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Former Pfc. Kenneth David, left, receives the Medal of Honor from President Joe Biden during a ceremony on Jan. 3 at the White House. (U.S. ARMY/HENRY VILLARAMA)

Medal of Honor awarded to 7 soldiers

Seven soldiers—two who fought in Vietnam and five in Korea—were awarded the Medal of Honor on Jan. 3 during a ceremony at the White House.

Only former Pfc. Kenneth David, who was recognized for his heroic actions on May 7, 1970, in Vietnam, received the award in person from President Joe Biden. The other soldiers were honored posthumously.

They were Capt. Hugh Nelson Jr., who was a Huey pilot in Vietnam, and Korea War heroes Pfc. Wataru Nakamura, then-1st Lt. Richard Cavazos, who is the namesake of Fort Cavazos, Texas, Pfc. Charles Johnson, Cpl. Fred McGee and Pvt. Bruno Orig.

These seven men are heroes, Biden

said during the ceremony. "That's not hyperbole," he said. "These are genuine, to-the-core heroes ... who all went above and beyond the call of duty. Heroes who all deserve our nation's highest and oldest military recognition."

Biden said he was honored to learn about the soldiers' stories, "Americans who've not only fought for our nation but embody the very best our nation has to offer."

"Today we award these individuals the Medal of Honor, but we can't stop here," he said. "As a nation, it's up to us to give this medal meaning, to keep fighting for one another, for each other, to keep defending everything these heroes fought for and many of them died for."

Here is a look at each Medal of Honor recipients' story.

Pfc. Kenneth David

In May 1970, David was a radio-telephone operator with Company D, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, when his platoon was dropped off near Fire Support Base Maureen in Vietnam's Thua Thien Province.

The base had been abandoned, and just two days after arriving, on May 7, the soldiers were overrun in an intense attack from a large enemy force. "It was pitch black at night," David recounted. He had just finished checking in with his team, and "they all came back to me, two

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Medal of Honor*From Page 1*

clicks, everything was OK,” David said. “Then explosions started going off. We got overrun.”

The enemy’s ferocious attack mortally wounded the platoon leader and caused numerous other casualties, according to the Army. David immediately moved toward the defensive perimeter and unleashed a barrage of automatic weapons fire on the enemy. “Each time the enemy attempted to concentrate its fire on the wounded inside the perimeter, David jumped from his position and yelled to draw enemy fire away from his injured comrades and back to himself,” according to the Army.

Despite being wounded and running low on ammunition, David continued to fight, throwing hand grenades at the attacking enemy fighters. Refusing medical aid, David kept drawing enemy fire away from his fellow soldiers until the medevac helicopters could fly them to safety. “We did what we had to do,” David said. “We did our duty.”

David received the Distinguished

Service Cross, the nation’s second-highest award for valor, for his actions that night. But for the past 17 years, Herm Breuer, former director of the Trumbull County Veterans Service Commission in Ohio who learned about David’s story, worked to have the award upgraded. “Mr. Herm Breuer never gave up on me, and that’s why I’m here today,” David said.

While he is honored to receive the Medal of Honor, David said he carries with him the seven soldiers who died in that fight. “That’s my way of coping with my stress. I always talk about my friends,” he said. “I sometimes call them kids. We were all kids then. We knew the way they walked, we knew the way they talked, their heartbeat. We would do anything for each other in any situation.”

Receiving the Medal of Honor has “brought up a lot of cobwebs over 54 years for me,” David said, but he hopes it will enable him to do even more to support his fellow veterans.

“That is my duty,” he said. “I will never forget my friends and my veterans in my county up here.”

Capt. Hugh Nelson Jr.

On June 5, 1966, near Moc Hoa, Vietnam, Nelson was the acting aircraft commander of a UH-1 Huey helicopter with the 114th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light). Nelson and three crewmates were on a search-and-destroy reconnaissance mission when their Huey was hit by enemy fire.

The crew was able to crash-land the helicopter, but the impact caused them all to lose consciousness. When Nelson came to, he found his dazed and wounded crew chief trapped inside. After pulling him out, Nelson went back to help the door gunner, who was strapped inside and unable to move, according to the Army.

