

Retired Colonel John O'Connor

Venturing Crew #192's Representative from their Chartering Organization,
The David Ketchum American Legion Post #115

Mentors like John O'Connor are rare. They are the silent ones, the ones in the background who avoid the spotlight; the unrecognized heroes who arrange for youth to be successful, but disappear before they can be acknowledged. They are the ones who help without being asked and are often taken for granted, because their service is so willingly and quietly provided. They provide service, not for recognition, but for the good of the cause.



The presence of John O'Connor is an invisible thread woven into the fabric of my life, providing me opportunities to be better, stronger, and more successful. He has been my mentor at church, helping when I chaired the first & second annual Easter Egg hunts in Sun Valley and Ketchum (it has been cancelled the past two years, because we have still had snow - this Easter we had snowstorm!). He has been a quiet worker during pancake breakfasts and spaghetti dinners while our Esperanza group earned money to build homes in Mexico. John was my mentor in my Girl Scout Gold Award Project, when I produced an event to send cards to our soldiers on the Fourth of July. When I train younger girls in flag protocol and arrange for them to lead the flag ceremony for the week-long Sun Valley Jazz Festival, John works behind the scenes, arranging for us to have flags. Unlike the mentors I have recognized before, he is one you will probably never meet. He silently serves and almost always dodges thanks.

Our crew is chartered by the David Ketchum American Legion Post #115. The role of chartering organization representative for a Venturing Crew can be a position requiring minimum effort - not so for Mr. O'Connor. He is never seen at meetings, yet the hall will be ready for us and the heat turned up in advance. He assists at events so quietly you would think he had Harry Potter's invisibility cloak. The members of the crew know of Mr. O'Connor, although they rarely see him. Yet Mr. O'Connor follows the career of individual Crew members, suggesting them for Boys State or Girls State, writing letters of recommendation for scholarships or for a West Point appointment, nominating them for Eagle Scout of the Year, acknowledging them for bugling on Memorial Day, proudly arranging for them to be introduced at the annual Veteran's Day dinner.

Retired Colonel John O'Connor was commissioned in the Regular Air Force via the ROTC program when he graduated from the University of Vermont in 1956. He completed pilot training, survival school training, B-47 training and B-52 training. In the Air Force, Mr. O'Connor was stationed or trained in Nevada, Kansas, Louisiana, England, and New York. After Mr. O'Connor retired from active duty, he joined the New York Air National Guard and retired with 30 years of service. His final assignment with the National Guard was the Commander of the 105th Wing Flying C-5, at Stewart Air National Guard Base near the United States Military Academy at West Point in New York.

For 26 years, Mr. O'Connor flew for Pan Am Airlines, living in Hong Kong, Connecticut and Berlin, Germany.

In 1996, Mr. O'Connor "retired" to Sun Valley, where he has served not only as the Chartering Organization Representative for Venturing Crew #192, but as Commander of the David Ketchum American Legion Post #115, President of the Elkhorn Homeowner's Board, Member of the KART (free local bus) Board, and ubiquitous volunteer at Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church. Additionally, John coordinates the grilling of meats for one of the largest fundraisers in our valley - the annual wine auction, has cooked/served dinner at our local soup kitchen, and has contributed to numerous events in his retired home.

John and Elaine O'Connor have been married for 45+ years and are the proud parents of two - and even prouder grandparents!