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# Medford Transcript

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SAVE THE HOLIDAY DATE!

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## Voters swarm polls as city tackles problems

By Nicholas Iovino

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Voters formed long lines at Medford's polling precincts on Election Day

morning to cast their ballots for president, senator, state legislators and to decide on key ballot questions that could set new state policy.

City Clerk Ed Finn predicted Medford would experience its largest voter turnout since the last

SEE ELECTION, A9



Medford resident Cindy Watson inserted her ballot into the vote counting machine at Lawrence Memorial Hospital on Tuesday morning, Nov. 6. WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY NICHOLAS IOVINO

VETERANS DAY

## Marine remembered by family

Mottolas honor fallen Vietnam vet

By Nicholas Iovino

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Forty-four years after Medford resident Vincent Antonio Mottola was killed by mortar fire in Vietnam, his family has uncovered new details about his death.

Members of the Mottola family recently gathered at the Custom House in Boston to remember their cousin and brother, who they affectionately refer to as "Vinnie."

Vinnie was 18 years old when he lost his life to hostile mortar fire while defending a bunker on Hill 881 in the Quang Tri



It's been nearly 45 years since Medford resident Vincent Mottola's death, but his brother, William 'Lenny' Orlando Mottola still remembers him as he sits in his wheelchair looking at Vincent's grave marker at Oak Grove Cemetery. WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY DAVID SOKOL

SEE MOTTOOLA, A10

HALLMARK HEALTH

## New urgent care center opens at LMH

By Nicholas Iovino

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Visitors packed into a newly designed facility at Lawrence Memorial Hospital (LMH) last week to get their first peak at Hallmark Health's latest brainchild, a new urgent care center.

"This is the new brainchild of the organization to meet the needs of the population and to offer more efficient care," said Deb Cronin-Waelde, system director of emergency services at Hallmark Health, which

manages LMH.

The new urgent care center aims to provide walk-in patients a quicker and cheaper alternative to the more costly emergency room visit. The facility offers treatment and evaluation for minor injuries, common illnesses, immunizations and other non-life-threatening medical needs.

Associate Chief Nursing Officer and LMH Site Administrator Lori Stevens said a study recently found more than half

SEE LMH, A11



Massachusetts state Rep. Paul Donato, left, speaks with Deb Cronin-Waelde, RN, Hallmark's director of emergency services, during the grand opening of the new Urgent Care Center at the Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Medford. WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY DAVID SOKOL

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Time to look at high school

By Nicholas Iovino

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Following recent allegations of a "piecemeal" approach to building improvements by members of the Medford City Council, one resident has formally requested school officials create a master plan for Medford High School.

"I propose we have an overview of the high school to propose the most crucial items like toilets to light fixtures," Cummings Street resident Jeanne Martin told the Medford School Committee.

Martin was before the body on Nov. 5, urging officials to set a deadline for prioritizing building needs. Otherwise, she said, the school system will be knocking on the City Council's door again, "asking for toilets to be fixed next week."

In response, Superintendent of Schools Roy E. Belson produced a stack of papers mapping out capital planning activities for the high school undertaken over the last decade.

The report detailed two capital improvement plans developed in 2001 and between 2006 and 2009, along with a list of recently completed and pending projects, like the Field of Dreams, Hormel Stadium, new technology and science lab renovations.

"It is not an absence of planning or assessment," said Belson. "Sometimes it's been an absence of having as much funding as we'd like to have. What appear to be random requests are really items that have been identified for a period of time."

The school system's building and grounds

SEE SCHOOL, A9



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**MOTTOLA**

From Page A1

Province of Vietnam on Feb. 23, 1968.

When he died, he left behind a mother, father and two brothers, along with several cousins, aunts and uncles.

Within the last year, a documentary about the siege of Khe Sanh prompted one of Vinnie's relatives to start researching more about his role in the battle and the circumstances surrounding his death.

The battle of Khe Sanh was considered one of the most bitterly fought and highly publicized battles of the Vietnam War. For 70 days and nights, a group of 6,000 marines and combined forces held out against a besieging force of 20,000 North Vietnamese. The battle raged from Jan. 21 to March 31, 1968.

Vinnie's cousin, Marie Mottola Chalmers, still remembers the day her family learned her cousin was killed in that battle. She had just started writing out her cousin's name, intending to send him a letter overseas, when she received the chilling news.

Only within the last few months did the Mottolas discover new details about Vinnie's untimely death and why he was stationed at Hill 881 at the time.