As Nelson worked to free him, enemy fighters kept firing on the aircraft, some from as close as 30 feet away. “Upon removing the wounded door gunner from the aircraft, he forced the specialist to the ground and, without regard for his own life, used his body as a shield to cover his comrade from the intense enemy fire,” according to the Army.

Nelson, who was hit several times, died from his wounds. His sacrifice allowed his wounded comrade to use a smoke grenade to signal supporting aircraft for help.

Debra “Debbie” McKnight and Hugh “Tripp” Nelson III were 5 and 1, respectively, when their father was killed in action. “We are very, very grateful and appreciative of this honor,” McKnight said.

She credited Ted Curtis, who, like her father, graduated from The Citadel, for pursuing a medal upgrade for more than six years. As Curtis, who learned about Hugh Nelson’s actions while going through The Citadel’s archives, gathered more information for the medal upgrade effort, McKnight and Tripp Nelson were able to learn more about their father. “We never knew the whole story until Ted did this research, which is why we’re so grateful he never gave up,” McKnight said.

Having their father receive the Medal of Honor is “very, very special,” Tripp Nelson said. “He gave his life for another in battle, and we always knew the story, so we’ve been proud of him our whole lives, and it’s good that others know the story, and I know our mother would be very pleased that everyone else is knowing it now.”

See **Medal of Honor**, Page 6

ARMY magazine

January issue



AUSA Basic Members can now view a selection of articles from the January issue of *ARMY* magazine. To read the articles, [click here](#).

Paper: When planning for future war, Army should avoid ‘technology myopia’

The Army needs to move away from an overfocus on technology to effectively predict the character of war and use it to deter and defeat adversaries, according to a new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

“Today, many writers are making recommendations about how the U.S. Army should fight based on observations of the Ukrainian War. ... These commentators often focus on the technology employed in Ukraine,” Maj. Robert Rose writes. “As the Army prepares to fight a potential future conflict, it should not just analyze contemporary conflicts, but it should also remember its past to understand how the characters of its wars have influenced the strategies it has pursued.”

In “A Problem of Character: How the Army’s Myopic Focus on Technology has Clouded its Thinking,” Rose argues that writers’ claims that technology itself is changing the character of war are “problematic” and “ignore context.”

“There is not a single character of war across the world,” he writes. “Ukraine does provide an additional data point to forecasting the future character of potential wars, but we should not make sweeping generalizations about the changing character of war based on narrow observations of technological change.”

Rose commands A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade, and is a fellow with the LTG (Ret.) James M. Dubik Writing Fellows Program. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, and has graduate degrees from Harvard University and Cambridge University.

The paper is part of AUSA’s new Harding Papers series, which was launched in conjunction with the Army’s Harding Project, which aims to revitalize scholarship and writing



Spc. Alexis Ortega, left, and Sgt. Blaise Harvilla, assigned to the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, use a Stinger Field Handling Trainer to track a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Dec. 17 during training at Babadag Training Area, Romania. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. AUSTIN STEINBORN)

across the force. The Harding Papers exclusively highlight the work and scholarship of Dubik Writing Fellows.

Just as the U.S. was unable to defeat the Viet Cong or the Taliban despite “an overwhelming technological edge,” technology will not be a silver bullet over current adversaries, Rose writes. Moving forward, the Army will need “to make calculated bets on the character of” future “conflicts,” he writes.

“Before an over-emphasis on technology began to cloud our thinking in the mid-20th century, the Army had produced leaders like Grant and Scott who clearly perceived the character of the wars they fought, developed an effective strategy for those wars’ dynamics, and adapted the Army to win,” Rose writes. “With the right lens to examine each war’s chameleon—like character, we could return that perception.”

Read the paper here.

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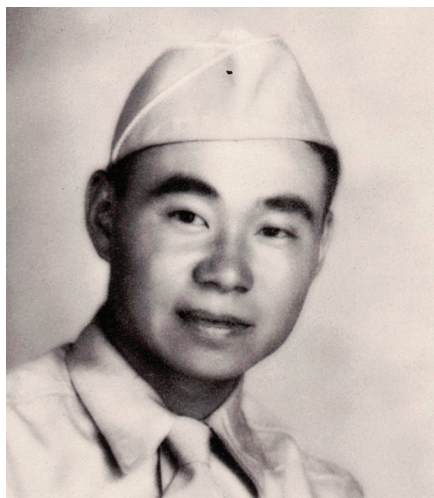
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Medal of Honor

From Page 3

Pfc. Wataru Nakamura

On May 18, 1951, near P'ungch'on-ni, Korea, Nakamura, of 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, volunteered to check and repair a communications line between his platoon and the command post.

