

NEWS – August 15, 2013 NEWS SOURCES, *Auburn Reporter Contributor*

Joint American-Vietnamese War Memorial Alliance hosts a dinner for veterans



Mayor Pete Lewis, Sen. Pam Roach and Rep. Linda Kochmar were among those who joined American- and Vietnamese-born veterans at the appreciation dinner.— image credit: Courtesy photo

The Joint American-Vietnamese War Memorial Alliance hosted a free dinner for veterans and their families at Holy Family Church last Sunday.

The dinner and festivities were a show of appreciation to veterans, especially Vietnam War veterans.

About 100 people attended, including several elected state officials, Mayor Pete Lewis, Sen. Pam Roach (R-rural Auburn), Rep. Linda Kochmar (R-Federal Way) and many local veterans. All shared personal stories of healing and dealing with the war's aftermath.

One special guest, Sarah Blum of Auburn, spoke of her experiences as a nurse at the 12th Evacuation Hospital in Chu Chi, Vietnam during the heaviest of fighting. She further shared the events she and a Vietnamese-born nurse had in organizing a day of reconciliation for Vietnam veterans of both countries at the Seattle Convention Center.

Ron Holz, also of Auburn, who lost his brother Gary in Vietnam, described how the South Vietnamese Army came to his unit's rescue after the American command deemed it was too dangerous to land any more troops.

Van Sang Alan, an officer in the South Vietnamese Army, spoke about his years in a concentration camp. Allan also expressed gratitude for a special program set up by then-President Reagan and U.S. Army Gen. John Vessey that enabled the release of thousands of former military officers to gain asylum in this country.

When Alan was allowed to return to Vietnam for a visit, a high-ranking police officer asked him about his background.

Van replied, "I am an American-Vietnamese."