AGIF-MH Promotes Education Through Scholarship Program

“Education is Our Freedom . . . And Freedom Should Be Everybody’s Business”. This is our motto and education is what the American GI Forum actively promotes through the Education Committee. Diana Romero, Chair of the AGIF-MH Education Committee worked very hard with the help of dedicated, committed, and enthusiastic committee members for an entire year to raise funds to award scholarships to some very dedicated, hard working and community involved young leaders who know the value of education. In addition to the scholarships awarded to these young individuals, AGIF-MH member Sharon Gallegos was also awarded a scholarship. She is a great example and an inspiration that it is never too late to start college.

At the annual Scholarship Awards Ceremony on August 18, 2007 scholarships were awarded to the following individuals: Lauren Carrillo, Sharon Gallegos, Isela Galvan, Jessica Galvan, Jonathan Garcia, Kristian Martinez, Esteban Romero, and Brisa Vasquez. The ceremony began with a welcome from Diana Romero followed by invocation by Dustin Caldwell, the Mile Hi Youth Chairperson and National Youth Chaplain, as well as opening remarks from Commander Cipriano Griego.

Using the example of Dr. Hector Garcia as a backdrop to his speech, State Vice Commander Jose Martinez encouraged all recipients to have a mission and to keep their eyes on the prize and to not give up. Commander Martinez pointed out the humble beginnings of Dr. Garcia and how he was able to make a difference through education, hard work, and perseverance.

Commander Martinez encouraged all to create opportunities for yourself; volunteer and become involved in community; and cautioned against letting anything stand in the way of your goals.

(continued on pg. 5)
Commander: Cipriano Griego

“Lord, make us an instrument of thy peace.”

They shall grow old, as we that are left, grow old: age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. — Laurence Binyon

Sgt. Randell Olquin, 24, of Ralls, Texas died September 30, 2007 in Baghdad, Iraq of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using small arms fire. He was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, Vilseck, Germany.

Capt. Maria I. Ortiz, 40, of Bayamon, P.R., died July 10, 2007 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered from enemy indirect fire. She was assigned to the Kirk U.S. Army Health Clinic, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

( . . . Department of Defense statistics)

The American GI Forum of the United States, at the 2007 National Conference adopted the following resolution: . . . .
  1. That the American GI Forum of the United States urges a rapid and safe withdrawal of all troops from Iraq.
  2. That the American GI Forum of the United States urges the Congress of the United States to provide adequate funding, including health, rehabilitation, and job opportunities, for all returning veterans . . . .

The war continues, without much notice or protest. The deaths (approaching 4,000) and the wounded (approaching 28,000) continue to mount. It is estimated that over a million Iraqis have died as a result of this war.

Our leaders continue to debate the efficacy of this conflict while our men and women continue to be killed or maimed. Our individual freedoms continue to be eroded as an expense of this war. Our economy is suffering while others are making billions. Our moral fabric is eroding to the point that we as a society are suffering a form of Post Traumatic Stress. This war must end.

As a member of the Mile Hi Chapter you can help. You can get involved and assist us in helping those men and women who are fighting or who have fought to defend our nation and protect our freedoms. Here are some ways you can help:

• Volunteer for the many activities of the Veterans Affairs Committee (see page 6)
• Education Committee is actively seeking funds for our scholarship efforts—become a patron of our “Century Club” (for individuals, families, or corporations contributing toward the fund).
• Advise friends, particularly veterans who may be interested in joining our fine organization;
• Join the Women’s Chapter and support our veterans and community through the efforts of the Women’s Chapter;
• Encourage your children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces or other young person between the ages of 10 and 16 to join the Youth Chapter;
• Volunteer to help with the Thanksgiving Food Basket Program and/or serve on the various holiday party committees

Financially, we continue to be sound. Our physical facilities continue to be kept in good repair, our liquor license is up-to-date and our debts are paid in a timely manner. Our membership count continues to grow. In December we plan on making the final payment on our mortgage. We will own the building free and clear.

In 2008 we will be celebrating 40 years of service to our Veterans, their families and the community-at-large. In 2008, the American GI Forum of the United States will be celebrating 60 years of service.

The American GI Forum, Mile Hi Chapter continues to be a leader in the Metropolitan Denver Community and as such, continues to be representative of the moral principals and traditions of both the State and National GI Forum. We as an organization have achieved national prominence and for that we should be proud. Again, we should not rest on our laurels because there is much more to be accomplished.