Around daybreak, as he made his way along the line, he came under fire from an enemy force that had surrounded friendly positions and was threatening to break defense lines. Nakamura immediately rushed the enemy with a fixed bayonet and single-handedly destroyed a hostile machine gun nest, driving the enemy from several bunkers they had captured.

His ammunition depleted, Nakamura withdrew under intense enemy fire, met an ammunition party ascending the hill, rearmed himself and returned to the fight.

In a fierce charge, he killed three enemy fighters in one bunker and killed and seriously wounded another in the last enemy-held bunker. Continuing to press the attack, he was mortally wounded by an enemy grenade.

For his heroic actions, Nakamura was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, an award that has now been upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

A native of Los Angeles, Naka-

mura enlisted in the Army on April 22, 1944, after spending part of his youth at the Rowher Relocation Camp in Arkansas where Japanese Americans were incarcerated after the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, his nephew, Gary Takashima, told reporters.

"As soon as he could, he enlisted in the Army, like many Japanese American men at the time, to show his loyalty and sense of duty to his country," Takashima said.

1st Lt. Richard Cavazos

While serving as commander of the 3rd Infantry Division's Company E, 2nd Battalion, 65th Infantry Regiment, near Sagimak, Korea, Cavazos led his soldiers on a night raid to destroy enemy fighters and their entrenched outpost.

During that June 14, 1953, mission, Cavazos directed heavy fire on enemy positions, withdrawing his men under heavy enemy mortar and artillery strikes so they could regroup and reengage. He led his soldiers twice more through enemy fire, destroying vital enemy fortifications and personnel.

Cavazos inspired his soldiers to keep fighting despite the tough conditions, and when ordered to withdraw his company, Cavazos complied but remained alone to search for missing men. While exposed to enemy fire, he located five casualties and evacuated

them, one by one, to a nearby hill where they could be safely recovered.

He would make four more trips to the battlefield, searching for casualties and evacuating scattered groups of men who had become separated or confused. He allowed his own combat wounds to be treated on the morning of June 15 only when he was satisfied that the battlefield was cleared.

His actions earned him a Distinguished Service Cross, which has now been upgraded to a Medal of Honor.

"I'm sure my father would assert that he was very much a humble, ordinary man who was a husband, a father and a proud American," Tommy Cavazos said. "He was a man of deep faith who loved his country, loved his family and loved his soldiers, and it was that love, that selfless love, of which there is no greater love, that drove him up the hill that night in 1953 to collect the men in his company and get them to safety."

A native of Kingsville, Texas, Cavazos was commissioned as an infantry officer in June 1951 and became the first Hispanic brigadier general in 1976. He was promoted to four-star general in 1982. He died Oct. 29, 2017, at age 88.

On May 9, 2023, Fort Hood, Texas, was renamed Fort Cavazos.

Pfc. Charles Johnson

Johnson, of Millbrook, New York, was a Browning automatic rifleman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th

Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, when Chinese forces attacked his unit on June 11, 1953, during a massive nighttime assault.

“Growing up, in the words of Charlie’s high school classmates, he was a heck of a football player,” Biden said. “Charlie signed up to serve in Korea, trading his jersey for a uniform.”

In the ensuing battle at Outpost Harry, a hill 60 miles northeast of Seoul, overwhelming numbers of Chinese troops assaulted the trenches and bunkers defended by Johnson and his squad.

Wounded from hand grenade fragments and a direct artillery hit on his bunker, Johnson tended to the more seriously injured while the unit continued to come under fire. Johnson dragged a wounded soldier to a secure bunker, stopping intermittently to aid other injured soldiers and kill several enemy troops in hand-to-hand combat.

