Going strong

Army Air Corps and Air Force veteran Harlan Plummer holds a Congressional Record acknowledging his more than 11,000 hours and 30-plus years as a DAV volunteer.

At 100 years old, DAV member continues serving fellow veterans

In 2017, Ohio veteran Harlan Plummer was awarded DAV’s George H. Seal Memorial Trophy, which honors the best of thousands of remarkable men and women who serve in the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program.

In December 2019, Plummer—who is a veteran of World War II, as well as the wars in Korea and Vietnam—turned 100, and he is still racking up volunteer hours with DAV. At last count, he had accumulated more than 11,000 lifetime hours, 500 of which he logged since receiving the award in 2017.
Plummer has volunteered through the VAVS Program for three decades in various capacities, including serving as a volunteer driver at the VA medical center in Chillicothe, Ohio, helping ensure veterans are able to access the health care they have earned. And while his devotion to veterans is clearly linked to his time in service, his volunteer spirit also seems to stem from his own experiences in childhood.

“When I was 13 years old, I got hurt on a railroad track. I was in the children’s hospital for 13 months, and the doctors said I’d never walk and that I’d be in a wheelchair the rest of my life,” said Plummer.

“But I started walking. I went through three wars and two mothers-in-law,” he joked. “It just means an awful lot to me, to help and see people get back on their feet.”

As DAV enters 2020 and looks to celebrate its centennial anniversary, it’s members like Plummer—a veteran of the Army Air Corps and Air Force who belongs to DAV Chapter 71 in West Union, Ohio—who are helping to define the legacy of the organization and set the bar for its future.

“We can’t thank Harlan enough for his time and generosity over more than 30 years with DAV,” said National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “His story should really inspire us all to dig a little deeper and see if there’s more we can be doing for the veterans in our communities.”

While Plummer has boxes of plaques, awards and certificates he’s amassed over time, his efforts are all for the veterans.

“That’s what keeps me going,” Plummer said, “these guys that really need help.”

“Harlan has overcome health and family obstacles over the years, but always comes back to the mission he loves,” said National Commander Butch Whitehead. “He is a living, breathing example of why volunteerism is the cornerstone of DAV’s
mission."