INSIDE SANDY VALLEY

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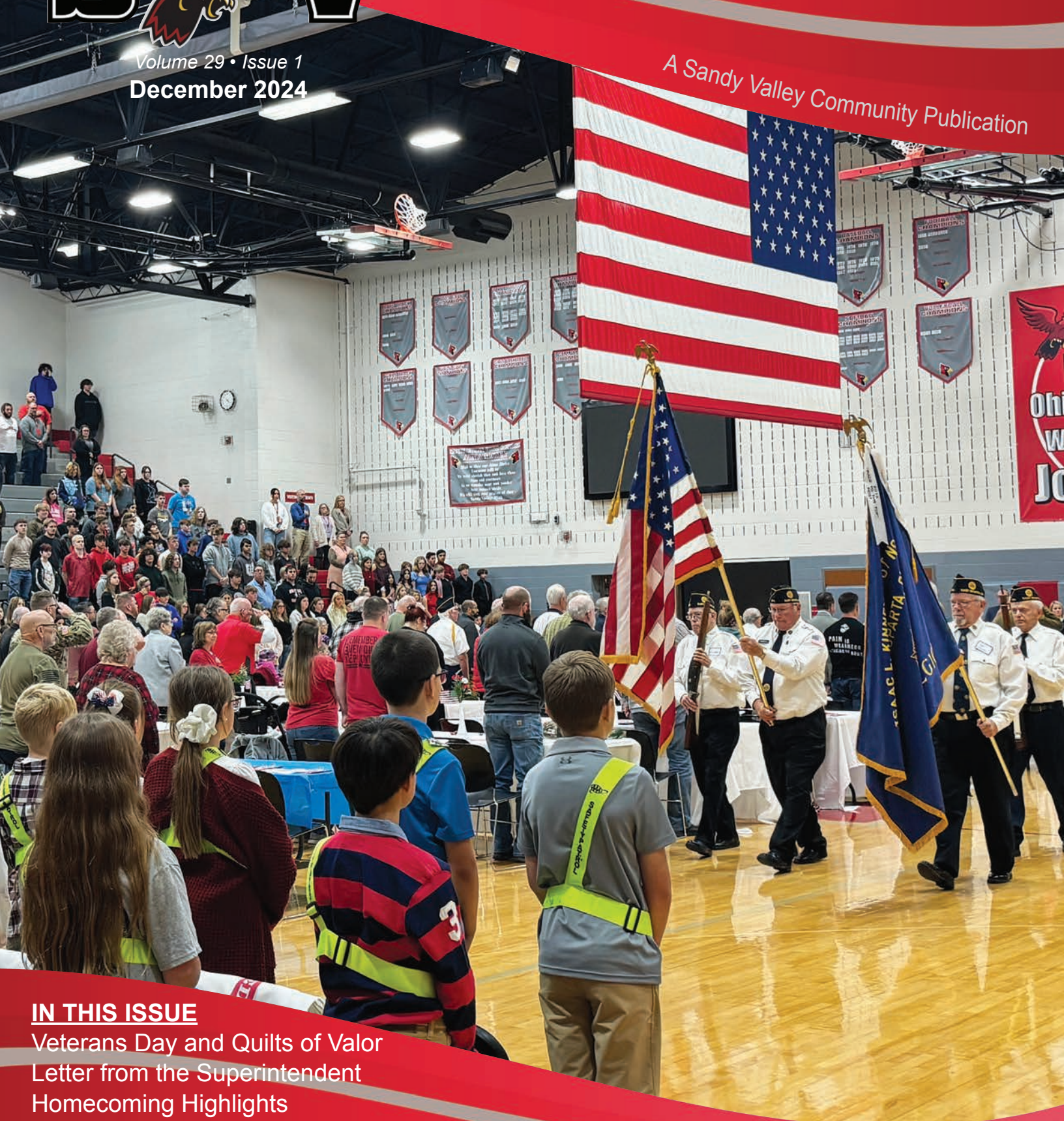
A Sandy Valley Community Publication



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*(l to r): **Stephen Pomesky, Isaiah Winters, Dr. Joseph Wigfield, Amie Snyder, Scot Bowman**.*

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Inside Sandy Valley is a publication of Sandy Valley Local Schools, a non-profit organization. For more information, contact Allison Morris, Director of PR and Communications, at a.morris@svlocal.org.

