

Groundhog Festivities

VA residents visit Gobbler's Knob

Feb 10, 2025

Members of VFW Post 2076 in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, hosted their 24th annual Groundhog Day celebration by welcoming residents from the VA Hospital in Butler, Pa., on Jan. 26.

Since its inception in 1999 — only canceled twice during the COVID-19 pandemic — Post 2076 has welcomed veterans from the VA, treating them to tours of the Punxsutawney Area Historical and Genealogical Society, the Punxsutawney Weather Center, and then back to the VFW for a lunch featuring beef stew and a visit with Punxsutawney Phil at Gobbler's Knob.

Butler VA Medical Center's recreational and creative arts therapist, Marc Conti, praised Post 2076 as a prime example of a resource in the community that can be used without the aid of alcohol, according to a press release by the VA.

"There are no temptations or triggers there to set off those who are being treated for addiction," Conti said, adding that he appreciates the Post does not sell liquor at their canteen.

According to the press release, the highly anticipated therapeutic trip provides education, fun, and camaraderie for VA residents who find that they can have a good time while remaining sober. Plans for next year's trip, which will be about a week before Groundhog Day, are already in the works.

Origins of Groundhog Day

Brought over by German settlers in the 1700s, they, of the Christian faith, believed that clear skies on Candlemas Day meant a long winter, while cloudy skies meant an early spring.

Facts About Punxsutawney Phil

- The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club was organized in 1899.
- Members of the club care for Phil and his family at a space next to the Punxsutawney

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Memorial Library.

- The Inner Circle is a group of members who wake Phil from his burrow and announce his prediction.
- In 1886, Clymer H. Freas, the city editor of the Punxsutawney Spirit Newspaper, proclaimed Phil the official weather forecasting groundhog.
- Phil's full title is "Punxsutawney Phil, Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators and Weather Prophet Extraordinary."
- Phil is now a celebrity, with thousands of visitors from around the world watching his prediction at Gobbler's Knob.
- If Phil sees his shadow, it's an omen of six more weeks of winter.
- If Phil doesn't see his shadow, spring is coming.

This article is featured in the 2025 February issue of Checkpoint. If you're a VFW member and don't currently receive the VFW Checkpoint, please contact VFW magazine at magazine@vfw.org.