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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Monthly dinner for area veterans gets \$2,500 boost

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2 Building Bridges Veterans Initiative, which lets those who
3 served their country connect and enjoy a meal, gets the boost
4 from a Rutland veterans' organization

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5 TEXT BODY:

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6 The Building Bridges Veterans Initiative started out in
7 Northampton, Massachusetts in 2015 as a monthly social get-
8 together for veterans — a chance to enjoy a dinner with their
9 comrades.

10 It has since grown to 17 sites around New England,
11 including Brattleboro, and has served 115,000 meals, along with

12 a big helping of friendship and a message to those who served
13 that they are not alone.

14 At the monthly meal in Brattleboro on March 25 at
15 American Legion Post 5, Building Bridges received some
16 affirmation for its work in the form of a \$2,500 check from
17 Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 1 in Rutland.

18 Rev. Christopher Carlisle, executive director of Building
19 Bridges Veterans Initiative, said the organization is run totally by
20 volunteers.

21 "It is an initiative that the Episcopal Diocese of Western
22 Massachusetts underwrote to address veteran social isolation,
23 depression, risk of suicide, and many who suffer from PTSD, but
24 essentially to build community," he said.

25 Carlisle said the people involved with launching Building
26 Bridges recognized that the most effective way for veterans to
27 break the feeling of isolation is to spend time with other veterans,
28 and that the best way to do so is over a meal with their peers.

29 Norm VanCor and Dr. Robert Tortolani, Vietnam War
30 veterans who organized the monthly Tuesday Morning Veterans
31 Coffee Group at American Legion Post 5, said that getting
32 involved with Building Bridges was a natural extension of what
33 that other outreach. Post 5 has hosted monthly dinners on the
34 fourth Wednesday of the month for the past couple of years.

35 Lawrence Gold, VVA Chapter 1 vice president, said he
36 was only recently became aware of Building Bridges, but the
37 more he learned about it, the more he wanted to get his
38 organization involved.

39 "Our chapter is about helping other nonprofits that are
40 either helping people who can't afford food or find a place to live
41 if they're homeless," said Gold during a brief ceremony before
42 the meal. "Today, we donated to the Building Bridges Veterans
43 Initiative to help it grow and to continue doing what it's doing."

44 Carlisle said the donation is enough to open a new
45 Building Bridges site and fund its operation for a full year.

46 About 50 veterans, most of whom served during the
47 Vietnam era, and their family members, enjoyed a meal of pot
48 roast, liver and onions, mashed potatoes, vegetables, and salad,
49 with chocolate and carrot cakes for dessert.

50 Those who stop by to eat are asked for a donation to help
51 cover the cost of the meal, but no one is turned away for lack of
52 money.

53 "The sense of gratitude by veterans for these meals is
54 amazing," said Carlisle, adding that the feeling is mutual among
55 the people who volunteer to cook and serve these dinners.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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56 For more information about Building Bridges, visit
57 buildingbridgesveterans.org.

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LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LINKS:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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