

A hero gets his medal

Lawson Sakai, left, a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, presents a declaration from Congress and President Barack Obama to fellow 442nd veteran Robert Masami Iso, 92, for the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award that can be given to a civilian, at the VA Menlo Park division's Community Living Center on Thursday.

Photos by Curt Campbell / Veterans Affairs



66 years after being crippled by WWII machine gun fire, brave veteran is recognized

BY VICTOR GONZALES
Daily News Staff Writer

For the family and friends of World War II veteran Robert Masami Iso, seeing him receive the Congressional Gold Medal for his service fighting in Europe was a bittersweet moment.

Iso, 92, originally of San Jose and a member of the highly decorated 442nd Regimental Combat Team, recently was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. His doctor, Eric Strong, pushed to have the award presented as soon as possible out of concern for his health, VA spokeswoman Kerri Childress said.

So, Iso was given the nation's highest civilian award Thursday morning at the VA Menlo Park division's Community Living Center. More than 100 people attended the event, including Iso's wife Rose, family members, friends and fellow veterans, Childress said.

"It was one of the high points of his life. He can't speak too much, but he was very impressed," Iso's younger brother James said.

Retired Air Force Col. Brian Shiroshima presented the declaration that President Barack Obama will give to members of the 442nd. Iso was the first of his unit to receive the award; the actual medals are being made and the others will receive theirs in August in Washington, D.C.

Iso already has a Bronze Star for Valor and two Purple Hearts. He fought in the European theater, participating in a bloody rescue mission in eastern France in 1944, before being gravely wounded by machine gun fire in Italy in 1945. At age 24, he would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

"He's really an American combat hero,



Rose Iso gives her husband Robert Masami Iso a loving touch after he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award that can be given to a civilian, on Thursday.

in my eyes," said James Iso, who worked in military intelligence for U.S. forces occupying Japan.

"Mom was all alone at camp while her two sons were off to war," James Iso said, referring to the internment camps Japanese-American citizens were forced into after the United States entered the war. "Our families had to prove our patriotism. They (the 442nd) proved dynamically on the battlefield their patriotism."

After the war, Robert Iso continued working for the government, dealing with military logistics, and volunteered.

"He was disabled, but he could drive a car. He drove disabled veterans from their

homes to the hospital and back. He also did that for senior homes as well," James Iso said. "He did what he could to help; he's that kind of a guy."

The city of San Jose recognized Robert Iso for his civic service, his brother said.

Nephew Brian Iso said he is proud of his uncle.

"It's a very high and prestigious award," the 60-year-old Fremont resident said. "At the same time, it's not something that particular generation (of Japanese-Americans) openly discusses."

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SCHOOL MATTERS

How parents can teach children to be creative: Expert to talk Feb. 15

"Creativity is critically important. Without creativity, you'll never find answers to all the problems life throws at you," says Dr. Tina Seelig, a neuroscientist and author of "What I Wish I Knew When I Was 20: A Crash Course on Making Your Place in the World."

Seelig will be speaking at a PTA parent education event Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at Stanford University's Arrillaga Alumni Center, 326 Galvez St. The talk will be very interactive, she said.



PREEVA TRAMIEL

Her topic, "InGenious: Levers for Unlocking Creativity," focuses on techniques and exercises that parents can use with children to ensure that they are creative problem-solvers.

Seelig is the executive director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program, the entrepreneurship center at Stanford University's School of Engineering. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on creative thinking there.

"I'm almost ashamed to say that I have to teach creativity to university students," Seelig said. "We have the basic tools for creativity in us when we are 3 years old. We should be cultivating those skills at every level of education."

When her students graduate and get jobs, they report back that the training they got in her class gives them an edge. "They tell me that they use what they learned every day at work," Seelig said.

She acknowledged that creativity is not the only key to success.

"I teach in the School of Engineering, so, of course, having a deep understanding of science, math, and technology are also very important. But if you want to truly succeed, you also need to look at problems with a creative eye."

Seelig is excited about bringing parents and their children together to work on creativity.

"At one of my lectures, I met a father with a middle-school-age son, and the son was an out-of-the-box thinker who had been having difficulties at school," Seelig said. "The father wrote to me to let me know that my lecture and the exercises showed them that the son really had an advantage, and that really boosted his confidence."

Seelig will be joined by Matthew Severson, a real-life creative problem-solver. Severson founded The School Fund in 2008 to help students in Tanzania and is expanding the organization globally with the help of fellow students from Palo Alto High School.

"We are fortunate to be able to provide this program that focuses on a fresh approach to problem solving. I'm looking forward to hearing Tina's tested academic approach and Matt's real world experience," said Sunny Dykwe, vice president of parent education for the PTA Council, which is sponsoring the event along with Stanford Hospital and Clinics.

The flier for the program can be viewed at info.paloaltopta.org/docs/110215TinaSeelig.pdf.

Kevin Skelly, Palo Alto superintendent of schools, is a fan of Seelig's latest book.

"I enjoyed Dr. Seelig's book enormously," he said. "Her ideas have affected the way I now think."

School Matters is happy to read your feedback. Please e-mail comments to schoolmatters@paloaltopta.org to reach Preeva Tramiel.

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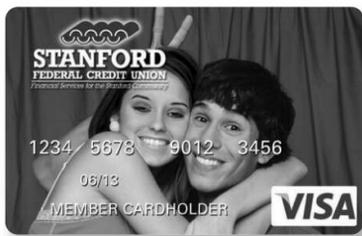
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"We choose a happy new year."

"Every new year, Mom and I make resolutions. Usually, they're about losing a few pounds, or being organized. But she needs more help now, so this year we resolved to find the perfect place for her. A community where she could be active, but get the help she needs. We found it at Belmont Village. Mom's made new friends, and the chef-prepared meals are delicious. Best of all, with Belmont's well-trained staff to meet her daily needs, I don't worry anymore. For once, our resolution was easy to keep!"

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