

SUMMER
July 2014
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LEGION

NEW YORK

*Your
American Legion
in Action*

*Possible
Game-Changer
for PTSD*



LEGION NEW YORK

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RECRUITING IS 'EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY'

Workshops to provide tools for member campaigns

The Department membership team will kick off the 2014-2015 membership year with a series of five workshops across the state on the two middle weekends in August and the first Saturday in September.

Pointing to recruiting as "everyone's responsibility," Membership Chair David Riley said members of the Legion, Sons of the American Legion, and the Auxiliary "are encouraged to attend."

Each membership workshop will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end at 1 p.m. with lunch.

Registration will be from 9 to 9:30.

Here is the schedule:

1. Saturday, Aug. 9, at Botts-Florita Post 576, Leroy, NY (Districts 7 & 8).

2. Sunday, Aug. 10, at Arthur W. Butler Post 359, East Syracuse (Districts 5 & 6).

3. Saturday, Aug. 16, at Throggs Neck Memorial Post 1456, Bronx (Districts 1 & 9).

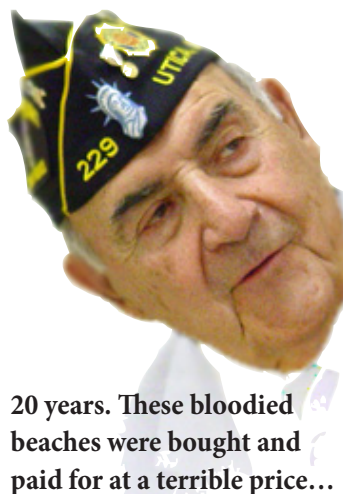
4. Sunday, Aug. 17, at Williston Post 144, Williston Park (Districts 2 & 10).

5. Saturday, Sept. 6, at John Wyszomirski Post 701, Amsterdam (Districts 3 & 4).

LEGION COMMEMORATES 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY FROM ALL CORNERS OF NEW YORK TO THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY

While world leaders and veterans, including national American Legion Commander Daniel Dellinger, gathered in Normandy, France to commemorate the 70th anniversary of D-Day, Legion Posts around New York marked the occasion in a number of ways -- from holding events to saluting World War II vets in their midst. In a D-Day message, Department Commander Kenneth Governor referred to the "indomitable spirit of American fighters" -- both then and today.

"Within five days," Governor said, "326,547 men, 54,186 vehicles, and 104,428 tons of stores were brought ashore over the beaches of the Normandy coast during the worst June weather on the English Channel in



20 years. These bloodied beaches were bought and paid for at a terrible price...

"We owe a great deal to the thousands who unselfishly gave up their lives so the world would be freed of oppression."

Utica Post 229 in Utica took the opportunity to salute D-Day veteran Phil Capraro (above) at a dinner June 5. After landing at "Omaha Beach" in Normandy during a second wave, Capraro was wounded three

times, Post Commander Chris Urban noted. The first was a bullet to the right leg while he was still in the water. Medics bandaged his leg, but he refused to return to the boat. A few months later at the Siegfried Line, he was bayoneted in the shoulder in hand-to-hand combat. A medic sewed him up and he refused to go home. The third time was at the Battle of the Bulge where he was blown out of his machine gun placement by artillery and tank rounds. He was left for dead. Soldiers readying a body bag put a mirror up to his nose and saw he was still breathing. Capraro woke up in a hospital in Paris. He received three Purple Hearts; and for helping to capture 200 Germans, he was awarded two Bronze Stars.

ON THE COVER

The Legion Family around NY State remembered the nation's war dead by participating in wreath-laying ceremonies and parades on Memorial Day -- including members of Utica Post 229 Color Guard, who presented the colors as wreaths were placed at six war monuments around the City of Utica. Photo by R. Stronach.

LEGION CHARTERS FIRST COLLEGE POST AT LONG ISLAND U

RICHARD L. CONOLLY POST 2014 NAMED AFTER WORLD WAR II ADMIRAL

The American Legion in New York State has chartered a (first-ever) college post at Long Island University.

