

SGT YORK - MAN OF FAITH

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Strengthening the Primary Care workforce in Rural and Underserved Areas

Upon returning home, Alvin married his childhood sweetheart, Ms. Gracie Loretta Williams on June 7, 1919 just up the road on the hillside between their two family farms. The two lived out their love story the rest of their lives here in Pull Mall.

Alvin's life mission was to bring opportunity to those youth that were not afforded to his generation. He helped build roads, bridges and schools. His proudest accomplishment was the building of York Agricultural Institute in 1927, the first full time school in East Tennessee. Alvin fundraised and ran the school for several years until he handed the daily operations over to the State of Tennessee in 1937, still an active state run high school today. Alvin continued to hand out diplomas until his debilitating stroke in 1954. Vacated for a newer building in 1979, Alvin's original school sat in disrepair for several years. Eventually, finding itself on a demolition list, the historic building was saved and is currently owned by the Sgt. York Patriotic Foundation. Plans to convert the historic school into the Sgt. York Center for Peace and Valor are under way. To become part of Sgt. York's story, please visit the Sgt. York Patriotic Foundation at www.sgtyork.org to learn how to become part of his Lasting Legacy Project.

Near the end of his life, Alvin wanted to be buried in Pull Mall, Tennessee. He was buried in Nashville and Washington, DC and to have his burial with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. Alvin was always adamant, however, that he should be brought home to the place and people he loved upon his death, to be buried amongst the mountains in this valley where the river runs - always with friends and family, forever surrounded by those he most cherished.

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Wolf River Methodist Church
Sgt. York was saved here in 1915



Gravestone of Sgt. York designed by Ms. Gracie York. The bronze ledgers are furnished for visitors and their spouses. Gracie's gravestone features the American beauty rose symbolizing love, her favorite flower. Alvin's gravestone features a helmet, rifle, pistol, and the Medal of Honor. The engravings inscribed on their gravestones are the York's personal favorite verses. The Adoring Angel on the left acknowledges the Final Resurrection and emphasizes the importance of Faith to the family. The cross on the right reinforces their religious beliefs, but its rough-hewn nature is meant to show how rugged the upbringing was in the Wolf River Valley. The two stacked books symbolize a lifetime of dedication to education and spreading knowledge throughout his verses. The Lily on the arch above the Angel symbolizes God's Grace and the promise of immortality and salvation, since it is Christ seen as the Lily which will return a pure life.



Gracie York worked tirelessly after her husband's death in 1954 to design and build an appropriate memorial for her beloved's final resting place. She campaigned and raised funds to make a fitting and symbolic grave for her sweetheart, Tennessee champion, national treasure.



York Agricultural Institute in 1928 in Jamestown, TN



The original York Institute building, now on the National Historic Registry and ready for rehabilitation into the Sgt. York Center for Peace and Valor.



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“To care for him who has borne the battle . . .”

- Many Veterans return to live in underserved, rural and highly rural areas following their separation from the military.
- Many of these areas are healthcare deserts in general which places a great deal of reliance on VHA for clinical and support services.
- Recruitment to these areas has remained a challenge but is slightly improving.



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Successful Strategies for Recruitment and Retention

- PACT model
- Opportunity for intermittent telework
- Clinical Resource Hubs
- Trainees attending a remote location for a rotation
- Whole Health Coaches for Veterans to offload clinicians
- Whole Health programs for employees
- Reducing administrative requirements and gaining efficiencies
- Modifying Federal policies that are barriers to team-based care



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Financial Incentives

- Loan repayment
- Salaries
- Recruitment bonuses
- Retention bonuses



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Primary recruitment and retention tool
is our Mission to care for Veterans.



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