

With enthusiasm and universal community agreement, I nominate Bill and Janet Orr otherwise known as "Team Orr" as the Mantee Veteran's Council "Civilian of the Year". It is high time their contributions have gotten the public acclaim earned over years of service to honor those who serve and have served the nation in military uniform. These contributions have increased with each passing year and embed every aspect of their social engagement in the community notwithstanding the demands of employment and multiple other demands on their time, energy, and personal resources. This year is a high water mark for a team that had already long been the prime example for all to emulate. They don't follow, they lead. They lead with humility, seeking support not credit. They chartered or created a number of activities and organizations in Manatee County and made each of them inseparable from Team Orr in the minds and hearts of our community while establishing a reputation across the region and state from which all of us have reaped the benefits.

Team Orr is the face of Honor Flight for us on the Suncoast. Three times between them they served as guardians. For the past five years they have seen every Honor Flight mission off and welcomed each home with all the bells and whistles and dozens of invited cheerleaders they feel duty bound to provide the participating service men and women. Beyond the time and out of pocket money spent doing this, they have donated more than \$3000 to the organization. The missions are incomplete without the joyous send off and welcome of Janet and Bill's undying direction and attention to ensure that every last participant has a lifechanging experience. Part of this experience is a program the Orr's started to solicit school children to write letters and provide post cards to those on Honor Flight.

Janet's inspiration is rooted in having grown up with a WWII veteran father. It was natural that in 2018 she founded the local Rosie the Riveter Chapter and that she infused programs to honor veterans as a 22 year Bradenton Women's Club member serving as President twice and managing the facility's use for untold programs and events. She was 3x the Chair of the Manatee County Halloween Children's Carnival and active member of Sertoma Club.

Bill "Willy" Orr was joined at wife Janet's hip in each of these endeavors and she too has been his right hand gal in all of his pursuits. He was a 20 year Palmetto Jaycee who also served as state historian and senator. Coming of age did not stop him, Bill founded the JcCongress, a club for those to continue to contribute in the spirit of the Jaycees for the remainder of their lives. His committee and club board memberships include: Manatee Civic Center, Palmetto Boys Club, Palmetto Rotary, Palmetto Pride & Beautification, Palmetto Code Enforcement, President of North Manatee County Business Association, Palmetto HS athletic booster, Palmetto Chamber of Commerce Small Business Committee, 4 year chair of the Palmetto 4th of July Celebration and 6 year member of Desoto Celebration-one of the SE largest and best known community celebrations. For the past four years he has planned, organized and executed the Manatee County Veterans Tribute, the highlight of the County Fair.

No parade in our community is complete or infused with honoring the memory and service of military members without the participation and leadership of Team Orr. The centerpiece of the annual Desoto Parade the past 6 years has been the Veteran's contingent begun and still overseen by Team Orr. For several years they have given logistical and organizational support of a parade in Remembrance of 9-11. Janet's yellow convertible "tweetie-bird" has become a mainstay tribute to the honor WWII veterans on board and in the parade audiences.

Less public, yet vital community contributions by Bill and Janet comprise a long list: visits to Veterans undergoing rehabilitation and those in retirement homes, Wreaths Across America, special honors to selected local heroes like Buffalo Soldier Corporal Steve Lewis and WWII veteran John Skeen, 105 years young, representing Tunnels to Towers and Wounded Warrior Project in parades and countless events, participation and contribution to Manasota Veterans Veterans and First Responder Annual Ball, founding of Women Veterans of the Suncoast in 2023, and numerous road rallies and fundraisers for the Veteran's lunch in conjunction with other civic organizations. His latest efforts include "A Veterans Tail" magazine and organizing and promoting regular informal breakfasts for Veterans at local restaurants.

Wow! Team Orr is our Civilian of the Year!

Nominated 8-1-24 by Kevin W. Wright, MVC Member, (502) 649-0089 kevinwwrightenterprises@gmail.com

