

## VETERANS' GROUP OFFERS BBQ TO BAY PINES VA PATIENTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

SAINT PETERSBURG, Fla. – October 6, 2018 – Members of the Military Order of the Cooties, an auxiliary organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, provided a Saturday afternoon barbeque meal at the Bay Pines' VA medical center.

The barbeque, a biannual Cooties event, served 139 patients and staff, and was held at the Community Living Center located on the Bay Pines campus. Food and beverages were donated by Randy Reece, owner of Reece Builders/Windows of Saint Petersburg. Reece stated, "My grandfather was a WWII veteran and our family has always supported our military veterans."

Michael Richardson, a Navy veteran, said that his Cooties organization dates back to the end of World War I, with the mission of entertaining hospitalized troops and veterans at VA hospitals. "Our barbeque events are part of this tradition," he said. Richardson said that he was from Cooties' "Pup Tent 18" at VFW Post 4256 in Madeira Beach and other participants were from "Pup Tent 32" out of the Indian Rocks VFW, Post 10094.

Cooties member Jack Lahti, who served two combat tours in Vietnam with the Marine Corps, remarked, "I get a fuzzy, nice feeling helping my fellow veterans. We Cooties call it the fuzzy wuzzies."

Lahti said his Cooties are planning to return to the Bay Pines VA on Valentine's Day with a care package gift for every patient, and to do another barbeque in March.



L-R: John Barber, Michael Richardson, Jack Lahti, Randy Reece, Gary Goddard, Robert McKinley, Kenneth Thie

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