Department of New York Commander Kenneth Governor presented the charter and installed officers May 28 for Admiral Richard L. Conolly Post 2014 at Long Island University's Post College (LIU Post) in Brookville, NY.

Governor took a moment to remind the student veterans about the history of the GI Bill, first enacted in 1944 and today offering expanded benefits for post-9/11 veterans. A former American Legion national commander drafted the original GI Bill, Governor noted, and "in the peak year of 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions." By the time the original GI Bill ended in 1956, "7.8 million of 16 million World War II veterans had participated in an education or training program."

LIU Post -- then known as LIU's C.W. Post College



Department Commander Kenneth Governor presents post charter to student military veterans at LIU, as other Legionnaires and Admiral Conolly family members gather around. Photo by Nassau County American Legion Historian James T. Randle.

-- was established in part to serve returning service members studying under the GI Bill. Then-LIU President Richard L. Conolly, a Navy admiral who served in both World War I and World War II, was there to welcome its first class of students in 1955, including Korean War vets. So it was only fitting to name the Legion post after him.

Michael Knauer, commander of the new post, told Newsday that student veterans can now draw sup-

port from one of the country's premier national service organizations, and help chart its future.

"With the number of veterans who are transitioning back to civilian life, it just makes sense to make it easier for us to feel we belong," said Knauer, 37, a former Coast Guard petty officer. The new post has 20 members, including two former students.

Ashley Clay, 28, a Post vice commander and former Marine sergeant, told Newsday

that creating a post on campus would allow veterans to continue the spirit of service.

Other post officers include Vice Commander Matt Gabriel, Vice Commander Dan Pontenzieri, Treasurer Olatokunbo Oke and Chaplain Julio Hernandez.

Leaders from Nassau County Legion and the Department participated in the chartering and installation ceremony, along with Admiral Conolly's great grandchildren.

MEET YOUR STAFF

Department Adjutant Jim Casey will introduce staffers on a rotating basis. In this issue he spotlights Program Coordinator ANNIE WILSEY.



Some might say Annie Wilsey is "breaking in" her third department adjutant -- as she joined the Department of New York 34 years ago when PDC Leonard Baxter was adjutant. She continued through PNC Dick Pedro's nearly three-decade tenure, and today continues to work on everything involving programs.

"It's hard to describe my job because it's everything," Annie says. "It's being

flexible" -- whether it's coordinating consolidated post reports for Children & Youth and Americanism awards, handling numerous citations for the Department Convention, typing up innumerable thank-you letters, working on the annual oratorical contest ("my favorite"), helping to coordinate the annual Boys State, or assisting with Sons of the American Legion projects. "I'm never bored!"



A POSSIBLE GAME-CHANGER FOR PTSD

ALTERNATIVE HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY SHOWING RESULTS

A therapy delivering 100% oxygen in a pressurized chamber may be a “game-changer” for treating military veterans with mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

That’s the word from New York State American Legion Commander Kenneth Governor, who is calling on the Veterans Administration (VA) to “put aside any reluctance and bias toward looking at a better way to treat veterans” with PTSD and mTBI.

Medical vs. psychiatric approach to many cases

PTSD has traditionally been treated as a psychiatric disorder. But Governor points to a growing number of physicians who regard many cases of PTSD as a byproduct of post-concussive syndrome. “There’s growing evidence that a significant number of PTSD and mTBI cases should be treated as medical conditions, not psychiatric conditions,” he said.

In fact, the psychiatric medications usually given to veterans with mTBI or PTSD too often do not heal the underlying brain injury and can have serious side effects. “Treating mental health often happens because of a patient’s deteriorating ability to cope, resulting in depression, addiction, even suicide,” Governor said. “Instead of prescribing



psychiatric medications for what appear to be mental health symptoms, we need to look at treating the condition behind the symptoms. Otherwise, it’s like treating a broken leg with pain killers and not setting the fracture.”

