



Medal of Honor recipients commended at Balboa

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MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT SAN DIEGO (Feb. 3, 2006) -- Six Medal of Honor recipients gathered together at the Naval Medical Center San Diego Jan. 24, as TriWest Healthcare Alliance unveiled a traveling photographic exhibit to honor recipients of the medal.

The Visions of Valor gallery is being presented across the United States to educate American citizens of the heroic acts during combat that resulted in the nation's highest honor for valor under fire.

"We're meeting here today to be reminded of freedom," said Duncan Hunter, 52nd district representative of California.

Freedom was portrayed well with the six Medal of Honor recipients in attendance who, as Hunter pointed out, made a great representation of the 619,000 heroes who have died in wars fought by America since the Civil War.

Among the recipients present were guest speakers Jay Vargas and Robert Modrzejewski. Both served in the Marine Corps, were stationed at the depot during their careers and retired as colonels.

Modrzejewski summed up the day when he said, "Men and women were called; we went and answered that call."

Before the ceremony kicked off near the quarterdeck of the hospital, the recipients were afforded the opportunity to meet with Marines recently wounded in combat and recovering at the hospital, for lunch.

"I think the connection between Medal of Honor recipients and those wounded here at Balboa is found in one word: Duty," said Hunter. "Duty to country and fulfilling that duty in citizenry. We live in a society that is self-indulgent, and it's important to inspire others."

Inspiration of selflessness and regard for fellow human beings masked the walls throughout the quarterdeck of the hospital, where the Visions of Valor exhibit was displayed. Medal of Honor recipients' photos, citations and quotes filled the room creating a shrine of silent respect, which left an impression of patriotism and the ultimate recognition of heroism in America.

William E. Barber, a retired colonel in the Marine Corps and a Medal of Honor recipient, is one of many who left an impression on the walls of valor in the exhibit. He was awarded the medal for his actions in the battle for Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. He died April 19, 2002.

His quote chosen for the traveling exhibit encapsulated well the Visions of Valor's mission to educate and inspire. Barber said, "I have been honored to serve my country and to be a part of the great things America has done for other nations whose people yearn for the freedom we take for granted."

Other Medal of Honor recipients present at the unveiling included Navy Lt. John Finn, who was the guest of honor; Army Staff Sgt. Walter Ehlers; Army Capt. Lewis Millett; Army Chief Warrant Officer Fred Ferguson, and Air Force Col. Leo Thorsness.

The exhibit is scheduled to stay at the hospital until March 10. For more information on Medal of Honor recipients, log on to www.cmohs.org.