Please visit our web page (http://www.agif-milehi.org) for further information, future events and activities.
Communication Committee: Alberta Lopez

The last edition of “El Veterano” was released in July—over three months ago, so I must first apologize for the delay in getting this edition to you. My goal is to produce six editions a year—every other month or bi-monthly. You will see another edition released soon to allow me to catch up. There is so much to cover and there is never a lack of information to forward to our members.

This edition I am focusing on the events of the last three months and we’ve had several noteworthy events take place. I have highlighted them throughout the newsletter and included photos for your viewing enjoyment. After the “Trip to the Wall” in June, I promised a “Special Edition” of that experience. I felt it was more appropriate to release it with the November issue around Veteran’s Day. Expect another newsletter within weeks of this one.

In the November issue of El Veterano, you will find articles about the Adult and Children’s Halloween Parties at the Forum, as well as the World War II Dinner hosted by the Veteran’s Affairs Committee. My goal is to gain as much exposure to our events as possible and as appropriate and per the direction of our chapter Commander.

Currently, with help and support from the leaders within the organization, the Communications Committee is working on ways to improve communication throughout the organization from the chapter level to the national level, as well as creating guides designed to help our members and our officers, such as rules for disseminating information to the membership; job postings; community events; committee information; AGIF events; national news, etc. We want to be able to accommodate our members and give them information they want and need and look forward to.

In addition to producing a national recruitment brochure, meetings with the National Commander, State Commander, Chapter Commander and Vice-Commander regarding communications within the organization, I participated in the “Coors Lideres Training Workshop Program” that was also attended by many AGIF members (please see article in this edition). I am currently working on the following AGIF projects:

- Still in the process of completing a documentary to be aired by Rocky Mountain PBS when complete. This project will take several more months and more interviews with Reporter/Writer Richard Randall;
- Working with a freelance reporter with the Pueblo Chieftain in promoting the AGIF-MH cookbook;
- Working on the policy sub-group as well as the communications sub-group appointed by Commander Griego in preparation for upcoming AGIF-MH retreat for officers and Committee Chairs

Good communications is a team effort. I continue to count on your support, understanding and teamwork. Please contact me if you have any questions. I am always open to suggestions and ideas, and of course you are always welcome to join the Communications Committee.

I can be reached at (720) 317-9559 or on the AGIF e-mail address: agifnewsletter2007@comcast.net

Life must be lived forward but can only be understood backwards. Always remember God gives you:

- Enough Happiness to keep you Sweet
- Enough Trials to keep you Strong
- Enough Sorrows to keep you Human
- Enough Hope to keep you Happy
- Enough Success to keep you Eager
- Enough Friends to give you Comfort
- Enough Wealth to meet your Needs
- Enough Enthusiasm to make you look Forward
- Enough Faith to banish depression, and
- Enough Determination to make each day a better day than the Last.

- Marcela Paiz
The Women’s Chapter is very active and very involved. We have a record number of members who are active and committed. Dolores Moya, chaired our fundraiser “Bella Noche” event and she did a wonderful job of getting this off the ground. We had a great group of volunteers that were there for setup and the actual event. Events like this can never be successful unless everyone contributes their time and effort. Even working with limited funds, the event generated a substantial profit. This event was well received and the response was that everyone had a great time.

We also had a great time with the Race for the Cure. We not only reached the goal of $500 I set for us when I set up the team, we went beyond that amount and went above and beyond and collected $1,026! I want to thank everyone for doing your part to help fight against this terrible disease that lives among us. If affects everyone when one of our loved ones has cancer and so I know that on October 7th we really did our part to help toward the research to rid our society of this terrible disease.

Once again it takes volunteers and I appreciate all of you who have been involved with the projects the women have worked on this year.

I also attended the State Quarterly Meeting and gave a report about all of the Women’s Chapter projects.

Our next goal is to complete our cook book and we really need our members to start sending their recipes to Mary Acosta, Roberta Moreno, Rebecca Martinez, Dolores Moya, Dolores Martinez or myself. The target date for completion is December 1, 2007 so that we can start selling them. We do not have a cost yet because we are going to get some bids and prices on putting it together. We already have some excellent contacts to work with. This book is going to need contributions from everyone. Any veteran that wants to send us a short bio and a recipe we welcome that. We have a template set up for this. Please send your bio and recipe to Mary Acosta at macosta1225@yahoo.com. If you have questions and/or need to reach me, my phone numbers are: (720) 424-1435 (work); (720) 933-1081 (cell); (303) 480-0957 (home) and my e-mail address is: kathyclenin@comcast.net

THANK YOU!!