Injured brain needs extra oxygen to heal

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) may be a difference maker.

HBOT works for a simple reason. A healthy brain uses 100% of the oxygen the body provides it. However, when there is trauma to the brain, it needs extra oxygen to heal. HBOT provides that extra oxygen.

“Oklahoma this year passed a law guaranteeing free HBOT for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury, and several other states are attempting to follow Oklahoma’s lead,” Governor said.

He pointed to the suicide epidemic among veterans. “We’re losing 22 veterans a day who take their own lives, with another 44 attempts. We need to offer veterans with TBI/PTSD an alternative to a sliding slope of drug therapy. We need to do it now. Today.”

Governor stressed the importance of incorporating HBOT with a counseling and rehabilitation program to give veterans every opportunity to get better.

HBOT provider treats vets for free

Recently, a contingent of American Legion leaders, including Commander Governor, visited Hyperbaric Medical Solutions (HMS) on Long Island after learning that the HBOT provider was offering free care to veterans with mTBI or PTSD.

Governor noted that the story of HBOT and veterans

hits home personally for HMS Medical Director, Dr. Henry Prince. Dr. Prince’s son Jesse, a West Point graduate, served in Iraq and returned in 2011 with PTSD and a radical alteration of personality. Jesse first went to the VA Medical Center, where he was told nothing was wrong. He tried medications but they only made him feel worse. Dr. Prince had spoken to his son about the benefits of HBOT. After Jesse received 70 HBOT treatments at HMS, said Dr. Prince, “I got my son back.” Jesse’s PTSD resolved and he now leads a full and normal life in New York City with a career in commercial real estate.

Of the veterans treated at HMS, Dr. Prince said, “We don’t have large numbers yet but almost 100% of those we have treated have had significant benefit from hyperbaric treatment.” HMS is currently treating Matthew Scanapico, a 29-year-old vet with TBI and severe PTSD. He lost his entire squadron in Iraq; he alone survived. For over six years he suffered terrible insomnia and recurring nightmares. Medication did not help and he finally turned to HBOT. He has more sessions to complete but already reports that he “feels like a completely different person” and for the first time in seven years, he can sleep through the night.

Continued on Page 5.

ERIE CO. LEGION WORKS ON HOUSING FOR FEMALE VETS

SAYS THERE ARE 40 HOMELESS VETS WITH CHILDREN IN BUFFALO AREA

Homeless female veterans could have housing, child care services and additional support under one roof in Erie County, the Amherst Bee reported April 30. The Erie County American Legion Family is working to acquire and renovate an old school in the Buffalo-Cheektowaga area to be used as a transitional home.

The idea for helping female veterans came from Kathy Renner, who handles secretarial and public relations duties for the Erie County American Legion Family.

"It has just taken hold so fast - I mean, we have the floor plans and everything," Renner told the newspaper.



Slated for completion in 2017, the six-floor structure would house 39 family units and 35 single resident units, for a total of 74 adults and 69 children, and would include a cafeteria, a day care program and additional services to help residents heal and re-enter society.

"I don't think Western New

York, much less New York State, realizes that 25 percent of our military is now female," said Renner. "A lot of our female veterans come back with PTSD...Some of them do come back pregnant. Sometimes...they have nothing to turn to and no one to turn to."

According to Liz Cash, president of Orchard Park

American Legion Auxiliary 567, there are 40 homeless female veterans with 59 children in the Buffalo area. The auxiliary is familiar with the plight of such women; this past Christmas, its members donated gift cards and a holiday outfit to female veterans in need, along with toys for their children.

Cash estimated a cost \$20 million to create the transitional housing. However, she noted that some of that money will come from state and federal grants. Renner said they were working with Rep. Brian Higgins and State Senator Tim Kennedy, and planning to reach out to more government officials.

HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY

Continued from Page 4.

