

Chattanooga: Plaque honors veterans' counselor

By [Naomi Jagoda](#)

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Harry Jackson receives a hug from Becky Coleman while his family stands around his new plaque on the Walnut Street Bridge after a ceremony.

Photo by [Jenna Walker](#).

About Harry Jackson

- Age: 67
- Military service: U.S. Army, 1966-1968; served in Vietnam from 1967-1968
- Military awards: Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal with “V” device and others
- Degrees: Bachelor’s in psychology from Tennessee Temple University, master’s in education in community counseling from UTC, doctor of ministry in Christian counseling from Covington Theological Seminary; licensed professional counselor; clinically certified forensic counselor.
- Current job: Team leader at Chattanooga Vet Center

When Harry Jackson was about 7 years old, he would walk across the Walnut Street Bridge at night while selling newspapers.

Sixty years later, Jackson is being honored with a plaque on the bridge for his service to the Chattanooga community as a veteran, counselor and volunteer.

At a ceremony Saturday, Jackson received a plaque on the south end of the bridge that is part of the Walk of Honor for celebrities from Chattanooga and people who have contributed to the city.

A plaque in honor of singer Bessie Smith also was placed on the bridge at the event.

Garnet Chapin, executive director of the Parks Foundation, said the group decided to honor Jackson because he has been important to the community but isn't well known.

The foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to maintaining, beautifying and promoting the Walnut Street Bridge and other public parks and spaces in Chattanooga.

"He's one of the good guys," Chapin said. "He had a very compelling story."

Jackson served in Vietnam from July 1967 to July 1968 and received numerous awards, including a Bronze Star.

After leaving the Army, Jackson finished his psychology degree from Tennessee Temple and earned graduate degrees in community counseling and Christian counseling.

"I guess I just enjoy helping people," he said.

Jackson serves as team leader for the Chattanooga Vet Center, where he has worked since 1990. He counsels other veterans with issues relating to readjusting to civilian life, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

Evan Bellville, whom Jackson counsels and who was among those who nominated him for the plaque, said Jackson never says no to anyone in need.

"He's one of the most revered and admired people," Bellville said. "He's virtually dedicated his life to other people."

Jackson also gives back to Chattanooga outside the military community.

He lived in the Bonny Oaks School, a children's home, for about nine years growing up, and he now serves as secretary of the Bonny Oaks Foundation's board.

He also is involved with Dallas Bay Baptist Church.

Jackson said he is pleased but surprised to be honored.

"[I was] really shocked. In fact, I still am," he said.