Free Breakfasts and Lunches for all Sandy Valley Students!

INSPIRE *to learn* SV *prepare for* SUCCESS

We are thrilled to announce that starting this school year, **all Sandy Valley students** will receive **free breakfasts and lunches** through the **Community Eligibility Program**!

At the Sandy Valley Local Schools Board of Education meeting on July 29, the implementation of this program was approved, ensuring free meals for students in every grade level through the 2027-28 school year.

A special thank-you goes to our dedicated Food Service Department and Food Service Director, Mrs. Tina Kindelberger, for their hard work in applying for this program and securing this incredible benefit for our district ensuring that SV received our fair share of state and federal funding which pays for this program.

Sandy Valley Food Service remains committed to providing healthy meal options, free breakfasts, and exciting additions like smoothies and other enhanced offerings.

This milestone represents another step toward supporting the well-being and success of all Sandy Valley students!

Thank You, Advertisers and Sponsors!

As we transition to this new format, we want to express our heartfelt thanks to our sponsors and advertisers for helping make Inside Sandy Valley an outstanding community publication.

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LOOKING AHEAD

Dec. 23-Jan. 3	**Holiday Break**
Jan. 6	School Resumes
Jan. 17	**No School** for students
Jan. 20	MLK Day **No School**
Feb. 17	President's Day **No School**
Mar. 14-16	Spring Musical
Mar. 24-28	**Spring Break**
Mar. 31	School Resumes
APRIL	STATE TESTING
Apr. 12	Prom
Apr.18	**No School** for students
Apr. 21	**No School** for students
May 18	Commencement ..... 2 pm
May 30	*Last day for students*

A Season of Gratitude

David Fischer

Growing up, we all have fond memories of our favorite milestones. Whether it is a specific Birthday, Holiday, or Family Reunion. Mine has always been Thanksgiving! As we enter this season of reflection and gratitude, I am thankful for the incredible community we have here. Our schools are more than just buildings; they are places where students, educators, families, and community members come together with shared purpose and dedication. This was especially evident during our annual Veterans Day Assembly.

I am grateful for our parents, guardians, and families who work hand-in-hand with us, entrusting us with their children and actively supporting their learning journeys. Our partnership with families makes a tremendous difference in the success of our students. Each day, I am inspired by the commitment and energy that everyone brings to our Sandy Valley Local School District.

I am thankful for our students – their curiosity, resilience, and motivation to learn reminds us daily why we are here and why we do what we do. Their progress and achievements inspire us all.

And finally, I am appreciative of our dedicated teachers and staff who go above and beyond to foster a safe, supportive, and engaging learning environment. Their efforts ensure that our students not only grow academically but are also prepared for life beyond the classroom. I especially appreciate their grant writing efforts that bring great things to the valley without any local taxpayer's expense such as BWC Grants, Tele-Health, and our Free Lunch Program for every student, serving as just a few of the most recent examples.

As we approach the holiday season, I wish each of you a time of joy, peace, and togetherness. May the holidays bring you moments of rest, cherished memories, and warmth with loved ones. Thank you for making our community a place of learning, growth, and mutual support. As we continue to work together, I am excited about what the future holds for all of us and I look forward to a bright and successful new year together.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and Go Cards!

David Fischer, Superintendent
Sandy Valley Local Schools

Sandy Valley Elementary School

Mr. Greg McClellan
Principal

Sandy Valley's Fifth-Graders Honor Resilience with Survivor Tree Project

Sandy Valley's fifth-grade students recently created their own Survivor Tree commemorating 9/11. Each student crafted leaves adorned with messages of hope for survivors of tragedy.

The inspiration for this project comes from the original Survivor Tree, a Callery pear tree discovered weeks after 9/11 amidst the rubble at Ground Zero. Though burned and severely damaged, the tree showed signs of life and was carefully rescued. It was relocated to a park where it was nurtured back to health, growing from 8 to 30 feet tall. In 2010, the tree was returned to the 9/11 Memorial Plaza in New York City, where it continues to bloom each spring as a powerful symbol of hope and resilience.

