



## **ARTISANS' Bank Team Member Spotlight | November, 2024**

### **A Companion Named JIM**

*Exemplifying dedication & pride through his work and Navy service.*

The term “companion” is generally understood as a person who accompanies another to provide assistance; a comrade.”

In the context of the Milford branch, James, our November Team Member Spotlight, embodies the definition and job title of Companion in extraordinary ways. He not only offers dependability and support to those around him but also fosters a sense of community and belonging. James engages with individuals on a personal level, and his presence enhances the experience for everyone, making him a valuable part of the team and a true companion in every sense of the word.

#### **Q: What do you like most about being a Companion for Artisans' Bank?**

A: “Being a Companion gives me purpose each day, and the people here at the Milford Branch feel like family to me. This place is my home and provides comfort when I need it,” said Jim.

At 78 years old, James, better known as Jim, occasionally finds himself contemplating retirement, but the vibrant joy he experiences in his daily work keeps drawing him back. Each day, he eagerly engages with his customers, building meaningful connections that enrich both his life and theirs. The laughter, stories, and warmth exchanged in those interactions make his job feel less like work and more like a rewarding experience. Despite the thought of stepping away, James remains dedicated to his role, relishing the sense of purpose and community that his job provides.

**Q: Part of why you were chosen this month is your past military experience, can you share that with us?**

A: Jim enlisted in the Navy in 1965, motivated by a sense of duty and a desire for adventure. After successfully completing his initial training, which included physical preparation and technical instruction, he was trained to carry an M-16 rifle. To his knowledge, his boot camp class was the only one to receive training on this weapon.

He chose to further his skills by taking additional classes in specialized fields. This dedication to his professional development would serve him well during his service.

His journey began with an exhilarating deployment aboard the USS Rushmore, a well-equipped amphibious dock landing ship, as it set sail for the Mediterranean Sea. Over the course of more than a year, he dedicated himself to serving on this ship, engaging in a variety of missions that included training exercises and multinational naval operations. Each day brought new challenges and experiences, shaping his skills and deepening his commitment to his fellow service members and the mission at hand.

Jim was then deployed to Vietnam aboard the USS Springfield for almost a year.

Upon returning from his deployment in Vietnam, Jim continued his commitment to military service by joining the Reserves, where he served for an additional two years. During this time, he remained stationed domestically and did not undertake any new overseas assignments. In total, Jim dedicated six years to his military career, encompassing both his active duty in Vietnam and his subsequent service as a reservist. This experience greatly shaped his perspective and experiences throughout his life.



**Q: Is the Military part of your family history?**

A: The military has played a vital role in Jim's family history, with roots tracing back to the historic Battle of Gettysburg. One of his ancestors fought valiantly during the battle, and their name is honored on a plaque situated within the hallowed grounds of the battlefield. This connection to such a pivotal moment in American history fills Jim with pride and serves as a testament to his family's legacy. Throughout his life, he has had the opportunity to visit the site on a few occasions, and each time he stands before the monument and gazes at the plaque, he feels a deep sense of admiration and remembrance for his ancestor's bravery and sacrifice. These visits are meaningful moments for Jim, allowing him to reflect on his family's contributions to the nation's history.

**Q: What can you share about being a Veteran?**

A : Veterans Affairs is a remarkable organization that brings together dedicated professionals committed to supporting the health and well-being of veterans. Jim's journey to become a member of the VA was a long one, filled with challenges over several years. It wasn't until he reached out to Senator Coons that he gained the support needed to navigate the system. In 2012, after over 35 years since his service, Jim proudly became a member of the VA, marking a significant milestone in his life.

Jim actively participates as a dedicated team member for Wreaths Across America, an organization that honors veterans by laying wreaths on their graves during the holiday season. Through his volunteer efforts, he helps to organize events and spread awareness about the importance of remembering and honoring those who have served in the armed forces.

**Q: Are there any other activities you enjoy?**

A : Outside of being a companion, Jim passionately tends to his garden, knowing that even in its current disarray, he has the power to cultivate beauty and restore life.

He shares a special bond with his granddaughter and daughter-in-law, who have returned to Florida. They make it a point to connect regularly over FaceTime, keeping their relationships close, no matter the distance.

Jim is deeply engaged with his church, United First Methodist, where he finds not just solace but a vibrant community full of support and connection. His involvement there reflects his commitment to fostering meaningful relationships and nurturing a sense of belonging.

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Jim could easily spend countless hours sharing stories about the remarkable individuals and significant locations that have profoundly impacted his life and contributed to the person he has become today. Each of these experiences has played a crucial role in shaping his identity, intricately woven into the very fabric of his existence. He reflects on how the challenges and triumphs he encountered along the way have enriched his journey. Jim feels an immense sense of gratitude toward the Navy and the Veterans Affairs (VA) for the unwavering support and opportunities they have provided him throughout his life, helping to forge the path he walks today.

In honor of Jim and all the Veterans who have served our country with integrity, their resilience inspires us to recognize that strength is forged in the quiet moments of bravery.

**Happy Veterans Day!**

Thank you, Jim, for sharing your time and stories with us!

Check back next time for our next Artisans' Bank Team Member Spotlight!