Brain scans document results of treatment

Commander Governor pointed to Israeli research that demonstrates through the use of SPECT brain scans that HBOT has the potential to heal brain injuries, even years after the incident. HBOT pioneer Dr. Paul Harch has also used SPECT scans to document similar results of the treatment. The SPECT scans show that there is a correlation between psychological symptoms and actual abnormalities in the brain.

Governor also cited the National Brain Injury

Rescue and Rehabilitation (NBIRR) Coalition, whose network of HBOT facilities have, on a pro bono basis, successfully treated 270 TBI/PTSD casualties, all service members including active duty, veterans, National Guard, and reservists. Dr. Harch is launching a new study using HBOT for mTBI in his work at Louisiana State University.

Governor noted that HBOT has not received adequate attention as a therapy for TBI/PTSD due partly to a few government studies that, he said, Dr. Harch has criticized as being scientifically flawed.

The recent advances are compelling enough to recommend the immediate use of HBOT, Governor said. Like Dr. Prince, he questioned current attitudes toward PTSD treatment.

"Often people speak of it as a psychiatric disorder, but it may not be," Dr. Prince said. "The average Marine in Iraq or Afghanistan suffers approximately eight concussive episodes from being near explosions. Is this rampant PTSD we are seeing a psychiatric disorder, or in fact, a manifestation of chronic concussive symptoms, minor traumatic brain injury? Maybe this

huge increase in PTSD is a result of the different kind of war these men are fighting."

"Another prejudice against HBOT is the perceived high cost," Governor said. But, as Dr. Prince noted, a life-time of drug therapy could be exponentially more expensive than a full series of HBOT treatments, which might cost about \$15,000.

Added Governor: **"While cost is always a concern, we need to put the focus where it belongs -- we're talking about giving our men and women back their lives."**

DELLINGER BLASTS VA DURING NEW YORK SWING

VETS TAKE OFF UNIFORM, BUT CONTINUE TO SERVE: 'IT'S WHO WE ARE'

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system needs to be more transparent and its leaders must be held accountable for mistakes that result in needless deaths at their facilities.

That was a key message that American Legion National Commander Daniel Dellinger brought to the New York Legion Family during a swing through the Empire State April 9-11.

Fresh on the heels on testifying before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs in Washington, D.C., Dellinger spoke at dinners in his honor in the central, eastern and southern parts of the state.

Due to his Congressional testimony earlier in the day, along with a flight delay, Dellinger arrived late to dinner at Robert Edwards Post 358 in Pulaski Wednesday, April 9, where he received a standing ovation from some 200 members of the Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion (SAL). The next day he lunched with Legion Family leaders in



National Commander Dan Dellinger addresses NY Legion Family.

Saratoga Springs, met with newspaper reporters, and spoke at a dinner in the Holiday Inn-Saratoga Springs before a crowd of some 400 people. On Friday he made his way to New York City to lunch with Legion Family leaders at Victor Koenig's in Floral Park and later address a crowd of nearly 700 during dinner at Antun's in Queens Village.

Dellinger recounted how he met an Army veteran at the hearing, suffering an advanced stage of cancer due to misdiagnosis and delays

in getting proper diagnostic procedures at the VA. He also referred to an outbreak of Legionella bacteria at Pittsburgh VA medical center that killed six patients and sickened others. When a team from the Legion's System Worth Saving (SWS) Task Force visited the facility last November, administrators claimed the outbreak was caused by equipment failure. E-mails and internal memos indicate human error, however. At another facility he cited dirty instruments, and still another, two

veterans died of an overdose and one committed suicide, attributed to mismanagement and inability to get the mental health care they needed in a timely manner.

As he told the Congressional hearing: "Patient deaths are tragic -- preventable deaths are unacceptable. But failure to disclose safety information -- or worse -- to cover up mistakes, is unforgivable, and The American Legion will not sit quietly by while some VA employees cover up the truth -- and the VA shouldn't, either."

Dellinger praised and thanked the New York Legion Family members for all they do for veterans, and also encouraged every post to submit reports on its activities so The American Legion can tell a more complete story on its impact on family, community and nation. Last year, he said, the Legion served 220,000 youth, raised \$22 million for children and youth programs, and worked 3.8 million volunteer hours -- and that's only with 53 percent of posts reporting what they do.

