

## Michael Joseph Feirer

This week we are happy to name Michael Joseph Feirer as the 125th inductee in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Mike Feirer was nominated by his sons, Shawn and Shane Feirer, and submitted by Michael D. Meyers.

Volunteers contribute greatly to services, programs, organizations and facilities in our community, and we tend to take them for granted. We are very fortunate in the Marshfield area to have several of these giving people in our midst.



One such person is Michael J. Feirer, a lifelong resident, a veteran, and a public servant, born with a giving spirit and instrumental in making things happen in the many organizations to which he belongs.

Michael was born in Marshfield on March 28, 1949, to James and Marie Feirer. He attended St. John's Catholic Church and school. He graduated from Columbus High School in 1968. In anticipation of being drafted into the military during the Vietnam War era, Mike enlisted in the United States Air Force in April 1969, and reported for training at Lackland AFB, Texas.

Mike Feirer and Kathy Carlson were married in Marshfield Oct. 4, 1969, and moved to George AFB, California. In May 1971, Mike was deployed to southeast Asia for one year, stationed in Udorn, Thailand, at the rank of Staff Sergeant, serving as a weapons technician, loading munitions on aircraft destined for massive U.S. bombing strikes in North Vietnam. Mike was later stationed at Ellsworth AFB at Rapid City, South Dakota for the balance of his military commitment.

Mike was employed much of his life at Marshfield Monument, performing many tasks, including utilizing his talent as a skilled freehand artist.

In 1975, at age 26, Mike began a lifelong dedication of his time and talents serving area military service veterans: Lesselyong-Sadowska-Kessler-Martin-Altmann Marshfield American Legion Post 54; and Mueller-Hintz Post 1866 Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mike was elected Post 54 Commander in 1978, the first Vietnam veteran to hold the post; and Wood County Commander, which he held for three years. In 1985, Mike was elected 8th District Commander of the Wisconsin American Legion, again the first Vietnam veteran to do so.

Mike attended the annual Legion State Convention in July 1987 and, in a race with four others interested in the post, was elected to serve as the esteemed State Vice-Commander.

Feirer was a candidate for the post of state commander of the Wisconsin American Legion at the state convention in Eau Claire in July 1988. Despite the statewide support he garnered, however, his bid was unsuccessful. Mike was again elected Post 54 Commander in 1990.

Michael J. Feirer was honored by his friends and comrades as the Marshfield "Veteran of the Year" at a banquet held at the Post 54 clubrooms Nov. 11, 1994.

"Peace and serenity – I think that's what we were looking for here," Feirer reflected, prior to the dedication ceremony which took place on Memorial Day, May 28, 1995.

Mike had been a key figure in the development of the new Veterans Field of Honor. The first phase established the new dedicated military cemetery consisting of 400 burial sites. As the cemetery took shape, Mike drew the plans for the memorial project, constructed of native Wisconsin Ruby Red granite.

In 1996, Mike and his wife Kathy introduced the 1st annual Christmas Friendship Dinner at the Legion clubhouse. This annual event consistently attracted 300-plus people. The tradition continued until 2022 when Mike, favoring a chance to gather with his own family, offered his services to another tradition instead, an annual Thanksgiving dinner.

The annual Children's Easter Party has been held each year since the 1980s. Peter Cottontail joins kids aged 2nd grade or younger for games and activities, especially the popular Easter egg hunt. About 150 people participate, and the kid's menu includes hot dogs, chips and desserts.

Each year, Mike Feirer coordinates the placement of American flags at the graves of Veterans in Hillside Cemetery for Memorial Day. Volunteers place a flag at each of the 2,000 graves. Mike also commissioned a computer map identifying each veteran grave, making it easy to locate them.

Each year, the Wisconsin American Legion plays host to Badger Boys State, open to 940 high school juniors, ages 16 to 18 from throughout the state. Everyone participates in a week-long exercise of practical citizenship training. Over 100 volunteers are needed to support the program, and Mike Feirer has been specifically recognized many times for his volunteer contributions each year.

Mike Feirer first ran for 1st District alderman on the city council in 2000. He defeated 12-year veteran Ernest Raschke by five votes. Mike has served on the council continuously since then and has contributed greatly to a number of very important projects.

In 2006, Mike was elected to the Wood County Board of Supervisors as well. He served in many capacities dealing with social services, traffic and safety, and programs for aging residents. As a member of the ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Center), the group formed a multi-county cooperative agreement involving several surrounding counties. Mike served a total of 16 years on the Wood County Board.

In 2001, Mike Feirer asked his fellow city officials to consider naming the newly constructed boulevard. Various titles were suggested, but Mike's suggestion of Veterans Parkway prevailed.

Shirley Mook asked Mike to help develop a history museum to support local veterans. In 2010, Mike began painting scenery backdrops for various displays; carved and molded hands on the mannequins to hold rifles depicting war scenes; and even carved the military rifles themselves to replicate those depicted in the displays. Mike Feirer and other volunteers eventually moved the collection into the lower level of the 2nd Street Community Center in late 2014. The original displays were expanded and many more added. No longer strictly a military museum, visitors are now exposed to numerous historical stories from Marshfield's past.

In 2012, construction on the Fallen Warriors Memorial located along East First Street recognizes those from Marshfield who have fought and died as a member of the military service. Highlights include paving bricks; utilizing murals and flags to recognize each branch of the military and MIA/POW; and the area is lighted at night. The memorial features six granite slabs with 139 names of local soldiers who have died, from the Spanish-American War to Afghanistan; a 16-inch naval battleship and 50-mm shell; a replica six-to-eight-foot ship anchor; and a combat medic memorial. Organizers are attempting to locate a military howitzer for the memorial.

As a result of efforts by Mike Feirer and others, a new Cabin 12 at Camp American Legion near Tomahawk was dedicated May 13, 2023. The previous cabin was replaced with an entirely new and modern building, completely furnished, in beautiful, peaceful surroundings.

Communities need people like Mike Feirer. He has proven to be honest, dependable, concerned and willing to put himself in a position to do good for others. He is a true Marshfield ambassador, believing in giving back to the community he has always called home. Mike has the ability to lead others to get projects done. And like others of a similar personality, he is reluctant to take any recognition for it. Let this nomination serve as a well-deserved recognition.