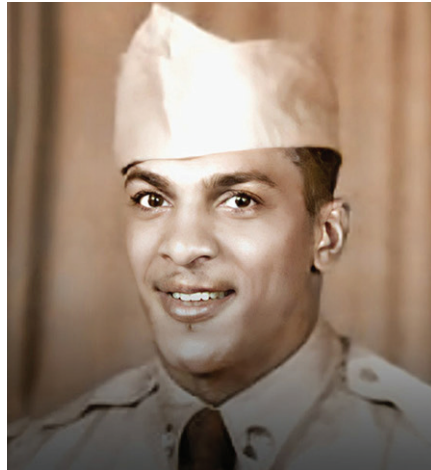
Leaving the safety of the second bunker, Johnson searched for weapons and ammunition, then returned to rearm the others. Recognizing their dire situation, and with disregard for his personal safety, Johnson left the bunker and placed himself between the enemy and his wounded comrades, telling them he would hold off the enemy forces as best as he could.

Johnson, who was killed in action on June 12, is credited with saving the lives of as many as 10 soldiers.

His heroic actions earned him a Silver Star, which has now been upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

Trey Mendez, Johnson’s nephew, said he never met his uncle but has met and spoken with some of the men he saved, including former Pvt. Don Dingee, a high school classmate of Johnson’s who happened to be in the same unit. “To me he’s a story passed down from his siblings, and it’s just so great to hear his story being told to the broader nation at large and hopefully inspire everyone the way it’s inspired in the family all these years,” Mendez said.

Cpl. Fred McGee



During an assault on fortified enemy positions near Tang-Wan-Ni, Korea, on June 16, 1952, McGee delivered a heavy volume of supporting fire despite being exposed to intense enemy machine-gun and mortar fire.

When his squad leader and other members of his squad were wounded, McGee assumed command and moved the squad forward to a more exposed position to neutralize an enemy machine gun. When his machine gunner was mortally wounded, McGee again took over the gun.

He then ordered his squad to withdraw and voluntarily remained behind to help evacuate the wounded and dead. Though wounded in the face, he exposed himself by standing straight up under intense enemy machine-gun and mortar fire and attempted to evacuate the body of the company runner.

Forced to abandon the body, he aided a wounded soldier and moved him to safety through a huge volume of enemy mortar and artillery fire.

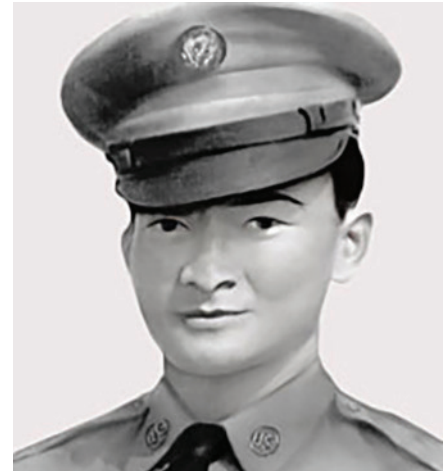
A native of Steubenville, Ohio, McGee enlisted in the Army on May 22, 1951. For his heroic actions in Korea, McGee was awarded a Silver Star, an award that has now been upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

“We are grateful to the nation for joining us in resurrecting the truth and courage of Cpl. Fred B. McGee,” his daughter, Victoria Secrest, said, pointing out that his unit’s motto was

“Truth and Courage.”

McGee died on Jan. 3, 2020, at the age of 90.

Pvt. Bruno Orig



On Feb. 15, 1951, Orig was serving with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, near Chipyong-ni, Korea.

Returning from a wire-laying mission, Orig saw several of his fellow soldiers wounded during a fierce enemy attack and went to render aid. On one of these trips, Orig noticed that all except one man of a machine-gun crew had been wounded.

Without hesitation, he volunteered to man the weapon and placed effective fire on the enemy, allowing a friendly platoon to withdraw without a single casualty. Orig continued to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy until the company positions were overrun.

Later that day, when the lost ground was recaptured, Orig was found dead beside his weapon, and the area in front of his gun was littered with several dead enemy soldiers.

For his heroic actions, he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross, an award that has now been upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

A native of Hawaii, Orig enlisted on Aug. 9, 1950.

“It is an honor for me to be here today to know that my brother is being recognized for what he did during the war,” said his sister, Loretta Orig.