This initiative helps students understand the importance of perseverance and healing while reminding us all of the strength to overcome adversity and rebuild after tragedy. Thank you to **Mrs. Moll's fifth-grade classes** for creating and displaying this tree of hope and perseverance.

PBIS Continues to SOAR at Sandy Valley Elementary

Sandy Valley Elementary's PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) program promotes social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth in a safe and welcoming environment.

This fall, students reviewed SVE's three key behavior expectations: **Be Safe, Be Kind, and Be Responsible**. They earn colored "poms" for demonstrating these behaviors: **Red** for Kindness, **Yellow** for Safety, and **Purple** for Responsibility.

Poms are collected for classroom rewards, building-wide celebrations, and personal achievements.

This fall, Cardinals have already earned three major rewards:

- A dance party with Board Member Steve Pomesky as DJ.
- A BMX bike show featuring Counselor **Miss Dearing** in an epic stunt.
- A fun-filled school-wide hat day.

Visit www.sandyvalleylocal.org/sve to view and use PBIS strategies at home. We're proud of our Cardinals for embracing these expectations and soaring to success!

Sandy Valley Elementary's Safety Patrol: Leading with Safety and Kindness

At Sandy Valley Elementary, the Safety Patrol, a team of 16 dedicated fifth graders, works to ensure a safe and welcoming environment. Their duties include:

- **Morning and Afternoon Assistance:** Helping younger students safely get on and off buses and into the building.
- **Leadership Roles:** Opening doors, supporting peers in hallways, and maintaining a courteous presence.
- **Patriotic Duties:** Caring for the U.S. flag daily and assisting with the Veterans Day program.

Emphasizing Citizenship, Leadership, Service, and Responsibility, these students serve as role models, ensuring safety and setting a positive example. Their dedication helps make Sandy Valley Elementary a safe and friendly place for all Cardinals!

Sandy Valley Middle School

Mrs. Melissa Kiehl
Principal

Student Council: Leading with Purpose and Passion

The Sandy Valley Middle School Student Council is making a big impact through leadership, service, and school spirit. Their mission is to foster student growth, amplify voices, and strengthen the school community.

Recent and Upcoming Activities:

- **FFA Tailgate Support:** Helped with setup and serving.
- **Hoedown Dance:** Raised funds for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.
- **Woo Wagon:** Celebrated staff with fun gifts and recognition.
- **Veterans Day:** Assisted in honoring those who serve.
- **Zoar Ghost Tours:** Volunteered as guides sharing local history.
- **Magnolia Tree Lighting:** Preparing for the Sweet Shoppe and Gingerbread House Contest.
- **Candy Cart Fridays:** Spread joy with treats for students.
- **Upcoming Dances:** Cupid Shuffle in February and a Luau in May.

Through these efforts, the council uplifts others, fosters joy, and builds a stronger Cardinal community while growing as leaders. We are excited about what's ahead and remain dedicated to building a brighter, more connected Cardinal community—one activity at a time!

Field Trips Spark Exciting Learning Opportunities

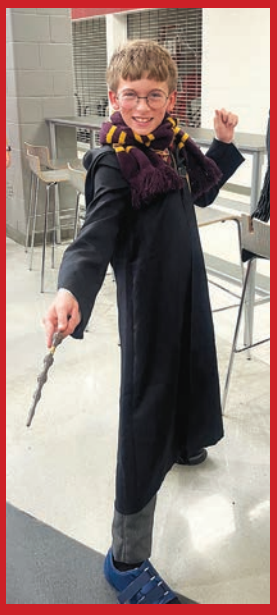
Field trips are an exciting way for students to explore the world beyond the classroom, and Sandy Valley Middle School is making the most of these incredible opportunities! This year's trips are packed with hands-on learning, adventure, and memorable experiences for every grade level.

Field trips provide Sandy Valley Middle School students with ways to explore the world beyond the classroom. This year's trips are packed with hands-on learning, adventure, and unforgettable memories.

- **Sixth Grade:** A festive trip to see Elf live on stage introduced students to the magic of theater. They experienced the joy of live performance and gained a deeper appreciation for the arts through this holiday production.
- **Seventh Grade:** Students embarked on a canoeing adventure, blending outdoor education with teamwork. While paddling through the waterways, they learned about water safety, environmental stewardship, and the value of collaboration.
- **Eighth Grade:** This spring, students will journey to Washington, D.C., where they'll visit iconic landmarks like the Capitol, Smithsonian museums, Lincoln Memorial, and the Vietnam Memorial. This trip offers a unique chance to connect with American history and government in a meaningful way.

