

Korean War veteran Phil Wendel greets every customer at our Sterling Heights store with a smile and a salute. Phil has worked as a greeter at the store for more than 13 years and gathered a following of admirers and fans in the community due to his friendly smile, positive attitude and his standard response when asked how he's doing: "I'm walking and talking, but not bragging."

Diane Laskey and Keri Sutton, Macomb County Veterans Service Navigators, recently coordinated an in-store celebration of Phil alongside members of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 154, who presented him with a Freedom Medal to thank him for his service to America, as well as a Chapter 154 challenge coin.

"We have quite a few customers who come into the store just to see Phil, and we feel so lucky to have him as part of our team," Store Director Elona Musaka said. "When they walk in and get to talk to him, he always puts a smile on their face. It's very heartwarming and special."

More than 50 Meijer team members, customers and veterans gathered at the store's entrance to honor Phil with a salute, a photo display and an American flag cake decorated with "Thank You for Your Service." Regional Vice President Tony Moore, who is also a veteran, attended the event to honor Phil, and personally thanked him for his service to the country, as well as the joy he brings to customers in the store each day.

"I was absolutely surprised. It was unbelievable," Phil said. "I feel very fortunate and lucky to be here."

Members of local community Facebook groups occasionally post stories about interactions with Phil, and these posts have amassed thousands of comments and likes, with hundreds of Sterling Heights residents commenting with their own stories and interactions with the well-loved greeter. Prior to the event, one customer printed 20 pages of comments and stories about Phil from the group posts and presented them to Phil and his son during the celebration.

"I have 20 pages of my own Facebook now," Phil said. "I read them once a month!"

Thank you, Phil, for your service to our country and for the happiness you bring to our customers every day!

---

Additional assets available online: [\(4\)](#)

<https://meijercommunity.com/2023-11-10-Korean-War-Vet-Honored-by-Customers-and-Community>