Lawmakers pass 2025 National Defense Authorization Act

Action has resumed on Capitol Hill as lawmakers returned to begin the 119th Congress and count and certify electoral votes. President-elect Donald Trump will be inaugurated on Jan. 20, beginning the new administration.

The Association of the U.S. Army's Government Affairs directorate was busy in December. On Dec. 10, retired Gen. Bob Brown, AUSA president and CEO, and retired Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, AUSA's vice president for Leadership and Education, presented the association's Legislator of the Year award to Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, a Democrat from Maryland, and Republican Rep. Steve Womack from Arkansas.

Both have served on the House Appropriations Committee for a number of years and have been strong advocates for the Army. Ruppersberger has since retired after 22 years in Congress, while Womack continues to serve on the House Appropriations defense subcommittee.

On Dec. 17, AUSA Region Presidents Greg d'Arbonne, Rhonda Sutton, Brett Cox, Scott Leeling and Jay



Mark Haaland, left, AUSA's Government Affairs director, and several of the association's region presidents visit Capitol Hill to advocate for soldiers and families. (AUSA PHOTO)

Sweeney, along with retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, met with congressional staff from the offices of Sens. Katie Britt of Alabama, John Boozman of Arkansas, Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, Jacky Rosen from Nevada, Michael Bennet of Colorado and Eric Schmitt of Missouri.

The region presidents met with

staff from the House of Representatives in June, where they also advocated for AUSA's Focus Areas.

Before Congress left on recess for the holidays, it passed, and the president signed, the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. This critical legislation provides authorizations and policy guidance to the Department of Defense and the Army.

Congress also passed another continuing resolution, this time through March 14. Lawmakers have repeatedly used these stopgap measures to fund the government and prevent shutdowns over the past several years, but they are inefficient, hurt readiness and negatively impact soldiers and families.

You can help build momentum for quick passage of all 12 appropriations bills and additional funding for the Total Army by contacting your representatives and senators or meeting with them.

We will continue to monitor these and other developments closely as we advocate for the Total Army with Congress.

Mark Haaland is AUSA's Government Affairs director.



Lt. Col. Mason Thornal, commander of the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, gives congressional staff delegates a tour of the unit's headquarters at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson, Louisiana. (U.S. ARMY/PORSHA AUZENNE)

Members can save on financial programs in the new year

Your Association of the U.S. Army member benefits package includes services that may be helpful at the beginning of a new year if you are thinking about finances and your plan for the year. Here are some examples.

Debt review and consolidation

Are you struggling with debt and need help putting together a budget? There are many for-profit companies offering to help repair your credit score, work with your creditors to lower your interest rate or negotiate a lower payment. Unfortunately, not all of them are trustworthy.

AUSA works with a trusted non-profit organization, Cambridge Credit Counseling Corporation, which is funded by major financial institutions to work with customers who are in debt to prevent a bankruptcy filing.

A certified debt expert will meet with you and conduct an in-depth analysis of your financial situation to help identify ways for you to save money and get out of debt as quickly as possible. There is no charge for this service. For many people, it's the first time they see their complete financial picture.

If you want to participate in a debt consolidation plan, they will work with your creditors to get your interest rates reduced (average credit card interest rates are reduced from 29% to as low as 0%) and negotiate lower monthly payments (typically 25%). Debt repayment is usually accomplished in about 42 months.

If you set up this repayment plan, you will make your payment directly to Cambridge, and they will distribute it for you.

There usually is a fee for this service, depending on the rules and regulations of your state. The average is \$30 a month.

Cambridge also offers housing, stu-

dent loan, foreclosure, reverse mortgage and bankruptcy services with counselors certified by the appropriate authorities. AUSA members receive a discount on any of their services that have a fee.

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Insurance options

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- Tricare and Medicare supplements.
- Group dental and vision.
- Long-term care.
- Pet insurance.

Association membership also includes guaranteed issue life insurance. If you are leaving active military service with an honorable discharge and are younger than 55, \$100,000 of coverage is guaranteed issue if you apply within 90 days of your discharge date. See the website

for complete terms and conditions.

Visit www.ausacoverage.com for information on all these plans.

Tax returns

Over the next few months, we'll all be working on our tax returns. AUSA members and small businesses save 25% on TaxAct for individuals at www.taxact.com/ausa or for businesses at www.taxact.com/ausasmb.

