North Kitsap native's film shares veterans' stories around the nation
Award-winning director John Goheen's V-DAY 11.11.11 shows Sunday

By Ed Friedrich
November 10, 2012

KINGSTON — War dragged on in the Middle East. Americans back home had become disinterested. John Goheen didn't want men and women fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those before them, to be forgotten.

The 1's lined up last Veterans Day. November 11, 2001. 11/11/11. World War I ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 with the German signing of the Armistice. That's where Veterans Day, which celebrates the service of U.S. military veterans, originated.

"I figured it'd be as good a reason to do it this year (in 2011) as any," the award-winning director said of the documentary, "V-DAY 11.11.11," which examines what it means to be a veteran in America by telling the stories of 15 of them.

The 1-hour, 40-minute film is being offered for free to veterans organizations to host screenings or use for educational purposes, and is being shown on public TV. Locally, it will be screened at 11 a.m. Sunday at Firehouse Theater in Kingston, near where Goheen grew up, and air at 6 p.m. on KCTS-9 TV the same day.

Goheen, a three-time winner of National Press Photographers Association's Television News Photographer of the Year award, was raised in Indianola and graduated in 1974 from North Kitsap High School, where he starred in track and football. He attended Eastern Washington University and graduated in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in Radio & Television News before spending four years in the Army as a Signal Corps officer. He worked for five TV stations, including KOMO in Seattle, and is now an independent filmmaker and instructor at Loyola University in Chicago.

Goheen's mother and one sister still live in Indianola. Another sister resides in Port Orchard. His father and a brother passed away.

Craig Smith, who hung out with the Goheens in Indianola during the summers, owns Firehouse Theater. He also served in the Army and doesn't think veterans get the credit they deserve.

"I thought it was a nice gesture of John, and when he contacted me I said of course I'd do that," Smith said of the screening. If there's enough interest, he said he'll try to schedule another showing.

Goheen, who was turned on to film by North Kitsap High School Drama teacher Don Edgers, contacted 40 of the top video storytellers in the country, many of whom he didn't know, for the
"V-DAY 11.11.11" project. Last Veterans Day, they shot and edited profiles of veterans in their areas. Goheen picked all or parts of 15, including one shot at American Lake Veterans Golf Course in Tacoma, and wove them together. There is no narrative outside of the veterans telling their stories. Five recurring vets from different generations provide perspectives and viewpoints that flow one profile into the next. Everybody worked for free except an editor who was paid through a grant.

"It's a really, really powerful piece of work," said Goheen. "Next to (the editor), I'm probably the one who's seen it the most. Still, watching it, I choke up. There are just certain stories that are emotional stories and phenomenally unique stories that are in it that you're not going to see anywhere else."

Being a veteran, Goheen said he feels kinship with those who have served.

"These two wars have lingered for a long time," he said. "We were losing sight of those on the battlefield. I felt somebody needs to do something to keep the memory alive. Men and women have sacrificed to help America be what it is. I felt it was a way to bring honor and recognition to people who unselfishly do this sort of thing for the good of the country."