After Chalmers' nephew, Jimmy, watched a documentary that sparked a revived interest in her late cousin, Chalmers learned of a new, limited-release documentary called "Bravo! Common Men, Uncommon Valor," which detailed the



**The grave marker of Vietnam Marine war hero Vinnie Mottola is seen here at the Oak Grove Cemetery in Medford. After Vinnie's death, his brother William started to abuse drugs, causing him to burn down his family's home and develop neuropathy, which has left him in a wheelchair. William, who has been clean and sober for 11 years, is trying to get a plaque named in honor of his brother.** WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY DAVID SOKOL

**Online**

For more photos and to hear Lenny talk about his brother, log on at [wickedlocalmedford.com](http://wickedlocalmedford.com)!

experiences of marines who sacrificed lives and limbs in the Battle of Khe Sanh.

The producers of the documentary put Chalmers in touch with soldiers who served alongside Vinnie in the battle. The veterans told Chalmers her cousin was "funny, irreverent and carried his own weight."

Chalmers said Vinnie used to carry a heavy rocket

launcher, but never complained about it. Vinnie often made jokes to keep up the spirits of his fellow marines, according to the veterans who served with him.

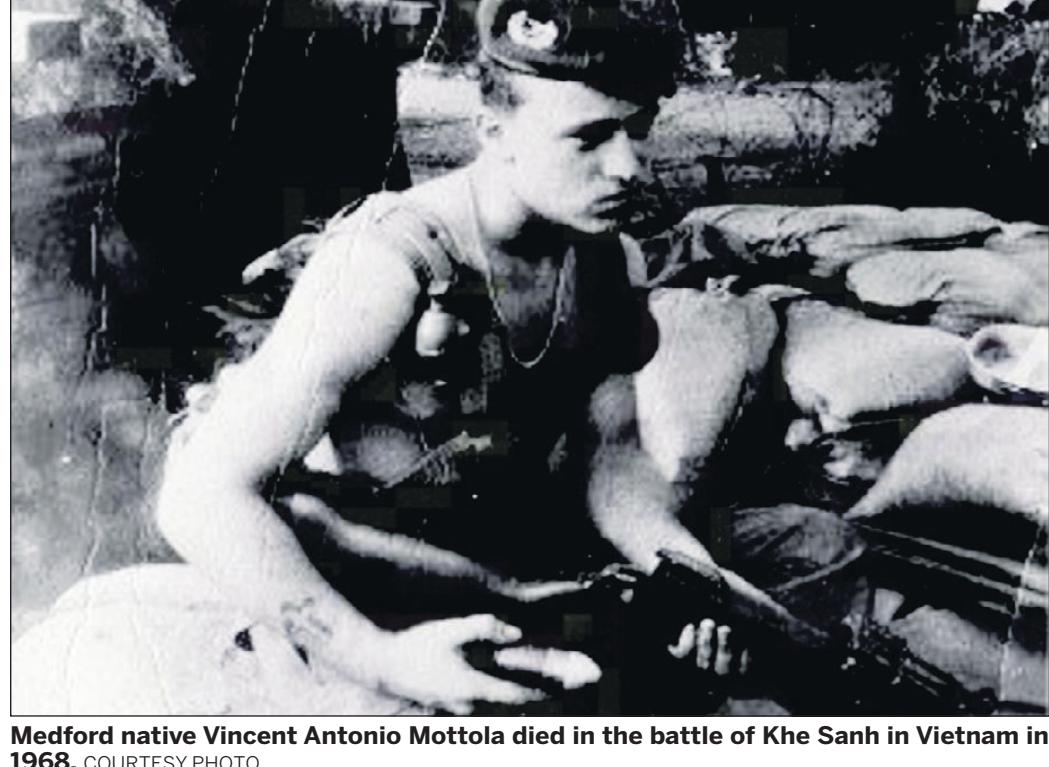
The Mottola family also learned Vinnie was hit with shrapnel on Jan. 24, 1968, and was sent to Japan to recuperate less than a month before he died. The family says Vinnie was not supposed to be stationed in a place where his life would be in danger less than 30 days after he was injured.

Marines who served with Vinnie told the family he was likely stationed there because the military assumed it would be a "lighter duty" assignment.