As he mentioned to news reporters, veterans take off the uniform, but still serve community and nation in the Legion. "It's who we are. It's our fabric... 95 years and counting."



National Commander Dan Dellinger links hands with New York members as they sing God Bless America. Photo/Doug Malin

NATIONAL COMMANDER SALUTES WWII VETS, OTHERS



World War II vets Grover Britton (left) and Francis Slate. At right: Department Vice Commander Joe Barilla with WWII vet Al Paviglianti.

National Commander Daniel Dellinger made a point of giving recognition to World War II veterans while visiting New York State April 9-11.

During his dinner talks, he would take a moment to ask whether any WWII vets were present and offer heartfelt thanks, quoting journalist Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation" description.

Wild applause would follow. In fact, in Saratoga Springs April 10, 3rd and 4th district attendees jumped to their feet to give them a standing ovation. The night before in 5th District's Pulaski, Dellinger and Department Commander Ken

Governor got to meet some World War II veterans. There were three:

- G. Grover Britton, 89, 53-year member of Williamstown Post 1128. A Navy electrician's mate first class, Britton served in the Pacific. He operated a twin 40 mm anti-aircraft gun aboard the USS Sierra, a destroyer tender, and was hit with shrapnel from a Jap Zero.

- Al Paviglianti, 90, a 63-year member who belongs to Canastota Post 140. A marine sergeant, Paviglianti helped lead a squad involved in the first flag-raising atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima. As soon as the flag was raised, the enemy lobbed at

hang grenade at them.

- Francis Slate, 93, a 70-year member of Camden Post 66. A four-time post commander, Slate served in the Pacific Theater as an army sergeant with the 81st field artillery Division. (His brother, Robert, was killed in Normandy on D-Day. Daughter Judi Beischel is Arizona department commander. Another daughter, Karen Kenealy, is an auxiliary member at Williamstown Post 1128, and her husband, Ted, a SAL member. Ted's father, Smith Post 24 Past Commander Thomas Kenealy, is a driving force behind a Veterans Archway at Rome's Memorial Park.)

Commander Dellinger also hailed Korean War vets, and noted that he and his wife had one of the best Thanksgivings when they got to serve meals to American troops along the DMZ separating North and South Korea. While there, he was amazed that Korean citizens would come up to them to express their gratitude for Americans fighting for their freedom -- 60 years ago.

Dellinger also offered a hearty "welcome home" to Vietnam vets, adding that he would be visiting North Vietnam this summer to meet with officials and work toward an accounting of America's MIAs.



National Commander Dan Dellinger tried his hand at directing the Fort Crailo Post 471 Yankee Doodle Band at the dinner in Saratoga Springs.

Photo by Doug Malin.

LEGION, LEGISLATORS TEAM UP FOR ALBANY'S HILL DAY

SEVERAL LEGISLATIVE LEADERS VOICE SUPPORT FOR VETERANS ISSUES

While the American Legion has been pushing for some 15 proposals for the State Legislature to enact, there are three core issues affecting veterans today -- jobs, homelessness and suicide, New York State American Legion Legislative Chair Joseph Barry told the Hill Day Legislative Breakfast March 18 at the Albany Hilton Hotel.

More than 200 American Legion leaders from around the state were at the breakfast, along with a number of state senators and Assembly members. Following breakfast, Legionnaires visited their respective legislators in their offices to push the veterans agenda.

Jobs-related legislation would perhaps have the most far-reaching impact in helping veterans, Barry noted.

Department Commander Kenneth Governor introduced several legislative leaders who spoke at the breakfast, including Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Chair



Senators Greg Ball & Joseph Addabbo Jr., and Assemblymen Michael Benedetto and Stephen Hawley.

Greg Ball, who urged legionnaires to push the Jobs for Heroes Bill when they meet with legislators.

