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## **Vietnam Veterans and Active Armed Forces Members to be Honored**

A unique exhibit of Vietnam combat art, an Army band performance, an address by a retired Navy Admiral, and a documentary film about a young Vietnamese survivor are among the events planned by the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts in September to honor veterans and those currently serving in the military.

The sponsor for the monthly-long salute is Blair Bros. Inc.

### **Vietnam Combat Art Exhibit**

As combat in Vietnam escalated in 1965, the U. S. Army Center of Military History developed an Army Art Program to document Army activities. Some 39 original pieces of art were completed and are currently housed at the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington.

The County of Roanoke, the cities of Roanoke and Salem, the Town of Vinton, and the Stonewall Jackson Chapter AUSA were given permission to reproduce these pieces and have made them available for public viewing.

During the Vietnam War, U. S. Army Special Services sponsored ten teams of artists to serve four to five month tours of duty. In addition, 10 civilian artists also toured Vietnam. For 60 days the artists travelled in Vietnam experiencing the war and documenting that experience through photographs, field sketches, and meticulous notes. They spent the rest of their tour working in a studio to produce art based on their observations.

An opening reception for the exhibit will be held at the Suffolk Center on Thursday, Sept. 8 from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. and is free and open to the public. Performing at the reception will be the U. S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Ceremonial Band.

The exhibit will run until Friday, Sept. 30, and exhibit hours are Tuesday through Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

### **Admiral William E. Gortney, USN, Retired**

As part of the Suffolk Center's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Speaker Series, Admiral William E. Gortney will speak on Thursday, Sept. 15 at 7:00 p.m. at the Suffolk Center. During his 39-year career, Bill

Gortney commanded at every level in the Navy. He has extensive fleet, joint, overseas and Washington, D. C. experience, to include assignment as Director, Joint Staff.

Among his assignments were Commander, U. S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet/Combined Maritime Forces, Bahrain; Commander, Carrier Strike Group 10, on board USS Harry S. Truman, and Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7 on board USS John F. Kennedy.

Admiral Gortney flew over 5,360 mishap-free flight hours and completed 1,265 carrier-arrested landings.

His address, “Art Honoring Those Who Wear the Cloth of our Nation”, is free and open to the public.

### **“Thao’s Library” Screening**

This film recounts the story of Thao, a young Vietnamese woman who was born in a village where American planes sprayed Agent Orange. Born with severe physical deformities, she was not able to attend school. She taught herself to read and put together a small library in a shed that stored animal feed. Many of the children in her village visited her library to read or borrow books.

Stephen Katz, a photojournalist for the Virginian Pilot, was on assignment in Vietnam when he met Thao. He asked her what she would wish for if she could have anything and she replied just a few hundred dollars to buy books to share with the children.

The film, done by the Purpose Project, chronicles the result of that request.

The film will be shown on Thursday, Sept. 22 at 7:00 p.m. at the Suffolk Center, is free of charge and open to the public.

Following the screening, Stephen Katz, who served as Director of Photography for the film, will talk about the making of the film and do a Q and A with the audience. In 2008, Katz was selected from the top photographers worldwide to be named Newspaper Photographer of the Year (POY) by Pictures of the Year International.

Katz, whose father is a Vietnam veteran who has severe health problems attributed to Agent Orange, has major health issues of his own which raises the question of second-generation transmission.

### **Family Movie “Big Hero 6”**

On a lighter note, families are invited to see the Disney movie “Big Hero 6” on Saturday, Sept. 10 at 2:00 p.m. at the Suffolk Center. There is no charge for the movie.

For more information on the September salute to the armed forces, please visit [www.suffolkcenter.org](http://www.suffolkcenter.org).