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SIUSLAW

VETERAN'S VIEWPOINT

Patton Returns to Florence

**CAL APPLEBEE,
CONTRIBUTOR**

Led by a team of award winning film instructors, Ben Patton, grandson of legendary WWII General George Patton, is returning to Florence in May to conduct a weekend filmmaking workshop designed to reach Veterans of military service and tell their story, not just about war, but also about the struggles and challenges they have faced since leaving military service. Patton first visited Florence in January of 2026 to meet with community leaders and introduce his project.

The Patton Veterans Project, started in 2011, utilizes professionals from the film and movie industry to coach and guide the Veterans in the three-day workshop, resulting in multiple short feature films featuring the Veterans themselves. Scheduled for May 1st through May 3rd, the workshop is being held at the Siuslaw Area Resource Center on 12th and Nopal in Florence, a new facility operated by Siuslaw Outreach Services to enhance the delivery of current social services and provide increased assistance to low-income

individuals and families in need.

During the three-day workshop, Veterans will work in small groups of four or five to create a short film with concept and production created entirely by the Veterans with the guidance of film professionals. This is the second workshop to be brought to Oregon, with the first taking place in Eugene back in January. At that workshop, a Veteran's spouse, Jennifer, participated in the joint film project and stated "Even though I am not a Veteran and just a Veteran's spouse, it felt so great helping my Veteran partner in a space, enabling him to feel comfortable and find camaraderie and connections with other Vets".

The project was brought to both Eugene and Florence by Will Wagner, Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator for the VA, as part of his efforts with the Western Lane Veterans and Community Partnership Coalition. Veteran participants, who need no prior film experience are limited to twenty and must commit to the entire weekend, and take full control of the

film content and creative process.

Examples of past films can be found by visiting <https://pattonvets.yourhometv.com/>. For questions or to register, Veterans can contact Mike Leeman with the Patton Veterans Project by either phone at 970-657-5500 or by email at workshop@pattonveteansproject.org.

VETERAN STAND DOWN RETURNS

Stand Downs are typically one- to three-day events during which VA staff and community volunteers provide food, clothing and health screenings to homeless and at-risk Veterans. In addition, Veterans also receive referrals for health care, housing solutions, employment, substance use treatment, mental health counseling and other essential services.

Held at the Florence Elks Lodge 1858 on 12th Street, the next event is Saturday, May 9th and will run from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Brunch will be provided by the Lodge from 8:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. This will be the third Stand Down held in Florence, and is a product of the Western Lane

Veteran & Community Partnership Coalition.

According to Will Wagner, Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator (CEPC) for the VA based out of Eugene, many of us in our community, particular Veterans, are "one major life changing event away from crisis." He explained that this is a venue that benefits our communities by bringing hope and healing. The atmosphere is "come as you are" providing a comfortable place to find services. While aimed at providing support to Veterans, all persons at risk within the community are welcome to attend.

More information can be found by contacting Chaplain Rick Chilton at 541-305-3911.

VETERAN PROFILE: WALTER WATERS

For this month's Veteran Profile I am reaching back in to history and covering a native Oregonian who served our country in the military multiple times, first in 1916 as part of General John Pershing's American Expeditionary Force chasing Mexican bandit Pancho Via; then as

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LETTERS

DEAR EDITOR

As a lifelong member of this community, a Siuslaw graduate and a mother

and our community. It is about creating a space where children feel safe, inspired, and capable

nations into submission, by destroying his enemies, by breaking the law at every opportunity,

all in the form of Donald Trump, the con man.

*George Durant
Florence*