

Veterans Closet a bid to repay debt to soldiers

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Intern Danielle Davis of Waukegan hangs shirts inside the Veterans Closet trailer where donated clothes are kept for veterans and their family to get free of cost. | Yadira Sanchez Olson/Sun-Times Media Group

Yadira Sanchez Olson

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Aug. 9 7:30 a.m.

Mary Carmody of Wadsworth started Veterans Closet last month to pay off the debt we owe to those who have fought hard and lost much to keep us safe and free.

In a small trailer at Freedom Farm for Vets in Wadsworth and only four weeks into the project, Carmody has already collected dozens of boxes of clothes donated by community members and elected officials.

The idea for Veterans Closet, a place where veterans and their families can get new or gently used clothing and household items, came out of a need she identified in her role as the new executive director of the Lake County Council for Seniors. Shortly after she took the position in March, she said she noticed a trend in the clients being served.

“I’d say about 80 percent of the males are veterans,” Carmody said.

In talks with the senior vets she found out many needed clothes for themselves and their families, and were looking to the council for help.

As the daughter of Slovenian immigrants who came to this country for its freedom and opportunities, Carmody thought a place specifically designed to meet this need would be worth the investment of time and energy.

The response from just about everyone she’s encountered has been amazing, she said.

With a few phone calls, a trailer where the clothes could be stored and displayed was lent by Valerie Herson, the daughter of late U.S. Army veteran Donald R. Herson.

The site for the trailer is provided by John Ress, the founder of Freedom Farm for Vets, 13155 Hart St., Wadsworth, where veterans are welcome to visit and engage in a variety of stress-relieving activities, including spending time with Ress’s horses, chickens and ducks or tend a garden from which produce can be picked and taken home.

Since veterans already visit the farm, Ress said it just made sense to offer the clothes there, free of cost, from Veterans Closet.

“That’s why I started this place,” Ress said. “Whatever they need we need to make available.”

The trailer was stocked Thursday with what Carmody called the fall line: jackets, sweaters and boots.

All the donations, some of them new, were donated by people who want to thank veterans for their service, like Mitch Moore, the district manager of a Home Depot in Schaumburg.

A disabled veteran himself, Moore said through the Home Depot Foundation he gets the opportunity to help veterans by providing funds, supplies and manpower to projects that benefit vets, like the Veterans Closet.

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“We seek to improve their quality of living,” Moore said. “It’s because of vets that we can exercise our rights.”

Moore and his team of volunteers will be building three sheds next month where the donated clothes can be neatly stored to make it easier and more accessible for the veterans to peruse.

Moore has donated two picnic tables to Freedom Farm for Vets. The sheds will be built where the trailer is now, just across from the garden.

It’s humbling for Carmody to see her idea start to bear fruit — already a handful of vets visit the trailer each day.

Two of the veterans she’s met have no home.

“They’re thankful for this service,” Carmody said. “But really we’re thankful for theirs.”

She calls the trailer and the sheds that will soon be built baby steps to a bigger goal. With funding and sponsorships, Carmody hopes Veterans Closet will one day be a centrally located spot big enough so no veteran ever has to go without.

“What’s great about this is that you can see where your donations are going. Drop by anytime and see,” Carmody said.

Veterans Closet is at Freedom Farm for Vets, 13155 Hart St., Wadsworth, and is open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

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Rosan

God bless you Mary Carmody for your your hard work in helping these Vets . Very proud of generous heart and hands.

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 Candidate Clerk Janet Kilkelly visits Freedom Farm | Janet Kilkelly for Lake County Clerk | Janet Kilkelly | Lake County Clerk | 708.859.1519

[...] The farm is open to all veterans and their families, giving them a positive place to be a part of and to visit. It was an honor to be there today and visit with the veterans and meet the kids from kids*rank The event was captured by Art Norman of Chicago News Channel #5 who stopped in to do a feature news article on the farm as well as Yadira Sanches Olson from the News-Sun. [...]

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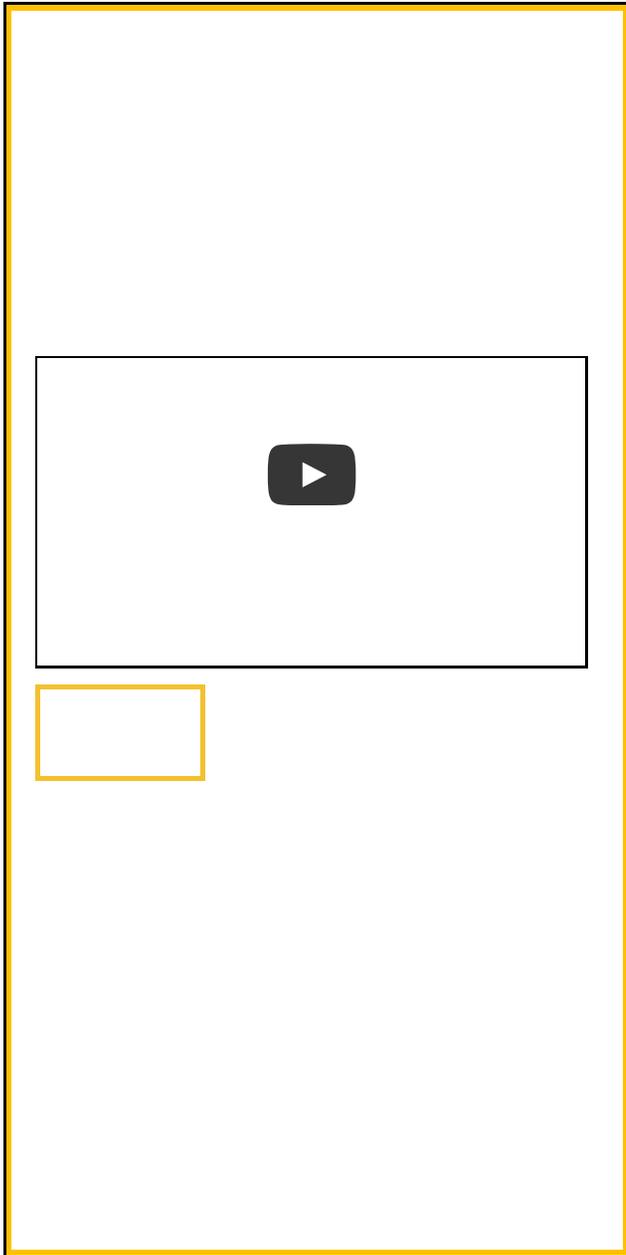
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