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| |  | | --- | | ****Rita Wasnick Awarded**** The Veteran Community Initiatives (VCI)Ed Cernic, Sr. Community SupportRecognition Award ***Spotlight On Community Action Partnership of Cambria County (CAPCC)***  Rita Wasnick is a passionate volunteer helping veterans.  Her father, Ron, was a Vietnam War Veteran and she knows that so many people want to help Veterans but have no clue where to begin. She came up with the idea of helping veterans through a backpack project for homeless veterans entering homeless shelters.  She wanted to get together hygiene bags, shampoos, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and deodorant to get them started into the shelter or into their own place.  She wanted them to save money to buy things that are important, like clothing for job interviews.  She sought donations from employees and people in the community.  People were starting to send in different types of products, and then they started to submit monetary donations after she wrote letters to local clubs.  ***When I tell people what I do and how we use the money to help Veterans - for instance to purchase a new water heater, a bed, or to pay for an auto repair (or even groceries) - they are amazed and want to be a part of it. They will hand me $100 and tell me to put it to good use," shares Rita.*** | |

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| |  | | --- | | With Cambria County’s Community Action being featured in newsletters, Rita is certain they have helped get the word out.  Newsletters help people know where to go, how to help and that they are making a difference in someone’s life!  She feels our Veterans should never struggle, and hopes this program grows so large that Veterans will know where to go for help.  ***Jeff Vaughn, CAPCC Executive Director, shares, “The people of the community and our Board of Directors are super impressed because this project started off very grass roots. Rita had a great idea and I got in touch with the Veterans Leadership Program to set up the backpacks.  The program gave us an opportunity to provide backpacks and now it looks like something we have been doing all along, when prior to four to five years ago we weren’t doing anything related to Veterans per se; that doesn’t mean that Veterans weren’t coming in and getting our services, but we didn’t have a designated avenue for them to come in.”*** | |

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| |  | | --- | | Veteran Community Initiative (VCI), who gave Rita the award, is a non-profit charitable organization whose purpose is to enhance the lives and well-being of community residents - focusing on Veterans and the Veteran families.  VCI was surprised to learn they had a connection to Rita and her father, Ron.   The President/Director met Rita's father back in 1993!  ***Veteran Community Initiative's (VCI) President/Director, Tom Caulfield, shares, “As Rita's father, Ron, was an early client of our own program back in 1993 (see intake form below),  I followed up with Ron periodically.  I was reminded at those times how appreciative I was of Ron's service and sacrifice during the Vietnam War.  Now, all those many years later, to see Ron's daughter (Rita) recognized with a community award...it says something special about Ron!"*** | |
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