

NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER

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New London retired Marine earns volunteer award

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HANOVER — Vietnam veteran Ted Rivera of New London was honored with the first ever Wheelock Terrace Senior Service Award from Wheelock Terrace Assisted Living last week.

Rivera and Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice, which he volunteers through, were each awarded a \$500 gift from Wheelock Terrace at a ceremony at Wheelock Terrace in Hanover on July 24.

After serving in Vietnam as a Marine, Rivera worked in the computer industry for 28 years. At the age of 50 he became a nurse.

When he retired two years ago he decided to pursue volunteer work.

“You don’t go into volunteering looking for recognition. You go into it as, you are retired now and you can do something to help your community,” Rivera said.

As a Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice volunteer, 67-year-old Rivera is called upon when a new hospice application comes in from a veteran.

He meets with veterans to ensure their medical and medication needs are being met by the VA.

“A lot of them don’t need help that way. What they want to do is talk and that’s what I am there for,” Rivera said. “I get a lot of tears. I get a lot of laughter.”

Many of the veterans going into hospice are of the World War II generation, Rivera said, and because of attitudes back then, these veteran never properly dealt with their emotional and mental health issues that resulted from their service.

“They never really got the support that they needed dealing with their mental issues, their feelings. World War II and Vietnam War mental issues were not as important and they carry that with them all of their lives and they had to deal with it themselves,” Rivera said.

“Surprisingly, I find that a lot of them have not even talked to their families about this stuff.”

Nan Abbott, executive director at Wheelock Terrace Assisted Living, said, “He really knows that population and there’s kinship there. And it’s wonderful to honor someone who gives so much.”

For Rivera, being a volunteer is an extension of being a Marine.

“As Ted said it’s the biggest volunteer job, to volunteer for your country,” Abbott said.