

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Proudly Honors



Patriot of the Month

April 2021

L. Stephen Gaither

United States Air Force Air National Guard United States Army Reserve



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Columbian
Chapter



Stephen Gaither grew up in Salt Lake City, UT and graduated from the University of Denver, CO. He joined the Utah Air National Guard in September 1972.

Although Stephen's college major was Political Science, his military career set him on a new path: electronics. He spent nearly a year training at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. He then returned to the Air National

Guard. He worked in Salt Lake City for the American Red Cross as director of Youth Services Programs and was later hired by the local VA Hospital.

In September 1977, he transferred to Columbia, Missouri to work at the Harry S. Truman VA Hospital. Concurrently, he served as a Personnel Specialist with the Army Reserves.

His initial position at the VA Hospital was Chief, Voluntary Services, but, in 1981, he was selected as the Assistant to the Chief of Staff, while continuing as the collateral duty Public Affairs Officer. In 1996, a full-time Public Affairs Officer position was established at Truman VA Hospital and Stephen served in that role until his retirement in 2018.

Stephen's volunteer efforts since coming to Missouri are impressive. He served with the community United Way in many leadership roles for 28 years. He has been in charge of "Military Morning", a local monthly breakfast meeting for all veterans. The breakfast is provided free of cost for veterans, hosts lots of comradery among the attendees, and provides a program beneficial for veterans. There were often more than 100 in attendance at a single meeting. This popular program has been temporarily closed since the start of the pandemic. He was also part of the planning process for the Patriot Place Apartments/Welcome Home emergency shelter project, a unique joint venture between the City of Columbia, Truman VA and a non-profit social service agency to provide housing for homeless veterans.

The Mid-Missouri chapter of Military Officers Association of America named Stephen as its 2018 Citizen of the Year. The organization has granted him honorary membership, even though he did not serve as a military officer. This award will be formally given to Stephen once the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Currently, Stephen is the Board Chair of the Friends of Mid-Missouri Fisher House. This facility will be located on the Harry S Truman VA Hospital campus. It will provide housing, free of cost, to veterans and their families who undergo extended medical treatments.

He recently celebrated his 45th wedding anniversary with his lovely wife, Leslie. They have 4 children, 7 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

Columbian Daughters are proud to honor L. Stephen Gaither as MSSDAR's Patriot of the Month.