

NEW BRITAIN HERALD

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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF CENTRAL CONNECTICUT

Hometown hero

NATION



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Tuskegee Airman and New Britain native Connie Nappier Jr., right, exchanges salutes with Marine Corps League member James D. Soder.

Tuskegee Airman Nappier feted at Golden Kielbasa

By **BRIAN M. JOHNSON**
CORRESPONDENT

NEW BRITAIN — Veterans flocked to Falcon Field to honor Tuskegee Airman Connie Nappier Jr. at the fifth annual Golden

Kielbasa ceremonies Friday.

The event, sponsored by Disabled American Veterans Chapter 8 New Britain, took place at 5 p.m. at Falcon Field and featured a cookout and 50/50

raffle. It was attended by 200 guests including local veterans, Mayor Timothy O'Brien, former Mayor Tim Stewart, Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz, and Nappier's

family members. The ceremonies were preceded by the Golden Kielbasa Veterans Open, a charity golf tournament which took place at 11 a.m. at Stanley Golf Course

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Golden Kielbasa raises \$10,000 to support DAV, other charities

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and was sponsored by Farmington Bank. A record 120 golfers participated in the tournament, which was won by the Aniskovich family — Bill, Bill Sr., Bill Jr., Kevin, and Chris.

Together, the events raised a total of \$10,000 to support the DAV, the House of Heroes Connecticut, and Friends of Fisher House Connecticut.

Nappier, who lives in New Britain, said he was extremely pleased by the event.

“It was a fine time to be allowed to stand here and get recognition for having served,” he said. “When I volunteered many years ago many folks tried to make you believe African Americans were not really Americans, but we knew better. For me, being here is a two-sided story though, because many of the friends I grew up with are not here.”

Tournament Director Dennis Buden said the event, which started as a fun gathering, has grown every year.

“In a matter of a few years we went from a small group of family and friends to a \$10,000 charity with major corporate sponsors,” he said. “It just goes to show you how folks react when they hear



Kevin Bartram | Staff

Food from Smokin' With Chris is served at the reception following the Golden Kielbasa Golf Tournament.

the cause is veterans. We hope to honor a veteran every year. Last year, we recognized Manny Jimenez, an Afghanistan War veteran and New Britain High School graduate who lost his left arm in action in 2010.”

Ron Pelletier, commander of DAV Hardware City Chapter 8,

said Golden Kielbasa is a great event.

“All of our local veterans will be helped by this,” he said.

Schwartz said the Golden Kielbasa ceremonies were like a family reunion to her.

“It’s really wonderful getting together and seeing old friends,”

she said. “These charities support people who really need them.”

Mayor Timothy O’Brien said it is important to support veterans.

“We owe it to veterans to support them for what they did for us,” he said. “It is an honor to be able to be a part of honoring Mr. Nappier.”

Former Mayor Tim Stewart said Buden “does a wonderful job for veterans in the community.”

“How much this event has grown over the years is a testament to the people running it,” Stewart said. “This is a phenomenal charity that I’ve been supportive of since day one. Nobody in any community, especially New Britain, would not support veterans organizations. The money raised goes to a truly worthy cause and I’m pleased to be a part of it.”

Eileen Hurst, who works with the Library of Congress and Central Connecticut State University to document veterans history, was glad to see Nappier honored.

“He lived in a historic time and was a part of making our American history,” she said. “I’m glad to see Connie honored in present day times. It wasn’t until 2007 with President Bush that the Tuskegee Airmen really got the recognition they deserved.”

For more information, visit goldenkielbasa.org.

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