



Breaking News: Citrus County Sheriff's Office Undersheriff Buddy Grant resigns

Updated: 7:18 pm

HPH Hospice honors veterans

Nineteen veterans honored through 'We Honor Veterans' program

By Nancy Kennedy

Tuesday, June 6, 2017 at 7:00 pm (Updated: June 6, 7:46 pm)

U.S. Navy veteran Benjamin Wray spent 10 years serving his country from 1979 to 1989 as a cook and a "damage controlman."



MATTHEW BECK/Chronicle

HPH Hospice volunteer and United States Navy veteran Rick Lawhorn, right, puts a military pin on the lapel of fellow U.S. Navy veteran Benjamin Wray on Tuesday morning at the Health Center at Brentwood. HPH Hospice presented 20 vets at the healthcare facility with the pins and "We Honor Veterans" certificates.

He spent a year on the USS LaSalle in the Persian Gulf and was in the Mediterranean during the Grenada conflict.

On Tuesday, Wray and 19 other veterans who are residents of the Health Center at Brentwood in Lecanto were honored by HPH Hospice for their military service.

The "We Honor Veterans" program of HPH Hospice recognizes veterans from all branches of the military by presenting them with a certificate and a pin.

Vietnam veterans also receive a Vietnam War pin and a 50-year commemorative pin for service "above and beyond."

"It doesn't matter what you did during your time in service or what branch you served in, we're all the same band of brothers," said Steve Gardner, one of the HPH Hospice veteran-volunteers who came to honor their comrades.

Each veteran was told: "We are here to pay special tribute to you for your military service to America and for advancing the universal hope for freedom and liberty for all."

To the Vietnam War veterans, they were also given a sincere, "Welcome home, sir."

As William Bidwell, who served in the Marines, received his pin and "Welcome home," his daughter, Joyce Atherton, hugged and kissed him.

"This means so much," she said, her voice breaking with emotion. "It's overwhelming to see him be

honored for what he's done."

Contact Chronicle reporter Nancy Kennedy at 352-564-2927 or nkennedy@chronicleonline.com.