He wrote of catching a 40-pound octopus, hosting beach barbecues with his fellow soldiers, and marveling at the beauty of the South Pacific. But on December 7, 1941, paradise turned to hell.

That morning, Dad stood on the porch of his barracks at Hickam Field, recovering from an upset stomach caused by cucumber salad. That minor ailment may have saved his life. At 7:48 a.m., the peaceful skies were shattered by the roar of Japanese planes. Over 350 aircraft swarmed Pearl Harbor, targeting ships and airfields in a coordinated assault. Bombs exploded, ships burned, and chaos engulfed the base.

Pearl Harbor was more than an attack; it was a turning point. It propelled the United



States into World War II, uniting a fractured nation under a common cause. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called it “a date which will live in infamy,” and he was right. It marked the awakening of what Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto called a “sleeping giant.”

Hickam Field, where Dad was stationed, was one of the first targets. Japanese Zero fighters strafed the airfield, killing over 200 men. Dad’s training as a paramedic kicked in immediately. As bullets rained down, he drove his ambulance through fire and debris, pulling the injured to safety. The attack killed 2,403 Americans and wounded over 1,100, but Dad never stopped.

### A Medic’s Heroism

The hospitals were overwhelmed, with resources stretched to their limits. One soldier, severely burned, required constant care. Dad stayed by his side for days, administering glucose, changing bandages, and even sleeping beside him to keep him warm and prevent shock. That soldier survived, and his grateful mother later wrote a letter to my father, thanking him for saving her son’s life.

That letter became more than a thank-you—it inspired the American Red Cross to launch a nationwide blood donation campaign. It was just one example of how Dad’s actions rippled far beyond that horrific day.

His life, shaped by history and service, stands as a beacon for future generations—a powerful reminder that the greatest acts of heroism often come from ordinary individuals facing extraordinary circumstances.

### Turning Pain Into Purpose

After the war, Dad was haunted by his experiences. His photographic memory was both a gift and a burden, as it forced him to relive the attack in vivid detail. But instead of letting those memories weigh him down, he channeled his pain into preserving the history of Pearl Harbor and honoring those who served.

He co-founded the Columbus Chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, helping establish eight additional chapters across the country. He partnered with Warren Mott, founder of Mott’s Military Museum in Columbus, Ohio, donating his Pearl Harbor coat and other memorabilia to its collection. His contributions helped expand the museum, ensuring future generations would understand the sacrifices made on that infamous day.

Dad’s advocacy didn’t stop there. In 2004, he successfully lobbied to rename a portion of Highway 75 as the Pearl Harbor Memorial Highway. Even in his final years, his mission was clear: to ensure the lessons of Pearl Harbor were never forgotten.

### A Legacy of Service

My father passed away in 2003, but his story didn’t end there. Inspired by his courage and dedication, I founded Veterans Outreach, a nonprofit organization that has supported veterans for over 30 years. Every day, I am reminded of his sacrifices and the sacrifices of countless others who served during World War II.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was more than a military strike—it was a wake-up call for a nation. It galvanized the United States into action, uniting the country against tyranny and marking the beginning of the end for the Axis powers. As President Roosevelt declared, December 7, 1941, was “a date which will live in infamy.”

Today, fewer than 20 Pearl Harbor survivors remain in the United States. With each passing year, their stories become more precious, and the responsibility to preserve their legacy grows.

“Lest We Forget”

Dad’s life was a testament to the resilience and spirit of the Greatest Generation. His bravery on December 7, 1941, and his tireless efforts to honor those who served left an indelible mark on history—and on me.

As we remember Pearl Harbor, let us honor heroes like Sgt. William Gordon Ely by living with the same courage, selflessness, and determination. Dad always said, “History isn’t just about battles and dates—it’s about people.”

He was right. And his story, woven into the fabric of Pearl Harbor and the war that followed, ensures that we will never forget.

“Lest we forget, Dad—you are a part of history.”

## Wreaths Across America



# Our Programs For Veterans

Over the last 30 years, we have helped veterans more than 100,000 times. Our motto is to "respectfully serve and honor all veterans".

We have developed programs that perform our mission to help veterans that include the Direct Aid Program, the Outreach Program, the Heroes' Closet Program, and the Freedom Food Pantry Program.

[Read More →](#)

## Veteran Career Options

### Guide to Choosing a Trade Career for Returning Service Members

Veterans find rewarding careers in the skilled trades, rather than going to college. See top careers, average pay, and resources including how the GI Bill can help.

[Read More](#)



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Learn more about us at [www.veteransoutreach.org](http://www.veteransoutreach.org)

Have something you would like to donate?

Contact us at [vodepot@veteransoutreach.org](mailto:vodepot@veteransoutreach.org)

Call 330-755-5792





# Youngstown Foundation Event Center

Located at Veterans' Outreach,  
17 Colonial Drive, Youngstown, OH 44505

## Book Your Event Today!

- 4,000 sq ft of space
- Perfect for any occasion
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- Tables and chairs provided for up to 80 guests
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[tely@veteransoutreach.org](mailto:tely@veteransoutreach.org)

330-755-5792 x2

Support our veterans and book your event at the Youngstown Foundation Event Center today!



