



# Public invited to support ‘Our Vietnam Generation’

**Aug. 22 Royal Park fundraiser benefits documentary**

By Erin McClary C & G Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — Some may recognize the name Keith Famie from his feats on the island made famous in CBS’s reality series “Survivor” back in 2000. Others may recall his international cooking program, “Keith Famie’s Adventures,” which aired on The Food Network some years back.

A more distinguished generation, however, would probably recognize Famie for his vested interest in respect for our veterans — more specifically, for his wartime documentaries.

Famie’s “Detroit: Our Greatest Generation” recently aired on PBS, and his documentary, “Can You See How I See?” featuring Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who lost their sight in combat, is slated to air this fall, also on PBS.

Most recently, though, the chef-turned-filmmaker has been working on his documentary “Our Vietnam Generation,” which he anticipates will



**Photo provided by Visionalist Entertainment Productions**  
**Veteran Joan “Donut Dolly” Kotcher served in Vietnam with the American Red Cross. She is featured in Keith Famie’s upcoming documentary “Our Vietnam Generation,” and plans to be at the Aug. 22 fundraiser to support the film.**

air on PBS in December.

Due to a lack of sponsorship this time around, budgeting for the film hasn't come easily, and his company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions, has opted to hold a fundraiser to support the film honoring Vietnam vets at the Royal Park Hotel Aug. 22.

Famie's wartime documentaries are funded in part through Veterans Memorial Park of Detroit, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Visionalist Entertainment has won eight Emmys for its productions over the past five years.

"It's been a challenge for him to have enough funding to finalize the film," said Kristin Priest of Tanner Friedman, the community relations firm helping publicize the Aug. 22 benefit. "He just feels so strongly that the Vietnam generation receives their recognition."

Priest said Famie showed her a clip from the upcoming documentary that was about seven minutes long, and it brought her to tears. "It was just so moving."

And that's the point, said Famie, about "Our Vietnam Generation." He hopes those who see the film are so moved that they take on a greater appreciation for a generation of veterans he says didn't receive the same "welcome home" or patriotic reverence as did their predecessor veterans of World War II.

"Our Vietnam generation has become the caregivers of our World War II veterans and the guardians of our current veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. They assure that the soldiers that come home from the current wars ... are met with the proper welcome back, thank you or patriotic presence," he said. "This is something they never experienced themselves."

During a time when acts of peace trumped patriotic duties in the eyes of many young Americans, thousands of men were being drafted to a war they didn't want to fight, let alone knew anything about, Famie said. To add to that, those same men fortunate enough to return from Vietnam were welcomed home with spit and tomatoes hurled by anti-war protestors.

Some were even asked to change out of their uniforms upon landing back in the United States for their own protection, he continued.

“To think that these guys ... who are clearly the leaders of our community nowadays — fire chiefs, police chiefs, our politicians — it became very apparent to me that there’s still a lot of hurt, a lot of pain. Now these guys are willing to talk, they’re now willing to open up.

“What I feel they need more than a welcome home: they need a thank you.”

Famie’s father was a B-17 bombardier in World War II, and his brother is a Vietnam vet. Making the recent documentaries also pays homage to this family’s service.

During filming for “Detroit: Our Greatest Generation,” which is about the significant role Detroit played in artillery assembly during World War II, Famie said he met several Vietnam vets who opened his eyes to another generation.

“What was interesting to me was every time I turned around, there was a Vietnam veteran.”

On Aug. 22, veterans of all wars, their family, friends and everyone in between can gather at the Royal Park, which donated its facilities for the event. Tickets are \$50 a person or \$450 for a table of 10. Tickets include dinner and a cash bar, as well as a 24-minute clip of “Our Vietnam Generation,” a 25-minute clip from “Detroit: Our Greatest Generation” and presentations from several decorated speakers.

Famie has also arranged for the Michigan Vietnam Veteran Traveling Memorial Wall to be on hand during the fundraiser, as well as the Vietnam veteran color guard and a full Vietnam military display. Music will be provided by 1960s-era band Puzzled Corner, and Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan Barnett’s wife, Corrin Barnett, will perform the national anthem.

Rochester Mayor Jeffrey Cuthbertson will also be in attendance at the Aug. 22 benefit. He spoke highly of Famie’s work, especially of the filmmaker’s support of the local organization Leader Dogs for the Blind, which provided leader dogs to the blind veterans in “Can You See How I See?” Cuthbertson sits on the philanthropy board for Leader Dogs for the Blind.

“It’s certainly an event that needs to take place for the Vietnam generation,” Cuthbertson said of the fundraiser. “The work that Famie is doing is fantastic, highlighting their sacrifice and service. And to have it in Rochester

is an honor.”

Everyone who attends the fundraiser Aug. 22 will receive a candle to participate in a vigil during the benefit, which will be accompanied by the song “Amazing Grace,” on behalf of the soldiers from Michigan who lost their lives in Vietnam.

Event-goers can contribute further to the production of “Our Vietnam Generation” through a silent auction at the fundraiser featuring sports memorabilia, collection items and services. Proceeds from the sales of “Detroit: Our Greatest Generation” DVDs for \$20 will also benefit the film’s production.

Famie said he recently heard a fact that stuck with him: During World War II, the average infantry soldier in four years of service saw 40 days of full-on combat. The average Vietnam infantryman, he said, saw 200 days of combat in one year.

While hanging out with a group of teenagers a few years back, he said, he learned another interesting fact: There’s now a generation of people who don’t know what POW MIA means. “That right there solidified why ‘Our Vietnam Generation’ had to be done.”

Tickets for the Aug. 22 fundraiser can be paid for at the door, but reservations are required by calling (248) 869-0096. Checks should be made payable to Veterans Memorial Park of Detroit and mailed to Visionalist Entertainment Productions, 28345 Beck Road, Suite 404, Wixom, MI 48393.

For more information and updates on “Our Vietnam Generation,” visit [www.ourvietnamgeneration.com](http://www.ourvietnamgeneration.com).

<http://www.candgnews.com/Homepage-Articles/2010/08-18-10/Rochester-Vietnam-Famie.asp>