Women’s Chapter: Kathy Clenin

Race for the Cure

Team Captain: Kathy Clenin
Team Coordinators: Ben Romero, Lorraine Espino, Shirley Lucero
Walkers: Ben Romero Frances Ortega
Marcela Paiz (Survivor) Flor Lovato
Julia Rivera Evelyn Romero
Delores Cordova Felicia Barela
Debbie Medrano Dottie Bruton
Dani Hernandez Diana Romero
Julie LeDoux Lydia LeDoux
Yolanda Cervantes Bernie Martinez
Toby Rampa & children Gloria Silva
Debra Valverde Jose & Dolores Martinez
Dolores Moya Juanita Cordova (Survivor)
Magdalena Gallegos (Survivor)
Melissa Romero (Survivor)
Survivors who did not walk: Louise Griego, Mary Diaz, Jose Sisneros, Angelita Armenta
Donations: Lorraine Espino, Joseph Sosa, Justine Gomez, Mark & Dee Aguilar, Dennis & Kathleen Clenin, Cip & Louise Griego, Ruby Gonzales, Angelina Medina, Rich Marin & Alberta Lopez (sold menudo the day of the race and donated proceeds to race.)
Notable mention: Louise Griego organized the gathering of survivors for the “Survivor’s Breakfast”; Dennis Clenin and Cip Griego shuttled race and breakfast participants; Dolores Moya allowed participants to park in her driveway to be shuttled to the race together.
AGIF-MH Promotes Education (continued from page 1)

In his final point to all scholarship recipients, Commander Martinez stated “YOU are the master of your destiny and only you can make it happen.” In summarizing the points he made, Commander Martinez said “We take the “M” out of mission, the “O” out of opportunity, the “N” out of nothing must stop you from taking your eyes off the prize, the “E” from education and the “Y” from you and we have “MONEY”. Commander Martinez points out in reality that we want to make money in order to better our lives and the lives of our family. He also cautioned that when we have completed our mission and we are making money, not to forget where we came from and how we can help to make the lives of others better.

In conclusion, Commander Martinez wished all scholarship recipients well in their educational and personal endeavors and repeated the words of another famous medical doctor, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, “Hasta la Victoria Siempre!”.

Education Committee Members:

Dottie Bruton
Dustin Caldwell
Kathleen Clenin
Ann Flores

Lorraine Jiron
Dolores M. Martinez
Jose P. Martinez

“Hamburger/Karaoke” Night Every Wednesday Night at the AGIF-MH. The first Wednesday of the month is “Mexican Hamburger” night.

The last Friday of the month is the MONTHLY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION. Please mark these dates in your calendar and don’t forget to check the AGIF-MH website periodically for current events/meetings. The AGIF-MH website: www.agif-milehi.org.

To help out with Hamburger Night, please express your interest by contacting the AGIF-MH e-mail address at agifnewsletter2007@comcast.net.
Veteran’s Affairs: Ben Romero

This year the Veterans Affairs Committee chose the theme of ‘Reaching out to Veterans and their Families’ to help support our veterans and their families. We need the help of our Chapter members to be successful in our committee activities.

The Veterans Affairs WANTS YOU. Sign up now and you can help our military veterans and their families by participating in any of the following committee activities:

- **Root Beer Social**: This social hour is a chance to visit with our Veterans (men & women) from all war campaigns who are patients at the VA Nursing Home. The Social is held the 2nd Friday of each month from 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Bring a little cheer to our veterans.

- **Hearts Across the Miles**: This program provides U.S. service members overseas with items for a better quality of life. Your donations can help to boost the spirits of our veterans. Look for the Red-White-Blue barrels soon at the Chapter to place your donated items.

- **Adopt-A-Veteran Unit**: The Veterans committee is working to identify a local military unit in Iraq that can be adopted and supported by our Chapter members. Support may include quarterly care packages, weekly letters and more.

- **The Veterans Honor Guard** is seeking veteran members to participate in the Honor Guard to remember and honor our fallen veterans.

Contact Ben Romero, Committee Chairperson (303-748-1295) or Rich Marin, Chapter Vice-Commander (720-479-9622) or anyone of the committee members if you are interested in supporting our veterans by participating in any of the activities listed above. Yes, YOU can make a difference. Give a little bit of your time or make a donation to benefit a VET or their family.

