

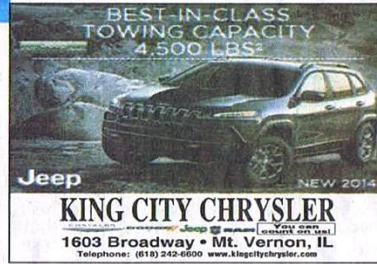


# Register-News

Vol. 95 — No. 46

www.register-news.com

75 cents



## Hall earns Governor's Award

*Hall of Honor and Military Museum began in 2009*

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MT. VERNON — The Hall of Honor and Military Museum at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport has

won a Governor's Hometown Award. The project began before 2009, when the late R.D. White asked Airport Manager Chris Collins about putting up a remembrance area for military men and women from Jefferson County at the airport. The two took the idea to the Airport Authority, which agreed

there should be a permanent display in the Kozaria Terminal. White, who passed away in March 2012, was a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association, commander of the local Civil Air Patrol and a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, was the first to take on the project, which has continued to grow to this day.

"We were so surprised with the award, and we're thrilled at being selected," Collins said. "We were just saying yesterday that wouldn't it have been great for R.D. to have seen this. Who would have known when he had this idea years ago that it would turn into a statewide honor?" Over the years, the proj-

ect has grown from a few plaques on the hallway wall to the entire hallway papered with tributes of veterans. Tribute boards are now placed in an auxiliary room off the main hallway. In addition, the museum area has expanded to several rooms of donated items.

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The Hall of Honor and Veterans Museum is entirely volunteer-driven with assistance from the airport board and staff. The Hall of Honor has more than 500 tributes to local and regional veterans. "The Governor's Hometown Awards honors 13 groups who have selflessly dedicated their time and efforts to making their communi-

ties a better place to live," Quinn said in his announcement of the 32nd Annual Governor's Hometown Awards at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. "Volunteers are the heart of Illinois and we applaud these groups for improving the lives of others and truly making a difference in our state." Those present for the award ceremony on Wednesday were Collins, volunteers Don Davis, George Gifford and Cliff Christiansen as well as Mt. Vernon Mayor Mary Jane Chesley and Tourism Director Bonnie Jerdon, who worked with the volunteers in pre-

paring the application for the award. "It's fantastic that in the city of Mt. Vernon, the people see a need, they step forward and they put in the time and planning to develop a project that addresses that need," Chesley said. "These people saw a need to recognize our veterans and they had a wonderful idea and followed through with it. ... The Hall of Honor and Museum has become a destination for people and a site of recognition for our veterans." The Governor's Hometown Award recipients are selected by volunteer judges who review and rank

applications based on a variety of factors including local need, volunteer participation, use of resources and the results achieved. The projects are judged within their population categories as well as within their assigned project categories. The project categories include services and mentorship, beautification and sustainability, parks and recreation, memorials and monuments and history and historic preservation. The Hall of Honor and Military Museum was submitted in the memorials and monuments category.