The bill (which eventually passed) sets aside 5 percent of government contract work for businesses owned by disabled veterans -- or more than \$400 million in business, he said. Gov. Andrew Cuomo supports it, he said; it just needs more legislators behind it. Since veterans hire other veterans, the bill would impact the high veteran unemployment rate.

"Saying 'thank you for your service' doesn't mean a damn thing, if it's not backed up" by action, Senator Ball said. Hold legislators "accountable," urged Ball, who is an Air Force Academy

graduate.

Joseph Addabbo Jr., ranking minority member of the Senate veterans affairs committee, referred to a survey where the majority of employers questioned the benefit of hiring a vet -- "what do I get out of hiring a vet?"

"You get someone who's capable of handling a (crisis) situation..." he shouted, "someone who knows how to work as a team."

He added: "You being here reminds us about how much we still have yet to do for our veterans."

Assembly Veterans Affairs Chair Michael Benedetto pointed to a bill just signed by the governor that would give unemployed veterans

preference for temporary state jobs. "New York State hires temporary workers to the tune of \$80 million dollars" a year. The new law would establish a list of unemployed veterans to draw from, which should be ready in about six months, he said.

The Assembly ranking minority member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, Stephen Hawley, pointed to the jobs bill and to a proposal to extend the Assembly internship program to disabled vets so they can earn money while gaining practical office experience.

"We are united in our commitment to honor all our veterans who sacrificed so much for our nation."



3-DAY EFFORT RECRUITS 125 IN BRONX

A three-day revitalization effort in March resulted in adding 125 veterans to the American Legion membership rolls in the Bronx.

"It turned out to be a very successful revitalization," said Department Membership Chairman Dave Riley.

"Even more important is the assistance we were able to provide to a couple of veter-

ans in need of help." A team of national, department, and NY City legionnaires made numerous phone calls and even knocked on doors, transferring, reinstating and signing up members. A service officer was part of the team, available to answer questions about veterans' benefits.

"The Department of New York is one of the most ac-

tive in revitalizations," noted Department Membership Team Consultant W. Michael Bowen, himself former membership chairman as well as past department commander.

A highlight, Riley added, was the "camaraderie of people (from different areas) coming together and their seeing the benefit of doing these revitalizations."

2 LEGION WOMEN SPUR TUITION BILL FOR VETERANS

ALBANY -- A number of states charge a small tuition to residents attending a state college and a much higher tuition for out-of-state students. Because of their military moves, veterans often end up trying to better themselves by enrolling in a state school wherever they land -- and struggle with higher tuition rates.

After hearing stories of such struggling veterans, two members of the Department of New York Auxiliary decided to do something about it. Two years ago, Past Department President Karyn Porempski of Cheektowaga and then-Legislative Vice Chair Julie Kleszczewski of New York City drafted a resolution that called for allowing veterans to pay in-state tuition no matter where they attended college.

Today a tweaked version of their resolution is in



Karyn Porempski (left) and Julie Kleszczewski.

Photo by Doug Malin.

Congress. The House passed it and now it's before the Senate. Similar legislation is before the NY State Legislature. Saying he wanted to "give credit where credit is due," Department Commander Kenneth Governor asked two women to stand to rousing applause during a legislative briefing March 17, the night before the Legion's annual Hill Day Legislative Breakfast in Albany.

Porempski and Kleszczewski said they were incensed at how state colleges were treating veterans who had put their lives on the line for their country. As far as they were concerned, public colleges in a number of states were "ripping off veterans." For example, they said, veterans enrolled in Florida had to pay \$19,000 vs. \$3,000.

Called the GI Tuition Fairness Act, the legislation

lets GI Bill veterans pay lower in-state tuition.

How did it get to Congress? First, the duo presented the resolution to an American Legion post, which adopted it and passed it up to the county, which in turn voted for it and gave it to the district, which in turn presented it to the Department or state level, where it was approved. The Legion's national legislative commission then tweaked it and asked the legislative chairs in every affected state to promote it.