These field trips are more than just fun outings—they enrich learning, strengthen friendships, and create lasting memories. A big thank you to the teachers, staff, families, and community for making these enriching experiences possible!

Students Celebrate Creativity with Halloween Costumes

This year, the halls of our middle school transformed into a parade of creativity as students dressed up for Halloween. From classic characters like witches and superheroes to inventive homemade costumes and even a Ghostbuster, SVMS was buzzing with festive energy and imagination.

Beyond the costumes, the day of dressing up encouraged school spirit and a sense of community making the celebration a highlight of the fall!

Thanks to everyone who participated in this spooktacular day!

Mrs. Alivia Stamp
Principal

A Murder…Most Fowl (and Funny!)

The Sandy Valley Drama Club presented *Murder Most Fowl*, a hilarious murder mystery and dinner theater where the audience got to help solve the mystery! Directed by **Renee Knoy** and **Brian Schwall**, the show featured a special cameo by SVHS Principal Alivia Stamp!

This performance was dedicated to beloved drama director, Mrs. Brenda Schreffler.

Be sure to **SAVE THE DATES**—March 14, 15, and 16—for Sandy Valley Drama Club's spring musical, *Anastasia: The Musical*, a story of courage, self-discovery, and love. Follow the brave young Anastasia as she embarks on an epic adventure to uncover the mystery of her past and find her true home.

The cast: ***Leah Grigsby, Sully Diss, Brendan Jones, Jamie Anstine, River Eick, Andrew Hughes, Emma Coy, Maddie Babcock, Jacob Geib, Asher Hughes, Cadence Greynolds, Kate McLeroy, Noah Coy, Sophia Palmer, Arianna Harris, Chelsea Kindelberger, Amelia McCabe, AJ Grigsby, Allyson Oller, Lauren Jones, Addison Muir, Alice Jones, Garrett Grigsby, Autumn Stafford, Olivia Collier, Jordyn Martin, Abigail Mangeris,*** *and* ***Noah Kline.***

Sandy Valley's Enchanted Homecoming

September was a memorable month for both the Class of 2025 and the Class of 1975 at Sandy Valley. On September 20, Homecoming festivities kicked off with the Class of 2025's annual Golden Day for Red and Gray 50th celebration, followed by a cookout before the big game. That evening, the Class of 1975 was honored on the field, and the 2024 Homecoming Court was announced.

This year's court included freshmen **Lexi Hoagland** and **Aiden Barfield**; sophomores **Riley Bishop** and **Sully Diss**; juniors **Gabby Richardson** and **Jonathan Wagner**; and seniors **Mikayla Palmer** and **Gage Walter**. The 2024 Homecoming Queen and King crowns went to seniors **Elyssa Jackson** and **Isaac Smith**. Congratulations to all!

The excitement continued on Saturday, September 21, when Sandy Valley High School students celebrated at the Homecoming dance. Held at the Sandy Valley Wellness Center with the theme "Enchanted Garden," it was an evening of joy and memories for all who attended!

Harvesting for the Future

Sandy Valley is pleased to announce a new career tech program available for students. In partnership with the South Stark Career Academy, Sandy Valley's Agriculture Business and Technology Program will provide students with hands-on learning and industry-recognized certifications in Agriculture!

Students will be able to discover the vast world of agriculture through topics like food science, natural resource management, animal science, horticulture, and bioscience. They will be able to build essential leadership, communication, and business skills while exploring the FFA organization and participating in Supervised Agricultural Experience programs.

There are a variety of project-based experiences including environmental technology and learning advanced tools like drones and GPS. The program will provide career-ready skills for high-demand agriculture industries.

We are excited for Sandy Valley's students, and students in the SSCA to have this incredible opportunity to innovate, cultivate, and elevate their careers in Agriculture!

Sandy Valley Athletics

Mr. Beau Balderson
Athletic Director

Boys Soccer has a Historical Season!

