

Vets use settlement millions from massive identity-theft suit against VA to help other vets

BY [Stephanie Gaskell](#)
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Tuesday, April 27th 2010, 4:00 AM

Pay it forward.

That's what a group of veterans is doing with a \$20 million class-action settlement from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) over a massive identity-theft suit.

They're donating about \$13 million to the [Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund](#) and the [Fisher House Foundation](#), two [New York](#)-based charities that help families of fallen and wounded troops.

"When I first heard about it, it just really knocked me down. It's indicative of the kind of men and women they are," said Fisher House [CEO Ken Fisher](#).

About 20 million veterans sued the VA after an employee's laptop with their personal information was stolen in 2006. The vets argued that the VA didn't do enough to protect them after discovering the sensitive data was missing.

"The veterans are very glad to have done this. These two are the most substantial organizations around," said plaintiff [John Rowan](#), a 64-year-old Air Force veteran from [Middle Village](#), Queens. "But the bottom line is, we had to make sure the VA doesn't do this again."

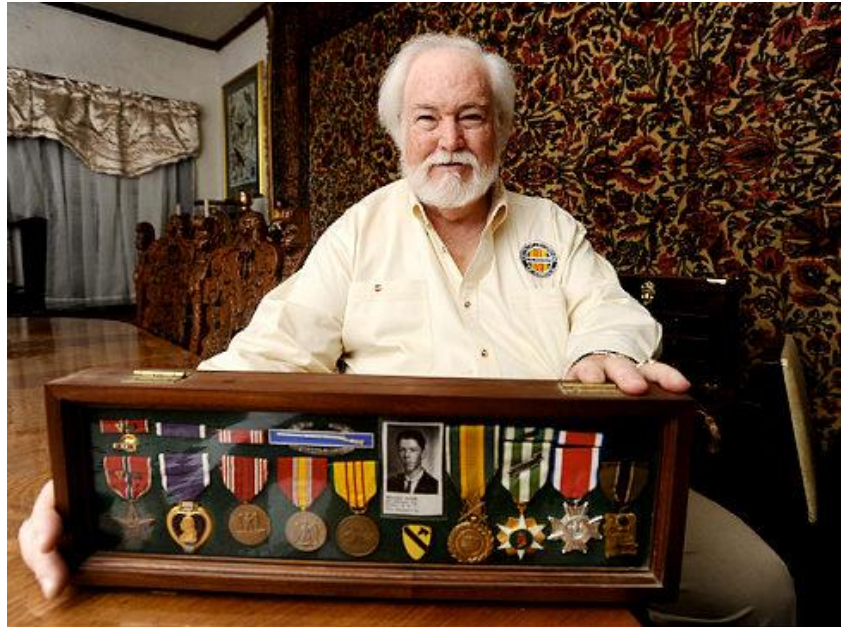
The Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund raises money for families of soldiers killed in combat. It also helped build the renowned [Brooke Army Medical Center](#) in [San Antonio](#) and the soon-to-be opened [National Intrepid Center for Excellence](#), a traumatic brain injury hospital in [Bethesda](#), Md.

There are 45 Fisher Houses across the country, located next to VA hospitals to give families of wounded soldiers a place to stay while they're being treated.

"It's just an incredible gift," said [Chairman Arnold Fisher](#), whose uncle, Zachary, founded the organization in 1991. "Veterans have been forgotten about by many people of this country. They're the ones who deserve the credit."

sgaskell@nydailynews.com

Get Morning Home Delivery of the Daily News for up to 70% off.
Call (888) 393-3760



Vietnam vet John Rowan is among group donating \$13 million to vets' groups from lawsuit against the VA.