



Iowa Compatriot, December, 2025  
Iowa Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

### **Liz Cameron Receives Life-Saving Award**



Several weeks ago, Doug Frazer's son-in-law's cousin, Roman Price, young married father of four, was suddenly diagnosed with stage-4 kidney disease. Doctors said that only a kidney transplant could save him from endless dialysis and ultimately death.

Doug and Claudia had no idea that Elizabeth, their daughter, had stepped forward. Doctors

found that she could indeed be the donor. Both surgeries were complete successes, and recovery was smooth. (This was in last month's newsletter.)

Shown in the picture above are Iowa SAR President Keven Parmenter, Elizabeth, Paul and Claudia Frazer, and Nancy Thornton (Claudia's sister / Liz's aunt). The award celebration was held on December 23, 2025.

What a wonderful way to close out the year!



## **The History of Wreaths Across America—in Iowa**

At 11:00 am on Saturday December 13, 2025, the Wreaths Across America ceremony took place at Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines and Linwood Cemetery in Dubuque. Many are not aware that Woodland was the site of the first Wreaths Across America ceremony held in Central Iowa.

In 2008, I was the president of the Iowa Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. I was contacted by a woman in Iowa City who was having a ceremony there. She told me that they had so many wreaths donated that they actually had 200 more than they needed. She knew of our efforts across Iowa to honor veterans and an offer was made that if the 200 wreaths could be picked up in a day or two they could be used to remember veterans in Woodland Cemetery.

Of course my first response was to accept and then figure out the details. How was I supposed to know how much room was needed for 200 boxed wreaths? As a salesman covering the entire state, I quickly scheduled appointments that would have me finishing my day in Iowa City in time to load 200 wreaths into my company car. While the effort did not rival the logistical challenges of the D-Day invasion, it was a rather tight fit. Even though the event was in December, I think I was still vacuuming out pine needles from the car by the 4th of July. As a side benefit, however, my car never smelled better.

On December 14, 2008, a ceremony was held at Woodland. Col Tim Orr, who had just been named the top General of the Iowa National Guard spoke on behalf of then Governor Chet Culver. In front of a crowd the *Des Moines Register* described as "predominantly older," Army veteran Dave Shannon of Newton, Iowa laid the first wreath to honor the POW/MIA's. Then 12-year-old Ricardo Gomez sounded taps and the other wreaths were laid.

Now 17 years later, 1375 veterans have been identified in Woodland Cemetery. Some of the original volunteers, now aging a bit themselves, donate wreaths and show up to place them. Dave Shannon has now passed and other veterans and families have stepped forward as wreath presenters for each of the service branches. Ricardo Gomez would now be about 30. Time can go quickly, but memories often linger and isn't that what these ceremonies are about?

Mike Rowley



## Wreaths Across America—2025

With windchill at -7 degrees, Larry, Matt and Randy attended to the wreaths at Linwood Cemetery in Dubuque with John Pregler of the SUVCW.

*“And what to our wondering eyes should appear  
but a shiny black car ...*

*and two Girl Scouts from near.”*

It seems the Cascade, Iowa girls heard of our work and drove up to see if they could help. Through our conversation, it appears we may be able to count on them again and assist with their projects.

## Woodlawn Draws Plenty of Helpers



The winter weather did not stop volunteers from the placement of memorial wreaths on the graves of the 1375 veterans buried in Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines, Iowa.



Veterans and families representing each branch of service- Marines, Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, Space Force as well as POW/MIA





SAR/SUVCW/1812 member Donald Richardson and his daughter Janet who is a Staff Sgt in the Iowa National Guard.



### **Salvation Army Bell Ringing**

Compatriots Randy Lyon, Matt Schwalm, Dennis Geesaman, and Larry Hoelscher (SAR /SUVCW joined other civic groups again this year to “ring the bell for the Salvation Army” at HyVee in

Asbury, Iowa. We were joined by John Pegler.

In a two-hour effort in windy, cold weather just over \$222 was raised. This was on pace with our past efforts and a lot of fun.

### **Iowa Gets Ready for the 250<sup>th</sup> National Celebration**

Mike Rowley is serving as a member of the Iowa 250<sup>th</sup> Task Force Celebration Committee as a representative of the SAR. Dianne Baker Hoye represents the DAR. The Task Force is now considering ideas. Send your thoughts to Mike

12/18 First Iowa 250 Task Force meeting at the Iowa State Capitol (Dianna Baker Hoye)



## Ideas for the Iowa 250 Project

Example: Take a picture in all 943 Iowa towns and cities with the large "Betsy Ross" (like the one taken in Knoxville, Iowa, on 11/19)



Just four days after Iowa showcased plans to celebrate America's 250th anniversary the City of Rippey, Iowa can already check the box for having one of the first Iowa 250 events to celebrate the history of all things Iowa.



Joshua Dyer, a history teacher at Southeast Valley in Gowrie, took advantage of a pre-holiday school break and unseasonably warm December weather to gather volunteers and townsfolk to install two Veterans Administration gravestones for Silas Cook and David Edwards. Both serve in the Union Army during the Civil War and are buried in Rippey Cemetery.



Joshua's research months ago led to the discovery of the unmarked veterans and his documentation allowed the approval of an application for military stones from the VA. As a history teacher Mr. Dyer sought assistance from fellow Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War member and Vietnam War veteran David Burkett of Scranton.



Friends --Luke Winkelman and Schyler Bardole-- represented in period uniforms the over one thousand War of 1812 veterans and the 41 Revolutionary War veterans known to have chosen Iowa as their final home and are buried in Iowa soil.

These soldiers were not officers and Rippey will not be the largest town to celebrate America 250. These volunteers certainly showed every town and resident in Iowa that they can make the next year a special one for others to learn of Iowa and her people.

When young men like Joshua Dyer come along, History is often re-discovered and taught to yet more generations.

This story is not only the marking and remembering two Civil War veterans but also a teacher's commitment to teaching by example.

I don't know if anyone has less free time than young working parents.

Yet here Joshua is marking the graves that have been unmarked for 120 years and then using them as an example for his students.

It is inspiring even to this nearly 70-year-old. We don't always need to search history books for heroes. They are still among us. Mike Rowley

#### **Your Iowa SAR Board of Managers**

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