

First-Ever Andrew Connolly Day of Service Benefits Dubuque Vets Center

Written by Jeff Giertz

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Volunteers honor legacy of Dubuque veteran by “paying it forward” to Veterans’ Freedom Center

Dubuque, IA – At 8:30 this morning, just two days before Veterans Day, dozens of volunteers from across the tri-state area gathered to put up drywall, paint, and help renovate the new home of the Dubuque Veterans’ Freedom Center during the first-ever Andrew Connolly Day of Service.

The day of service honors the legacy of the late Andrew Connolly, a Dubuque native and Iowa National Guard veteran who never stopped urging others to “pay it forward” in every aspect of their lives. Before he passed away on August 26, 2011, after a battle with spinal cancer, Andrew Connolly could often be found at Dubuque’s Veterans’ Freedom Center, a place close to his heart.

“Andrew’s life was committed to serving others,” Braley said. “Whether he was with his wife, Jenny, or his son, Brody, or serving overseas in Iraq, or advocating on Capitol Hill on behalf of other veterans, Andrew led by example. The mantra he often repeated was ‘pay it forward.’”

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“We organized today’s day of service to honor and commemorate Andrew’s selfless spirit and ‘pay it forward’ to the Dubuque Veterans’ Freedom Center. I hope this day grows in its scope and significance from this point forward – it’s a fitting tribute to a man who was so focused on helping others despite a life that dealt him a very challenging set of circumstances.”

Braley joined Jenny Connolly, the Freedom Center, and local groups to organize the day of service. Braley spent his time putting up new drywall. Volunteers were given custom Andrew Connolly Day of Service t-shirts.

Andrew Connolly worked hard to help his fellow veterans. In May, the US House passed the Andrew Connolly Veterans’ Housing Act, a bill Braley introduced to expand grant programs for permanently disabled veterans to remodel their homes and make them more disability-accessible

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