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Honoring Veterans in McLean

Organization aims to improve lives of wounded veterans, first-responders.

Wednesday, December 02, 2009

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More than 200 veterans, area residents and youngsters took part in the first annual Quality of Life Plus (QL+) Veterans Day BBQ and Picnic Sunday, Nov. 8, at The Pavilions at Claude Moore Colonial Farm.

The event helped to build awareness in the Washington, D.C. area of QL+ and its charitable mission to improve the day-to-day lives of disabled military veterans, those serving today on the front lines of the war on terror, and the nation's first-responders.

FORMER Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson attended along with Del.-elect Barbara Comstock (R-34), Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) and Hal Koster, founder of the Aleethia Foundation, a local nonprofit organization that also supports injured veterans. The QL+ event featured activities for people of all ages, including face painting, moon bounces and inflatable slides for children as well as a BBQ feast by J.R.'s Steakhouse Catering.

"QL+ is dedicated to improving the transition to private citizen of our nation's disabled veterans. We are grateful for this support and will work in the months ahead to build broad support throughout the Washington, D.C. area," said McLean resident Jon Monett, the organization's founder and chairman.

Monett founded QL+ to support his alma mater, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), while also supporting the military men and women who have served their country. He did so by funding the QL+ Laboratory, a multidisciplinary facility that generates research, development and innovation of technology that helps improve the quality of life of military members and first-responders injured in the line of duty.

MONETT is a graduate of the Cal Poly School of Engineering. After school, he enjoyed a 26-year career with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and currently is engaged in a successful second career in the private sector as founder of a global provider of security and intelligence solutions. Jon Monett's son Scott, a community leader in McLean, serves as the organization's president and executive director.

QL+ identifies and recruits wounded veterans with specific needs that can be met by applying and combining engineering disciplines, such as electrical, industrial or mechanical. At the QL+ Lab students and faculty direct their engineering talents to real-life solutions.

Currently in the lab, students are adapting heavy equipment so veterans who underwent leg amputations can operate the machinery. In response to a climbing challenge issued by a paraplegic, another team of students is designing an ultra-light, off-road wheelchair that will be capable of climbing mountain peaks. The QL+ program also will build a fly-fishing rod for an arm amputee and modify a prosthetic ankle so that an injured serviceman or woman can actuate a roller blade.



Photo courtesy of William B. Folsom
Former Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson, left, with QL+ staff and supporters, from left, Robin Walker, Scott Monett, Chris Monett, Kitty Gonzalez and Pat Velander pictured at the Veterans Day BBQ and Picnic on Nov. 8 at The Pavilions at Claude Moore Colonial Farm.

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