Let’s not forget our Veterans

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The J.P. Martinez, American Legion Post #204 located at 4200 Pecos Street in Denver, Colorado has “Hamburger Night” on Friday’s and weekly dances on Sunday from 4:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m. featuring: AMOR

The American GI Forum—Mile Hi Chapter is grateful to the J.P. Martinez Post for providing the rifles to the MILE HI VETERANOS for 21 Gun Salutes

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THE AMERICAN GI FORUM
MILE HI CHAPTER
INVITES YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN RECOGNITION OF ALL THOSE WHO SERVED AND DIED IN DEFENSE OF OUR NATION

PLEASE JOIN US ON NOVEMBER 10, 2007 AT 9:00 A.M.
DENVER CITY AND COUNTY BUILDING

TAKE PART IN OUR MARCH COMMEMORATING OUR VETERANS

The Youth Honor Guard from Horace Mann and Skinner Middle School will participate with the Mile Hi Honor Guard.

Rocky Mountain Cruisers will be participating with the Mile Hi Chapter.

Skyline Chapter will be participating with the Mile Hi Chapter.

Pizza and soft drinks will be served at the AGIF—Mile Hi immediately after the parade for all those who participate in the parade.
Los Piratas (the Pirates), Plunderers of Sloan's Lake, American GI Forum, Mile Hi Chapter competed in the “Dragon Boat Races” at Sloan's Lake during the Dragon Boat Festival the last weekend in July (three months ago!). Los Piratas have competed the last four years and are proud to be affiliated with the Mile Hi Chapter of the American GI Forum. Under the leadership of Team Captain and drummer, Judge Johnny Barajas, the team members were: Tammy Baca, Jeri Barajas, Shirley Lucero, Catherine Luevano, Julia Rivera, Ruth Sanchez, Carol Sandoval, Lindita Torres-Winters, Rob Baca, Ron Beall, Ralph Castor, Mike Garcia, Bill Garcia, Terry Luevano, Jimmy Lujan, Jose Pete Martinez, Greg Sullivan, Ernie Torres, and Pat Vigil.

According to Johnny Barajas, last year Los Piratas won 3 out of 5 races losing in the consolation semi-finals. The team gave it their best shot and had loads of fun, and made us all proud but the travelling trophy was not to be had. They look forward to the challenge next year and still have their eyes on the travelling trophy.

Some more happenings:

- Coors Lideres Training Workshop Program: On August 17th several members of the AGIF-MH participated in a minority leadership workshop sponsored by Coors Brewing Company. This four hour training program based on a personalized assessment tool developed by Gallup University — the Clifton Strengths Finder measures individuals’ talents and identifies their five most dominant strengths.

- A Panel Discussion on September 18th regarding the Ken Burns documentary “The War” and sponsored by AUSA Senate, Rocky Mountain PBS, and the DU History Project was attended by many AGIF members. Commander Griego was asked by the University of Denver to be a panelist. Other panelists included World War II veterans Dr. Robert Hardaway and Marvin Lederman; DU History Professors Dr. Elizabeth Escobedo and Dr. Susan Schultan; and Lisa Olken with Rocky Mountain PBS.
More AGIF-MH Happenings ........

Lou Cordova helping out with face painting.

Mercie showing her “tiger” face paint.

A young Forumeer trying her best at the piñata.

John Lopez (Alberta’s son) keeping an eye on third base.

Alberta and Nadia, Mercie’s Goddaughter.

Toby Rampa fires up the grill.

Events Committee Chair, Mercie Salazar planned the annual AGIF—Mile Hi Annual Picnic this year at Sloan’s Lake Park on Saturday, September 8th. The record number of people in attendance feasted on burgers, brats, chicken and many dishes members brought. The kids enjoyed the sack race, face painting, water games, and breaking open the piñata while the adults participated in a friendly game of softball played with members of the Skyline Chapter. There were several raffle prizes awarded and plenty of treats for the children. Fred Salazar donated a child’s bicycle to be raffled.

Mercie did a fabulous job putting this event together with the help of the Events Committee. A great time was had by all! We can hardly wait to see what Mercie has planned for next year’s picnic.

Coming Up in next issue of El Veterano:
- Pictures of the 2007 Halloween Party hosted by the Women’s Chapter
- Veteran’s Dinner honoring World War II Veterans hosted by the Veteran’s Affairs Committee as well as other Veteran’s Day festivities

Angelo Lopez pitches as Rich Marin (background) gets ready to steal base.
I had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Alfonso Rael for a story to be published in “El Veterano”. His son Jerry is a member of the American GI Forum. Being that Jerry is a war veteran himself (Vietnam) I was anxious to interview his father.

