

Veteran's wife makes sure 'Old Glory' gets respect through collection program

Bin for proper flag retirement makes way to Northland library

BY LAURIE REES

To Denise Etter, 46, of Cranberry Township, flying the American flag is a sign of respect for America and its veterans.

So when she and her husband — an Army veteran who served in Bosnia — began noticing ragged flags being flown outside homes and businesses, it irked her enough to take action.

The flag-collection program she began two years ago recently made the Northland Public Library, 300 Cumberland Road in McCandless, its 13th bin location.

In May 2011, Denise Etter started Retire Your Unserviceable Old Glory, which places collection bins in public locations so people can deposit tattered, torn, faded or soiled flags — also known as “Old Glory” — and be assured they will be disposed of in accordance with the U.S. Flag Code.

“I think flying the flag properly and retiring it properly are equally important,” she said.

As of mid-April, she had collected 6,728 flags from bins located throughout the Pitts-

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DENISE ETTER

RETIRE YOUR UNSERVICEABLE OLD GLORY ORGANIZER

burgh area, in Erie County and in Fredericksburg, Va.

The newest bin is by Northland's lower entrance.

“People don't have a clue what to do with their old flags or how to retire them in a respectful way. We signed on because we thought it was a nice thing to offer our patrons and community,” said Santina Balestreire, director of marketing and communications for the library.

The Ross Township resident said the bin was put in March 3, and as of April 11, it already had been filled twice.

The flags collected at Northland are given to Boy Scout Troop 279, based in St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland, across the street from the library.

The troop prepares the flags for disposal

by separating the stars from the stripes before burning them, said Ward Garner, 52, an Air Force veteran who lives in Marshall Township and serves as president of the Northern Allegheny Rotary Club.

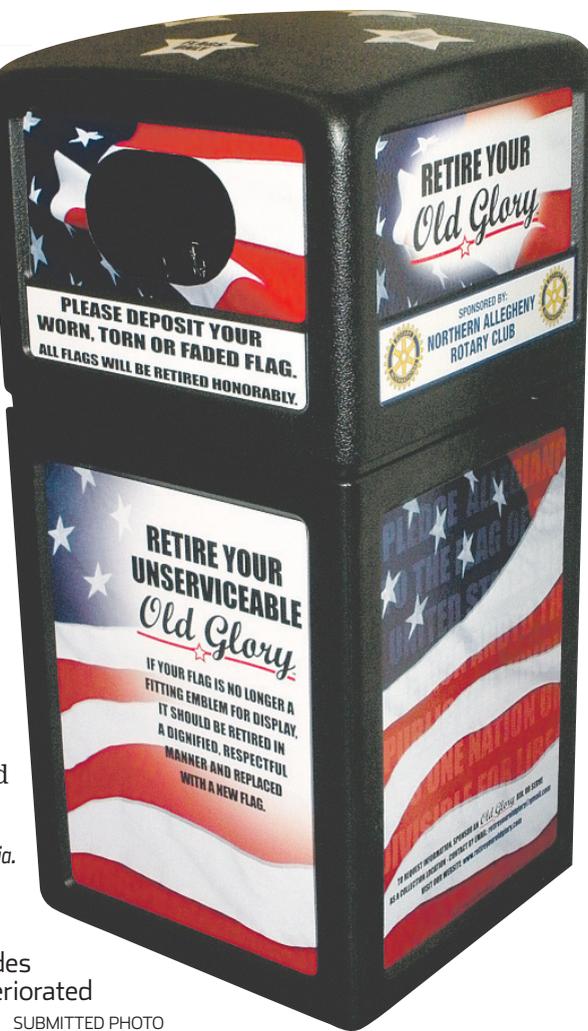
As a sponsor of the Retire Your Unserviceable Old Glory program, the Northern Allegheny Rotary Club, formerly the McCandless Rotary Club, paid for the collection bin at Northland and is responsible for retrieving the flags and delivering them to the Boy Scouts.

Etter said many of the flags she retrieves from the bins are neatly rolled or nicely folded. Some are gathered into a triangle. Others are too tattered to fold.

“Just getting them, period, is good enough for me,” she said.

Laurie Rees is a freelance writer for Trib Total Media.

This collection bin at the Northland Public Library in McCandless provides people with a place to drop off deteriorated U.S. flags for proper disposal.



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