The Sandy Valley Cardinals Boys' Soccer Team wrapped up an unforgettable season with a historic appearance in the District Finals. Facing the top-seeded River View Black Bears, the Cardinals gave a spirited performance that kept fans on the edge of their seats.

Cardinal Nation couldn't be prouder of this incredible team. Finishing with a winning record of 15-5 and over 70 goals on the season, the Cardinals have left a lasting mark. Every member of the 13-man squad played a role in getting to this historic District Finals game! Special congratulations go to senior **Landen Wigfield**, who closed out his high school soccer career with an impressive 14 goals.

The Cardinals extend heartfelt thanks to their parents and the fans who cheered them on throughout this remarkable season. We can't wait to see what this talented team will accomplish next year!

Cross Country Runners Shine at State Competition

Sandy Valley senior, **Casey Russell**, and junior, **Evelyn Pfeffer**, proudly represented Cardinal Nation at the OHSSA Cross Country State Championship in Columbus! Casey, the Regional Champion, and Evelyn, who earned 8th place at Regionals, secured their spots among the state's best runners.

Casey Russell

Evelyn Pfeffer

In true Cardinal spirit, the runners were celebrated with a school send-off. The Cardinal Marching Band, the girls' cross-country team, and community emergency vehicles escort made their departure a memorable one.

On November 2, Casey and Evelyn competed at State, where Casey finished 6th and earned a spot on the podium! Casey was also named East District Runner of the Year, while both she and Evelyn were honored as East District All-Stars.

Congratulations to Casey, Evelyn, and the entire cross-country team for an incredible season! Your hard work and dedication make Cardinal Nation proud!

Sandy Valley Athletics Schedules and Winter Sports Passes

All Sandy Valley athletic schedules and winter sports pass information can be easily accessed by heading to https://sandyvalleyathletics.org/ or scanning the QR code. Go Cardinals!

Quilts of Valor Recipients Honored for Service and Dedication

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This year at Sandy Valley's Veterans Day program, we honored four veterans with Quilts of Valor. **The Quilts of Valor movement was started in 2003 by Catherine Roberts**, a quilter whose son was deployed to Iraq. Since that time, thousands of quilts have been awarded to honor service members and veterans who have been touched by war.

Bill Bowman

At 94 years old, **Bill Bowman**'s life is a testament to service, family, and community. A U.S. Navy veteran of the Korean War, Bill served in radio communications while building a loving family with his wife, Patsy, during their 62 years together. A lifelong East Sparta resident, Bill worked 50 years in heavy equipment construction and dedicated himself to youth programs through the Isaac Kinney Post 244 American Legion, chairing the Boys and Girls State Program. He also served as Sergeant of Arms at military funerals and was named East Sparta's Person of the Year in 2016. Bill's quilt was lovingly made by **Mary Vickery**.

Sonny Fitzsimmons

Drafted in 1967, **Sonny Fitzsimmons** served during the Vietnam War, quickly rising to Staff Sergeant. As an instructor, he trained over 3,000 soldiers in essential skills like communication and map reading. Sonny also set up communication towers and served as a driver for high-ranking officers. Awarded the Bronze Star for his bravery, Sonny continued his service as a Sandy Valley Schools bus driver for 51 years. His quilt was created by **Denise Austin Hester**.

Jim Hunter

Jim Hunter's life has been defined by service and creativity. A U.S. Army veteran, he served as a radio operator in Germany before embarking on a 25-year teaching career at Sandy Valley Local Schools, where he directed musicals, mentored state-bound speech teams, and served as the SVHS principal. Jim is also a 58-year member of the Magnolia Lions Club and co-founder of a comedy group that performed across states. His quilt was crafted by **Peggy Dix**.

Terry Potter

Vietnam veteran **Terry Potter** exemplifies resilience and dedication. Wounded during service, he has faced ongoing health challenges with strength. A longstanding member and Commander of Isaac L. Kinney Post 244, Terry established the East Sparta Monument and organized local veteran honors. He and his wife Brenda raised two daughters, continuing to prioritize family and community. Terry's quilt was made by **Kaye Pomesky**.

We are grateful for their service, sacrifices, and contributions. A special thanks to Mrs. Kaye Pomesky, Mrs. Peggy Dix, and Mrs. Charlene Stilluto for bringing this program to Sandy Valley.