

Grand Rapids hosts 77th Annual 101st Airborne Division Reunion



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Posted at 6:04 AM, Aug 07, 2022
and last updated 1:44 PM, Aug 07, 2022

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Veterans from around the country gathered at the Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids for the 77th Annual 101st Airborne Division Association Reunion.

FOX 17 was there Saturday to find out why the event is so significant for, not only veterans, but also for active-duty service members.

“Why this is important is to get together and to keep our cherished values alive, keep them meaningful in our everyday lives and to pass them on to the next generation of young Americans and that is really,

really crucial,” Dr. Patrick Kavanaugh, President, 101st Airborne Division Association Michigan Chapter, told FOX 17.

The 101st Airborne Division Association was created more than seven decades ago in 1946, with the first reunion held that year in Indianapolis.

Event organizers say they maintained an unbroken string of reunions until the pandemic hit in 2020, making the 77th annual reunion extra special.

“We’ve got veterans from the 101st Airborne, from the airborne glider-era of WWII, the air mobile-era of Vietnam and the current day area of air assault, coming together to share and share traditions and history,” said Randal Underhill, Executive Director, 101st Airborne Division Association.

Veteran John Sosa, who fought with the 101st Airborne Division during the Vietnam War, says the legacy started even before his time overseas.

“Well, the legacy was established in WWII. It’s what prompted us to continue, you know, these men left whatever they were doing and many of them had never left their community and now they found themselves in Europe fighting a war against tyranny and injustice... And did not ask for anything, but just the dignity of work to help build this country into a family,” John Sosa, Secretary Treasurer, 101st Airborne Division Association Michigan Chapter, added.

Veterans we talked with Saturday agree that this event is about even more than the sacrifices they made.

“Every time we meet, we offer our prayers to safeguard our young soldiers taking up the cause, continuing the legacy... and we’re meeting also to try and spread the values and awareness in our local communities that the military, our young soldiers of today, are continuing to protect our freedoms,” said Patrick Kavanaugh, President, 101st Airborne Division Association Michigan Chapter.

“Today, we don’t have the draft. These people that are fighting in these wars and securing our country and assisting other nations, they are all volunteers. They have made the commitment and took the step forward

to serve and that should never be overlooked, and we have an obligation to take care of them when they come back and that's what we do to the best of our ability," John Sosa, Secretary Treasurer, 101st Airborne Division Association Michigan Chapter, added.

If you're interested in learning more about the association, or joining it, you can head to the division's [website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

Also, if you're interested in learning more about the Michigan Chapter, or joining it, you can visit and browse through the chapter's website (101stairbornemichiganchapter.com).