

by Jackie Perrone



Gene Royer

Gene Royer has no need for an interior designer to plan the wall décor at All American Heating & Air, his business on Leaphart Road in West Columbia. Just about every inch is already spoken for with the plaques and certificates he has received from the many community projects he has served.

“We do whatever we can when there’s a need in this community,” he says. “And especially anything that involves veterans and kids. That’s where my heart is.”

Royer, a military veteran himself, has found many ways to assist other veterans in the Midlands. Among his favorite memories are the several times that, as a sponsor, he accompanied a veteran on the Honor Flight to Washington D.C. He is also a co-founder of the Vets’ Christmas Charity Ride, which at latest count had 6,000 motorcycle riders parading to bring gifts to the patients at Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center in Columbia – the 17th consecutive time this event has been held here. Overall, about \$1 million has been raised for this project, which ensures that no hospitalized veteran is ignored or left alone at Christmas.

At the other end of the Royer charity spectrum are the children of the Lexington community. Whether the need is personal or a school shortage problem, school administrators around our area know that a phone call to Gene Royer will yield a desired result when something requires action.

“I love kids,” he says. “They’re our future, of course, and if we

can help out to provide for them it’s what we want to do.”

Especially close to my heart is Camp Kemo, which provides an outdoor camping experience for children undergoing cancer treatment. He also actively works to get sponsorship of local ball teams to keep kids active in sports.

“One year we learned that Airport High needed athletic shoes for their ball players,” he says. “We furnished shoes for everyone on the team.”

Toys for Tots, Meals on Wheels, Harvest Hope and many other worthy charities have benefitted from his generosity, all while Gene and his wife Debbie, (a nurse and also a fellow military veteran), were raising five children; when the youngest graduates next year from the University of South Carolina, all will hold college degrees and some post-graduate diplomas.

Gene is a transplant to South Carolina, having grown up in Arizona and enlisted in the Army at age 17 during the Vietnam War. He was assigned for a while at Fort Jackson, and upon discharge moved to Lexington and received his education at Midlands Tech. He opened All American Heating and Air in 1991, and built the current headquarters building in 2002.

He likes to quote his favorite movie, “It’s A Wonderful Life,” saying, “Each man’s life touches so many other lives. When he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?” Sometimes he can see the effects of his help to others; it keeps him motivated. ■