

Recipients of quilts speak warmly of their gift

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Jane Ashley retired as a Major in the US Army after about 30 years of service. Ashley was introduced to the group at the recreation center by an art teacher.

She visited with the quilters and noticed that one of them jotted down her name. About a month later, she was home alone when the ladies came to present her with a quilt of her own. She said the experience was “very emotional.”

“Every stitch, every thought is genuine love,” she said.

Ashley explained that when “you’re in uniform people thank you” and when she served her country, like many veterans, she viewed it as her job, her career. But how others see her career, such as with the gift of a quilt, tugged at her heart.

“It is so nice of the ladies to make them,” she said. “It’s an honor, the kind of love that envelopes you because people really care.”

Ashley will be visiting her daughter, US Army Sgt. Shandiin Ahsley-DeFrancisco, in Korea this summer. Her son, Jacob, is in the Jr. ROTC program at Gallup High School and has expressed interest in joining the military upon his graduation.

Tom Hartsock, Gallup Sun’s photographer, is honored to be the recipient of one of the quilts.

“I felt very honored, very privileged to have earned it through my service in the military,” he said.

Hartsock served almost 4 years in the army, 2 ½ years in Vietnam. When asked how he felt coming home, Hartsock replied, “Terrible. I was a late comer to the PTSD movement. It affected everything I did once I got out.”

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He added The Quilts of Valor are a “very visible form of thanks for the guys that served in Vietnam. It’s nice to know that somebody appreciates our service.”

Wyatt Steiger, academic advisor for UNM-G, received his Quilt of Valor in the summer of 2014.

“It was a great honor. I got to receive my quilt alongside Hershey Miyamura, a Medal of Honor recipient,” he said.

Steiger served nearly 24 years in the US Navy and was involved with many humanitarian missions as well as in the Persian Gulf during the Gulf War. He is the faculty advisor for the Student Veteran’s Association at UNM Gallup and is involved with Veterans Helping Veterans. “They have changed my life,” Steiger said, referring to Veterans Helping Veterans. “It is the best group ever.”