When I arrived at the home of Alfonso and Teresa Rael’s home, I was greeted by their sons Jerry and Gino and daughter Wanda as well as their son-in-law Floyd Sanchez who is daughter Debra’s husband. Debra had not yet arrived. The closeness of this family was very obvious and the love and respect in the home was evident by the attention given to their father and the love and respect demonstrated to each other.

As we were invited into the comfortable living room of their warm and welcoming home with walls adorned with pictures of their eight children, thirteen grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren, Mr. Rael thanked us for being there. Teresa Rael, Alfonso’s wife of 56 years mentions that she has two great grandchildren on the way. Born in Fort Garland, Colorado and a Rancher by trade, Mr. Rael is a tall, handsome and proud man even though he’s had some medical set backs and has had a few rough years, he has managed to keep his sense of humor in tact as he set everyone at ease. Mr. Rael served as a Marine Machine Gunner in the Korean War from October 1951 – October 1953. As a young 21 year old man, he was sent to Camp Pendleton for basic training and from there was shipped to Japan on a troop carrier and from Japan was sent to Korea. Mr. Rael fought in combat on Hill 747, 749, and Bunker Hill. Mr. Rael talked of the memories he has of the war and sadly recalls the carnage. He spoke of his experience on Bunker Hill and states all but two men died there, including his Gunner Assistant who was hit in the head by shrapnel and died in his arms.

Mr. Rael was married right before he left for Korea and says his only objective was to get back home. Mr. Rael expressed his anger that when he was drafted it was during the harvest season and he was not given a deferment to tend to his ranch where he had 100 acres of potatoes; 100 acres of field peas; barley, and oats and along with his cattle lost it all as it went unattended. His family suffered a great loss and he feels the government took the best years of his life and he got nothing out of it. He also said he did not see the world because he was on a ship most of the time. Mr. Rael spoke lovingly of the time he was given a two week furlough when his oldest child, Sandra was born on Christmas Day in 1951. He came home on December 27, 1951 to greet his two day old daughter. Interjecting humor Mr. Rael said all eight of his kids looked like the milkman!

While in Korea Mr. Rael was stricken with malaria and was hit with shrapnel and was hospitalized many times. He states that back then communication was very poor and most of the time word never got back to his family about his condition. He says it is not like it is now, where you can turn the television on and see what is happening in the war. He says his family never knew of his condition.

Mr. Rael was awarded the United Nations Korean Service Medal; the Korean Service Medal; and the National Defense Medal.

A very articulate man, Mr. Rael mentions that while on Hill 749, he wrote a few pages about his experience. Mr. Rael’s daughter Debra who was present for the interview and has written several articles about her father shared the journal entry with me. Debbie as well as the other siblings are very protective of their father. I was touched as Gino came up to his father and with love and compassion hugged him while Debra read the letter. Mrs. Rael stated her husband suffers from nightmares of his experience in the war and Mr. Rael added that he has the same recurring nightmare. Debra expressed the frustration her father and her family have experienced in obtaining veteran benefits for their father, it was hard for him to prove his condition was related to the war and discovered this to be true for a lot of older veterans as the government wants to attribute their condition to their age and/or sadly delay the process in hopes that given enough time they will not have to address their concerns. Fortunately, Mr. Rael has a lot of support through his family. Of his eight children and against his wishes, only son Jerry served in the military – the Marines like his father. Jerry said he was motivated by the educational incentive. He later received a degree and is currently teaching at Lake Middle School.

I was blessed to have the opportunity to meet the Rael Family and to talk with Alfonso Rael about his war experience, his family, and his life. I felt it only fitting to allow Debra, his youngest daughter to have the last paragraph of this story. Here is an excerpt of what Debra read: “My father told me as he had tears in his eyes, “every man on that hill knew in his heart that he owed his life to each other – because I personally never met men like these guys that I had never known nor will I know. In circumstances of war these men showed their colors. I am glad that I had the honor of combat positions with such a fine group of men.”

When he spoke these words he meant them with his whole heart as he sat up tall in his own chair. My father was proud to be a Marine and he was proud to serve his country, but what hurt him the most was the loss of the men during this war in Korea.”

Mr. Rael, we thank you for your service to this country, for the honor you have given to your fallen comrades, as well as your contributions to our culture and the love you have for your friends, family, and faith.
Congratulations to all Scholarship Recipients!

“Education is Our Freedom . . . and Freedom Should Be Everybody’s Business.”

American GI Forum
Mile Hi Chapter
1717 Federal Blvd.
Denver, CO 80204