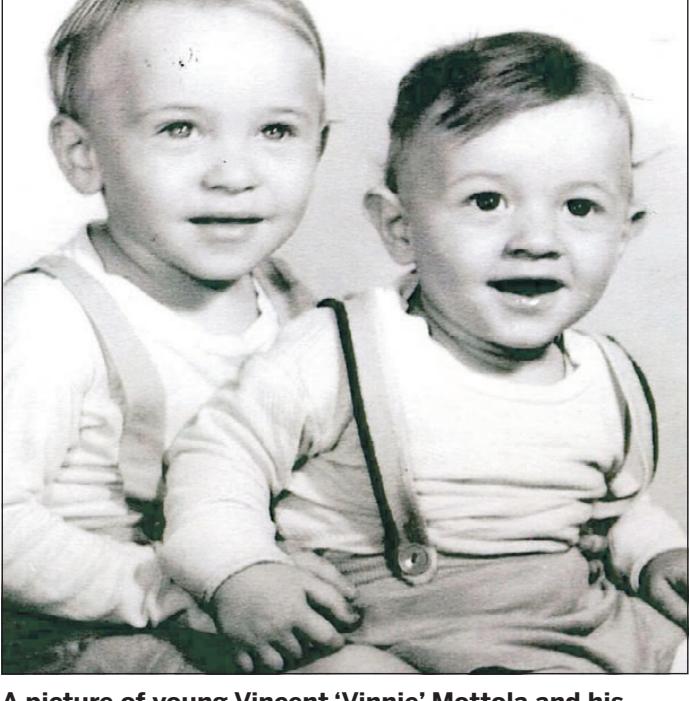
"They figured this bunker would be lighter duty," said Chalmers. "His mother and everyone fought not to have him go back so quickly."

The family said efforts were even made by the late Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill to prevent Vinnie from being sent back into action so soon.

Vinnie was one of eight soldiers who died defending the bunker on Hill 881 that day. Chalmers said hearing Vinnie died instantly from surviving soldiers came as some comfort to her and the family.



**Medford native Vincent Antonio Mottola died in the battle of Khe Sanh in Vietnam in 1968.** COURTESY PHOTO



**A picture of young Vincent 'Vinnie' Mottola and his brother, William 'Lenny' Mottola, illustrates how close the pair was while growing up in the 1950s.**

COURTESY PHOTO

military refused his request because his brother's death made him ineligible to serve in Vietnam.

"I wanted revenge for my brother," said Lenny. "When they wouldn't let me go, I didn't want to stay in the Army. I became a radical. I started a rally on the Boston Common against the war in Vietnam."

Lenny spent the next year in and out of federal stockades for going AWOL and refusing to report for duty with the U.S. Army. He was sentenced to a dishonorable discharge, which was later changed to an undesirable discharge.

In 1969, Lenny's downward spiral into drugs and alcohol led to a fire at his family's South Medford home at 543 Main St., located above what was then Gang's Market.

Lenny was partying with friends at the Main Street home when someone dropped a cigarette on his mother's cedar chest. After a fire erupted, Lenny was found passed out in his bed by Medford firefighters.

He woke up 37 days later at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. A heroin overdose coupled with smoke inhalation from the fire had placed him in a coma for more than a month.

Among the items lost in that fire were all of Vinnie's military medals. Mottola earned a slew of military accolades for his service, including the Purple Heart, Gold Star, National Defense Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Presidential unit citation and Marine Corps Rifle Expert badge, among others.

Upon the family's request, the U.S. Marines recently replaced those lost medals earlier this year.

**Reconnecting with family**

Lenny has now been clean and sober for 11 years, but decades of drug abuse caused him a lot of suffering. His wife, Patty, died at the age of 42 from AIDS contracted through needles used for heroin injections.

Lenny has lived with HIV for the last 21 years. He now lives in Lowell, where he serves on the AIDS Committee and Consumer Advisory Board for HIV, which

supports funding and legislation for AIDS treatment, prevention and awareness.

Lenny returned to Massachusetts in 2004 after living in Florida for 25 years. Upon his return, he reconnected with his estranged younger brother, Michael Mottola, whom he had not spoken to since 1991.

Michael also served as a U.S. Marine in the 1970s.

Lenny said he moved back to Massachusetts expecting his younger brother to take care of him, but roles were reversed when Michael was diagnosed with inoperable bone, stomach and lung cancer.

Michael passed away in March 2011.

Years of drug use also led Lenny to develop neuropathy, a condition that has now restricted his mobility to a wheelchair. Lenny said he feels certain life would have turned out differently had Vinnie not died in Vietnam.

"If Vinnie was still here, I wouldn't be in this chair," Lenny said.

On a recent late October day, Lenny visited his brother's grave at Oak Grove Cemetery. The grave was recently polished by Vinnie's cousin, Robert Mottola.

Lenny also found his brother's name listed on Medford's Vietnam War Memorial in front of Medford High School on Winthrop Street. With some assistance, Lenny stood up from his wheelchair and proudly pointed to his brother's name on the wall.

An asterisk beside the name denotes that Vinnie was killed in action.

Vinnie is one of 18 Medford residents who died while serving on active duty in the Vietnam War, according to the U.S. government's Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS). However, only 11 Medford residents who were killed while serving in the conflict have a dedicated memorial plaque or square named after them in Medford.

The Mottola family says they would like to get an official plaque, square or monument named in honor of Vinnie, whose loss they still greatly feel, even after 44 years.

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