

program where volunteers bring in their own pet dogs and cats.

Last year, volunteers organized a number of special events, including a Super Bowl Party, a Las Vegas Day, three fishing tournaments, a carnival, a fall harvest festival, and a Christmas celebration called the Veterans Star Christmas Project. As part of the project, volunteers distributed more than 700 donated gifts to residents on Christmas Day. According to one resident, the celebration was especially meaningful because “this kind of brightens our year, to know that there are people thinking about you, that care about you.” Surely, that kind of reaction is all the reward volunteers want for their efforts. Every day, these generous and dedicated men and women show the residents of the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans that the American people have not forgotten them or their service to our Nation.

It is in this spirit of generosity that I know my colleagues will join me in recognizing and thanking all those who volunteered at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans. The positive impact they have had on the lives of Michigan veterans is tremendous, and I extend my deepest appreciation for their service.●

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR W. DIVENS, JR.

● Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, today I recognize an outstanding public servant and longstanding resident of the great State of Maryland, Arthur W. Divens, Jr., as he completes more than 31 years of continuous service within the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. Mr. Divens began his public service life in naval shipbuilding as a project engineer/contracting representative for the Military Sealift Command and is ending it as executive director for the Amphibious Warfare and Sealift Office, Program Executive Office, Ships, where he oversees one of the broadest acquisition portfolios in the Navy—including more than \$30 billion in complex shipbuilding procurements. Highly respected throughout the DOD acquisition community as a visionary leader and a man of uncommon character, he has left a long and lasting legacy to our Nation—both through his unparalleled contributions to the strength and flexibility of our Navy’s surface forces and through the generation of professionals that he has mentored throughout his time in Federal service. Today, it is my great pleasure to recognize his achievements and to thank him and his family for their service to the Navy and our Nation.

Mr. Divens has a long and distinguished career of innovative thinking and aggressive execution of shipbuilding programs across the entire spectrum of naval shipbuilding. He has been directly involved in the design, construction, or delivery of over 150 ships and over 1,000 small boats and craft, more than any other individual

in the Department of the Navy. Since joining Federal service in 1980 and the Senior Executive Service in 2000, he has held a variety of key leadership roles throughout his professional life, including positions with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command, the Military Sealift Command, and the Naval Sea Systems Command. He has also provided strong leadership to groups such as the National Shipbuilding Research Program and the Marine Engineering and Shipyard Management Program, where he has worked tirelessly with his peers throughout government and industry to promote the open interchange of ideas and information and constantly improve shipbuilding and ship repair processes and technology.

In 2002, Mr. Divens joined the Program Executive Office, Ships, where he has played a critical role in defining and fielding our Navy’s future Surface Fleet. During his tenure and as a result of his sound stewardship, 31 ships have been delivered to the U.S. Navy and our allies, including two first of class vessels—USS SAN ANTONIO (LPD 17) and USNS LEWIS AND CLARK (T-AKE 1)—and the amphibious assault ship USS MAKIN ISLAND (LHD 8), widely lauded for its revolutionary application of hybrid technology and integration of environmental efficiencies and fuel conservation initiatives in the earliest stages of ship design. In the past year, he has worked tirelessly with General Dynamics NASSCO to contract for three affordable and flexible mobile landing platforms, saving the Navy nearly \$2.1 billion and preserving the shipbuilding capability of the Navy’s only west coast shipyard. He has been an influential advisor to the LHA 8 analysis of alternatives which will result in a well deck ship configuration for the next Marine Corps large deck amphibious ship, and has worked to maximize competition in the Ship to Shore Connector Program, which will provide an unprecedented level of support to amphibious forces. He has been the central figure in some of the Navy’s toughest negotiations involving nearly \$10 billion in Navy shipbuilding funding, to include the award of LPD 22-26 and the LHA 6 amphibious assault ship, the joint high speed vessel competition, and the Landing Craft Air Cushion Service Life Extension Program. At the heart of his efforts has been a relentless drive to improve the strength, capability, and flexibility of our operating forces at the best possible value to the American public.

Mr. Divens is also responsible for more than 100 foreign military sales cases, with more than 30 nations and a collective value of nearly \$2 billion. Of special note has been his direct effort with United States Forces—Iraq, helping Iraqi security forces develop the tools they need to defeat terrorism and sustain an environment where they can live free.

Mr. Divens’ contributions to our Nation extend far beyond his material

achievements and programmatic accomplishments. He has served as an inspiration to all who have served with him, ensuring that all members of his team are keenly aware of their importance to the Navy and the true appreciation that he holds for their efforts. His unique ability to recognize talent and to foster respect and camaraderie throughout the workforce has had an enormous influence on junior Sailors and civilians and will continue to steer the course of our Navy well into the future.

Mr. Divens received his bachelor of science degree from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, NY in 1979 and his master of science degree from the University of Maryland in 1997. Throughout his distinguished Federal service career, he has been honored with numerous awards for his exceptional service, including the Navy Distinguished Civilian Service Medal, the Meritorious Presidential Rank Award and, most recently, the Rear Admiral Wayne E. Meyer Memorial Award.

Mr. Divens’ tireless leadership and lifelong commitment to the Navy’s shipbuilding capability have earned him the deep respect of his peers and shipmates throughout the Navy acquisition and fleet support communities. It is, therefore, a pleasure to recognize him for his many contributions in a life devoted to our nation’s security. I know my colleagues join me in wishing him, his wife Joan, his daughters Alison, Laura and Molly, and his grandson Daniel much happiness and fair winds and following seas as they begin a new chapter in their lives together.●

RECOGNIZING BLACKSMITHS WINERY

● Ms. SNOWE. Madam President, my home State of Maine’s long tradition of entrepreneurship includes a marked dedication to creative and quality craftsmanship. Small businesses in Maine strive to be both imaginative in design and superior in value. One such small business is Blacksmiths Winery of South Casco, one of Maine’s largest wineries and the first in the State to be awarded both the silver and bronze medals in international wine competitions. Today I commend Blacksmiths Winery on their continued success and commitment to excellence.

In the late 1800s, William Watkins lived and worked as an apprentice and blacksmith in South Casco. He was known to be an exacting craftsman, insisting upon making his own nails to ensure quality, rather than using the machine made variety. After William stopped working the blacksmith’s forge, his son Albert shouldered the responsibility of the family business.