



ELIYAHU GURFINKEL, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Jack and Faye Wiseley of Dexter raise money and recruit volunteers to fly World War II veterans to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. They're flanked by veterans Alton Steinaway, left, of Dexter, and Bill Short, right, of Ypsilanti. Steinaway was on the first flight the couple organized last year and Short is scheduled to make the trip to Washington in April.

"I don't think there's a day that goes by that I don't think about it."

- Bob Schmidt, a veteran from Ann Arbor who visited the monument July 7.

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By LYNN MONSON

The Ann Arbor News

Jack and Faye Wiseley created a program that last year took 222 area [World War II](#) veterans to Washington, D.C., to see the national [World War II Memorial](#).

This year, they plan to take 255 more.

Yet even though they raised tens of thousands of dollars to make the trips free for the veterans, and despite having spent hours and solved myriad problems that go with transporting large groups of senior citizens thousands of miles, they sometimes can't believe it's happened.

"Even still, I keep saying, 'Can this really work?'" Faye says.

It has more than worked. The [Pride and Honor Flight](#) project gained recognition throughout southeast Michigan as a selfless act on the part of the Wiseleys and the corps of friends they enlisted. Hundreds of people have responded by donating money, organizing fundraisers and giving time to ensure that area veterans can visit the memorial to their war service.

The Wiseleys' work in creating and maintaining this project is the basis of their selection today as the Ann Arbor News Citizens of the Year. They were chosen from among several finalists nominated by readers of The News. The newspaper is donating \$1,000 to a fund, chosen by the Wiseleys, that helps homeless veterans; it is administered by the [VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System](#).

Two years ago, Faye was watching television one Sunday morning when she saw a report about an Ohio group that took a few World War II veterans to Washington so they could see the then-new national World War II Memorial. Organizers arranged every detail of a flight to Washington on a single day, and they raised money so that the veterans wouldn't have to pay a dime. Faye told Jack that she wanted to form a local group to do the same thing.

Working with friends, the Wiseleys, who live in rural Dexter, began to hold fundraisers and they put out the word that local World War II veterans could get a free trip to see the monument. By April of last year they had raised enough money to take 60 veterans and a group of volunteer helpers, called "guardians," to

Jack and Faye Wiseley

Ages: Jack, 64; Faye, 65.

Residence: Rural Dexter.

Occupations: Jack is a retired [Ford Motor Co.](#) autoworker; Faye works in the property management office at [Domino's Farms](#) in Ann Arbor.

Community service: Created local chapter of [Pride and Honor Flight](#), a program that takes World War II veterans to Washington to see the national World War II Memorial; Faye established a grief counseling group in Dexter; Faye served a year as president and Jack assisted for the then-United Fund in Dexter; both earned GEDs and are advocates of the process.

Washington. In July, another 63 veterans made the trip and then 99 more in October. This year, trips in April and May are full and a third in June is nearly filled.

Bob Schmidt, a veteran from Ann Arbor, said he regularly reminisces about his trip to the monument last July 7, thinking of the people he met and things he saw.

"I don't think there's a day that goes by that I don't think about it," Schmidt said.

He is grateful for the Wiseleys' efforts. "That's done all out of the goodness of their heart - all that time they put in," he said.



LON HORWEDEL, ANN ARBOR NEWS FILE

Faye Wiseley chats with 85-year-old Alton Steinaway of Dexter last March. Steinaway is one of the World War II veterans that Wiseley and her husband, Jack, helped to travel to Washington, D.C., to visit the World War II Memorial there.

'Faye was a dynamo'

Linda Vincent of Ann Arbor was one of the people who nominated Faye Wiseley for Citizen of the Year. Vincent served as a volunteer on the trip last October, in part because her late father, Clarence Green, was a World War II veteran.

Vincent was struck by how proud the veterans were of their service and how happy the trip made them. "Even the ones in wheelchairs seemed to stand taller," she said.

Vincent applauds Faye Wiseley's initiative after seeing the television program about the Ohio Pride and Honor group.

"I saw those people that she saw (on television), and I said, 'Isn't that nice, and wouldn't it be nice to take my dad to that.' (But) she was the woman who said, 'I can do that. I can make that happen.'"

In her nomination letter, Vincent describes watching Faye work during the October trip: "Faye was a dynamo: greeting vets, getting through (airport) security, serving lunches, pushing wheelchairs, helping elderly vets on and off buses, doing whatever needed to be done."

Fundraisers continue

Faye extends credit to the original group of friends who helped get the project running: Nola Snider of Dexter, Dick and Mary Jo Ulrich of Dexter, Carol Gaal of Hartland, John Conklin of Whitmore Lake, and Larry Stalker, a member of the Dexter [American Legion](#) post. Several other friends have since joined in, attending work sessions at the Wiseley residence or at the Dexter Legion post.

The Wiseleys and others made presentations to service clubs, veterans groups and other organizations. The Wiseleys created a 501C3 nonprofit to document the fundraising and expenses, which include air fare from Detroit to Baltimore, bus rentals and food in Washington. The trip costs about \$300 per vet; volunteers pay their own way and the rest of the money comes from donations and fundraising events.

They've organized dance nights, silent auctions, a Rosie the Riveter dinner and dance event, a golf outing, several bottle deposit drives. And they're still at it. For this year, they have scheduled a USO-like dinner and dance with a swing orchestra at the [Dexter Knights of Columbus Hall](#) on March 15. There's a golf outing set for May 10 at Reddeman Farms and some restaurant fundraisers in the works.

Jack says "95 percent or more" of the money donated goes directly to the trips, with volunteers usually not billing for incidentals such as mileage, paper, copying expenses or other incidentals. When they recently had to pay the state of Michigan \$750 to maintain their nonprofit status, that translated in Jack's mind to: "Dammit, that's three vets that can't go," he said.

Faye says she will continue the effort until there are no remaining local veterans who haven't seen the monument.

How to get involved with Pride and Honor Flight:

- If you served in the armed forces during World War II, you are eligible to join a flight to Washington to see the national World War II Memorial, free of charge.
- The next scheduled trips are April 19, May 17 and June 14. Although the April and May flights are full, cancellations are common, so a waiting list is available.
- If you would like to go along on a trip as a volunteer helper, the cost is \$300. The job involves assisting one or two veterans through the day.
- Monetary donations are necessary to support the nonprofit enterprise.
- To sign up, contribute money or learn more, call Jack or Faye Wiseley at 734-426-8931, or check the [Web site](#). You can e-mail the Wiseleys at jfwiseley@chartermi.net.

Two veterans who were scheduled for trips this year died before they could make it, and Faye knows that may happen to more.

"We don't have time to back off," Faye says.

As the thanks pour in from veterans, Faye sometimes thinks back on the last year and a half.

"I feel so much passion for them," she says. "That one day (at the monument) is so special for them. And then some of them hook up with each other (later as new friends) and call each other. And that makes me so happy."