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Innovation Studio Volunteer Receives Quilt of Valor for Work with Veterans

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Innovation Studio volunteer receives Quilt of Valor for work with veterans



Jim Young was wrapped in gratitude and honor for the many lives he's touched — including hundreds of veterans — when he received a Quilt of Valor during a presentation July 29 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Nebraska Innovation Studio.

At the presentation, Young was flanked by sister-in-law, Pat Young, and wife Victoria, and seated near the same lathes he's spent countless hours standing over to train veterans on woodturning. They are lessons that double as therapy, helping the veterans heal.

"If I can get a veteran to come out here and make a pen, they'll spend 30 to 40 minutes concentrating on one thing, not thinking about all the other stressors they have," Young said. "That's very positive for them, and then as they get more skilled, they can share those skills with other veterans. They gain confidence in how to relate to people."

“We’ve had a number of veterans come out of their shell, so to speak, and then be able to go back to school or go back to full-time work.”

A veteran himself, Young helps others through Veterans in Recovery, a program he launched in partnership with Nebraska Innovation Studio. He and his wife moved to Lincoln in 2016 to be closer to their son, Brandon, an Information Technology Services employee on campus, and his growing family. It was Brandon who told his dad about Innovation Studio, since Young had previously volunteered for a veterans’ woodturning program in San Diego, California.

Young paid a visit to Innovation Studio in 2017, where David Martin, director, and Jerry Reif, assistant director, were receptive to hosting a similar program. After getting some area veterans groups and the United States Veterans Administration on board, Young launched the program in January 2018.

Since, he’s become a well-known face at Innovation Studio, spending three or four days a week working with veterans. The program partners with Innovation Studio and is made possible through the philanthropy of a generous anonymous donor, who pays for the veteran memberships and the supplies they need to complete various projects. It enables the veterans to learn new skills while aiding in their recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorder and more.

Doug Kapke, a United States Army veteran from Fairbury, Nebraska, is a van driver for the Jefferson County Veteran Service Office and has been bringing veterans to the studio to work with Young for several years. He nominated Young to receive the Quilt of Valor honor because he’s seen and experienced himself the impact of the program.

“I’m fortunate enough to live in a county that values our veterans, and so I’ve been driving veterans up here and that’s how I became involved in the project,” Kapke said. “Instead of waiting in the van, I was invited in, and I work with the guys. It’s been very successful.”

In his remarks, Reif said that 227 veterans have benefited the program, with an average of 30 taking part in any given month. Some, began with the program in January 2018 and continue to participate.

“These are just numbers of course,” Reif said. “For some of those veterans, the experience has been life-altering. For some, it’s been life-saving. I’ve been lucky enough to see the transformation in some of our veterans first-hand.

“From the beginning, Jim has been the heart and soul of this program... (He) has shown his own brand of focus, patience and creativity, and he has changed lives in the process.”

by [Deann Gayman | University Communication and Marketing](https://news.unl.edu/written-by/deann-gayman-university-communication-and-marketing/) (<https://news.unl.edu/written-by/deann-gayman-university-communication-and-marketing/>)

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