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WWII vet speaks with fellow Rotarians



Rotarian John Johnston, in his VFW Cootie hat, explaining his volunteer work at the Veterans Home Center

Story and Photo

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Published May 14, 2019 at 4:09 p.m.

TRENTON -- Service Above Self is the motto that reminds Rotarians to put performing service for others as the utmost priority.

At the Rotary Club of Gilchrist County's weekly meetings, usually held at the Woman's Club in Trenton, Rotarians are encouraged to share examples of where they

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have done good for others in the community. John Johnston recently described an example of how he did some good for his fellow veterans.

John, a WWII Veteran, is a member of the VFW and he explained to us why their VFW subgroup is called "The Cooties." In WWI the soldiers slept on bags made of straw and those bags were most often full of bedbugs, or cooties. That is how his subgroup of veterans took on the name of Cooties.

The Cooties recently went to Gainesville and spent the day at The Veterans Home Center, a facility that provides shelter and training for homeless Veterans. Supporting this Center with funding to train homeless veterans to get a new lease on life is something Rotarian and veteran John Johnston is passionate about.

John explained that too often, when veterans are discharged from their time of military service, they have difficulty transitioning back into civilian life. In military service one's lodging, meals, electricity and other basic needs are provided. Sometimes when returned to civilian life, the changes and challenges can be overwhelming and the veteran may not know how to provide for him or herself, so they end up on the streets, homeless and afraid.

The Veterans Home Center in Gainesville has 45 rooms and provides lodging and special training to help the discharged veteran men and women get a job and learn to pay for their daily living expenses.

They live at the facility for up to three months to acquire the skills to return to society and pay their obligations in civilian life. Every few months a new group of veterans comes in for the support and training. What a wonderful service to provide for those that have served our country and are now in need of help.

John Johnston, the Gilchrist Rotary thanks you for what you do for our club, and for your service in WWII and what you now do for our fellow veterans!