## Support For Our Veterans

We are thrilled to share the wonderful news of our successful journey through the first half of 2024, made possible by the unwavering support of these organizations, and, of course, all of our readers, donors, and supporters. Your generosity has been instrumental in propelling Veterans' Outreach toward new heights, and we extend our deepest thanks for your continued commitment to our mission.



## Special Donation from the Trumbull County Veterans Service Commission



We are beyond excited to announce that the Trumbull County Veterans Service Commission has generously donated \$90,000 to our cause. This substantial contribution will be pivotal in expanding our services and resources for veterans in need. The donation underscores the importance of our mission and provides a significant boost to our efforts in making a lasting difference in the lives of those who have served our country. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Trumbull County Veterans Service Commission for their incredible support.

### Walmart

Veterans' Outreach Corporate and Regional Offices are incredibly grateful for the support provided by Walmart's Spark Good grants. These contributions make a significant impact in helping us extend essential services and resources to veterans and their families. Walmart's commitment to community enrichment and support for those who have served our country is deeply appreciated. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those who have sacrificed so much for our nation. Thank you, Walmart, for your partnership and generosity!

### The Youngstown Foundation



A special thank you to The Youngstown Foundation for providing grant funds to facilitate our transition to a new headquarters. The funds allocated for the flagpole, security cameras, and signage are instrumental in creating a safe and welcoming space for our veterans. We are deeply grateful for your support. Your contributions serve as a beacon of hope for the veterans we serve, empowering us to forge ahead with renewed determination. Together, we are making a lasting impact on the lives of those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

### Sheely's Furniture and Appliance



Furnish Your Life.



A heartfelt thank you to Sheely's Furniture and Appliance for the fantastic partnership initiated during the first quarter of 2024. The overwhelming response to the survey set the stage for a meaningful collaboration. Their commitment to matching all donations was a testament to their dedication to the well-being of our veterans. Thanks to your generosity and support, the drive, which ran from January 1st through March 31st at Sheely's North Lima and Aurora locations, made a significant impact on our initiatives. We deeply appreciate Sheely's and all who contributed to this successful campaign.

## Hollywood Gaming



For years now, Hollywood Gaming at Mahoning Valley Race Course has been a steadfast supporter of ours. We are so grateful for them and their kindness. These much-needed funds go towards renovating our new building location. Thank you, Hollywood Gaming!

Your contributions serve as a beacon of hope for the veterans we serve, empowering us to forge ahead with renewed determination. Together, we are making a lasting impact on the lives of those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

[Donate Now](#)

We thank all of you that have supported our Mission through your donations, thoughts, and prayers. You made it possible to help tens of thousands of Veterans with financial assistance, food, and clothing. Your pledge of support is needed to continue our mission to serve and honor all veterans. Will you make a small monthly pledge of \$10 or more? This gift can immediately make a difference for a Veteran in need.



[Donate Now](#)



You can also call 888-2-VET-NET and speak with Teri Ely to donate.

## December



[Civil Air Patrol \(USAF Auxiliary\) Birthday](#)  
Dec. 1

[#GivingTuesday](#)  
Tuesday after Thanksgiving

[National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day](#)  
Dec. 7

[U.S. National Guard Birthday](#)  
Dec. 13

[National Wreaths Across America](#)  
Dec. 18

Hanukkah Begins  
Dec. 25, 2024 – Jan. 2, 2025

[Christmas Day](#)  
Dec. 25

[Kwanzaa](#)  
Dec. 26 – Jan. 1

[New Year's Eve](#)  
Dec. 31

## Discounts



This highlights the commitment of businesses that support our military through numerous military discounts, deals and freebies for active duty service members, veterans and their families.

### [Read More →](#)

- Auto Discounts
- Auto Insurance
- Lodging Discounts for Military
- Amusement Parks
- Computers and Software
- Cellular and Wireless Communication
- Life Insurance
- 2024 Veterans Day Deals, Discounts and Freebies
- Home and Garden
- Home Insurance

## Heroes' Passage In Kentucky

Veterans' Outreach was donated 110 acres of Kentucky wilderness. Plans are underway for the development of Heroes' Passage, a veteran retreat with a healing environment for veterans that are having problems with transitioning to civilian life.

[Read More →](#)





# Veterans' Outreach



## Ohio

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2VETNET  
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## Alabama

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Hartselle, AL  
35640  
P: (256) 778-3266  
F: (256) 778-  
03267

## Florida

5650 Park Blvd. N  
Ste. 3  
Pinellas Park, FL  
33781  
P: (727) 317-3712  
F: (727) 317-3713

## Kentucky

512 E. Main St.  
Grayson, KY 41143  
P: (606) 475-0216  
F: (606) 475-0217

## New York

P: (888) 283-8638

### West VA

P: (888) 283-8638

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