Legal documents

AUSA pays for a legal document service for all members. There are hundreds of documents available for individuals, families and small businesses. After you've selected the document you need, the system will build the document based on the laws of your state and provide instructions for signing, filing and more.

Visit www.ausa.org/legal and create an account on the LawAssure website. Don't use your login credentials for the AUSA website, as we do not share that with partners.

As always, visit www.ausa.org/savings to access all savings programs.

Susan Rubel is AUSA's Association and Affinity Partnerships director.

Member Benefits



AUSA members have access to discounts on a variety of financial planning options, including debt consolidation, insurance and tax preparation. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

Chapter leaders honored for service to soldiers, families

Three life members of the Association of the U.S. Army's Central Texas chapter were recognized for contributions to the quality of life of soldiers and their families during a Good Neighbor induction dinner at Fort Cavazos, Texas.

The III Armored Corps and Fort Cavazos inducted retired Col. Keith Sledd, the chapter's liaison officer and treasurer, and retired Command Sgts. Maj. Terry Fountain and Jackeline Soriano Fountain, who serve as chapter board members, as the installation's 2024 Good Neighbors.

"I'm glad that we have an easy way to recognize those who have contributed so much to our installation, and

Central Texas

I am also glad to recognize three new members as Good Neighbors tonight," said Lt. Gen. Kevin Admiral, III Armored Corps and Fort Cavazos commanding general, according to an Army news release.

Sledd served in the Army for 34 years and is the executive director of the Heart of Texas Defense Alliance, a nonprofit organization that promotes the importance and sustainability of Fort Cavazos and all defense-related industries, organizations and institutions. In this role, Sledd advocates for the installation, regional defense industries and—most importantly—soldiers and their families.

In addition to his role with AUSA, Sledd serves in several civic organizations and on professional, economic development and civic boards. He was recently appointed as the chair for the Texas governor's Committee to Support the Military.

"It is a great honor to be included here today with these great folks before us," Sledd said, according to the Army. "I've been very lucky to be able to play Army for 34 years, and I absolutely enjoy being able to serve the top 1% of our nation because they chose to volunteer to serve us."



Lt. Gen. Kevin Admiral, left, III Armored Corps and Fort Cavazos, Texas, commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Loyd Rhoades, right, Fort Cavazos garrison senior enlisted leader, present Good Neighbor awards to AUSA Central Texas chapter members, from left to right, retired Command Sgts. Maj. Jackeline Soriano Fountain and Terry Fountain and retired Col. Keith Sledd. (U.S. ARMY/SCOTT DARLING)

Fountain and Soriano Fountain co-founded the Texas Chemical Corps Association Lone Star chapter, with Soriano Fountain serving as the first vice president and Fountain as the inaugural operations officer. Together, they have led numerous initiatives to preserve the history of the Chemical Corps, while donating time, money, equipment and furniture to support families of the 48th Chemical Brigade.

Individually, Fountain founded the Central Texas 13th Corps Support Command Association, which for over 16 years has supported scholarship programs for soldiers and families, empowering them to reach their full potential.

Soriano Fountain demonstrated her commitment to community service by establishing the Central Texas Women to Women Foundation, an international organization that aids abused women.

AUSA's Central Texas chapter has honored the couple with several accolades, including the chapter's Award for Outstanding Support, the Douglas B. Hayes and Joseph B. Bufford

Awards for Sergeants Major and the Robert M. Shoemaker Award for exceptional service.

"It's truly an honor to be here," Soriano Fountain said, according to the Army. "This is selfless service. We do this because we love our soldiers; we love our community."

"I am proud to be a Good Neighbor," Fountain added. "I am proud to be a part of this organization. Thank you all."

Fort Cavazos has recognized 75 Good Neighbors since the program's inception in 1996, recognizing those who have dedicated many hours and personal efforts to enhance the lives of soldiers and their families.

Admiral closed out the 2024 Fort Cavazos Good Neighbor induction by acknowledging the recipients and the Good Neighbors as a whole.

"There are so many good people here who make it possible for our soldiers to train and serve here at Fort Cavazos and the world," he said. "It's because of you that our soldiers know that they belong to a community that will take care of them and their families and loved ones while they serve."

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