

Capitol exhibit shares glory of Medal of Honor recipients

Fewer than 120 of the honorees still are alive

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Two living Medal of Honor recipients from Oregon and Idaho, U.S. Rep. Greg Walden and a young man who wants to join the military came together Monday at the Capitol.

The occasion was a new exhibit, open in the Galleria during business hours through Nov. 27, about the nation's highest military decoration.

The Medal of Honor "represents the core values of a good person," said Ryan Ruark, a high school student who is the executive officer of the Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program in La Pine. Ruark hopes for an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

The medal has been awarded to 3,461 recipients, fewer than 120 of whom still are alive.

The Capitol audience heard from two of them during the ceremony presided over by Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees, who leads the Oregon National Guard.

Thomas Norris, now of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, was a Navy SEAL who rescued two downed pilots behind enemy lines during the Vietnam War in April 1972.

Bob Maxwell, then from Colorado and now of Bend, was an Army technician who threw himself onto a grenade that advancing German troops tossed in the midst of his Army squad in France during World War II in September 1944.



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Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees (right) of the Oregon National Guard speaks at the Visions of Valor ceremony at the state Capitol. Seated (from left) are David J. McIntyre Jr., the president and CEO of TriWest HealthCare Alliance; U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore.; Ryan Ruark, the executive officer of the Navy Junior ROTC in La Pine; and Medal of Honor recipients Bob Maxwell and Thomas Norris.

The exhibit tells the stories of 26 living winners, including Arthur Jackson of Portland, who was a private first class in the Marines in September 1944 when he charged a pillbox and killed three dozen Japanese soldiers during the U.S. invasion of the Pacific island of Peleliu.

Jackson is the only living person among 13 Medal of Honor recipients from Oregon, all of whose stories are told in a permanent display outside the Capitol.

The indoor exhibit is sponsored by TriWest HealthCare Alliance, based in Phoenix, Ariz., which provides health insurance for 2.8 million military members, retirees and their families in 21 Western states.

"It is important for us to remember the cost of freedom," said Walden, who represents the 2nd District of Southern, central and Eastern Oregon.

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If you go

"Visions of Valor," a new exhibit depicting 26 living recipients of the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration, is open during business hours at the Capitol Galleria through Nov. 27. The traveling exhibit will go to other Western states; a similar display was opened earlier this year at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va.

INFORMATION: Call (503) 986-1388 for Capitol visitor services, or go to StatesmanJournal.com for a link to the sponsor.