The result, Porempski noted, is that 38 members of Congress sponsored it.

Commander Governor noted: "This was a perfect example of how The American Legion serves our men and women in uniform, our veterans, their families and communities throughout the nation."

OLD FLAGS RETIRED ON FLAG DAY

MAINE, NY -- For Maine American Legion Post 1390, Flag Day meant honoring old and tattered American flags by retiring them, WBNG TV reported. Dozens came out to the annual flag burning ceremony, where worn flags of all sizes were placed in a fire pit.

Legionnaire Mike VanOrder said that the ritual was not only a way to honor the flag, but also veterans. "We Americans deserve that flag flying over our heads for all the anguish and conflicts and everything that we have fought for to remain and stay free."

LEGION RIDERS HOST POKER RUN

American Legion Riders in Chili, NY hosted the Spokes for Spina Bifida Poker Run June 8 at Chili Post 1830 in Scottsville. The event, which

benefits Rochester Rookies Youth Wheelchair & Ambulatory Sports, featured motorcycles, classic cars, a picnic, and cash prizes.

RICHMOND COUNTY LEGION LAUDS STATEN ISLAND YOUTH

STATEN ISLAND -- The American Legion of Richmond County held its 39th Annual Children and Youth Appreciation Breakfast on April 16, honoring 16 youth.

The honorees included: Amanda Jacobowitz and Christopher DeSimone (Special Recognition Award); Giuseppe Pellicchia (Special Olympics Award); Dawn Stachurski (Lifestyles for the Disabled

Award); Joseph DeCandido (Special Achievement Award); Rebecca Renzetti (Girl Scout Award); Michael Teichman (Boy Scout Award); Alexandra Bros, Michelle Maliborska, Isabella Vecchio and Eric Benedetto (Student Appreciation Award); Ana Luiza Teodoro, Karina Roman, Elaine Minew and Angelica Maya (Empire Girls State Award) and Devin T. Kenny (Boys State Award).

WHITESTOWN POST ACQUIRES ADJACENT PARCEL ASSEMBLYMAN BRINDISI HELPS BROKER LAND TRANSFER

WHITESBORO -- Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi announced March 29 the completion of a land transfer agreement that will allow the Whitestown American Legion Post 1113 to expand its property and parking lot, to host more Legion events

and increase fundraising activities.

The agreement allows the State Office of General Services to convey land next door to the Legion Post owned by the New York State Office of Mental Health.

The Whitestown Post 1113

hosts many public events such as its annual Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony in Whitesboro.

"The Whitestown American Legion Post 1113 serves the community of Oneida County in many distinguished ways. Under this

agreement, the Legion Post will have more space to host more community events," Brindisi said.

Post Commander Raymond C. O'Connor Jr. said they also were considering using the land to house a new pavilion.

MOVING WALL A TRIBUTE TO VETERANS, FIRST RESPONDERS



PEMBROKE — Members from the Oakfield-Alabama American Legion Post 526 set up the Vietnam Moving Wall tribute to soldiers, firefighters and police officers at Pembroke Town Park from June 12 to June 15.

"It is completely humbling to walk and see the print on the walls. I don't know that I can put it into

words," Jeff McIntire, a veteran, told Rochester Time Warner Cable News.

The Moving Wall lists names of every American soldier who died in the Vietnam War, with additional panels showing names of those killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. People of all ages searched the wall for names of family members

and friends. Many couldn't hold back tears, TWC News reported. The wall is a slightly smaller replica of the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C.

Ceremonies honored veterans of all wars as well as first responders. The public, especially younger people, "need to know the sacrifices" made on their behalf, said co-chair Richard Robinson.

LEGION URGES LOCALITIES TO OK PARTIAL SCHOOL TAX BREAK

ALBANY -- The New York State American Legion Family of more than 200,000 members is urging local municipalities and other governing bodies of school districts to approve a partial school tax exemption for veterans.

Legislation signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo in December allows municipalities to adopt a lo-

cal school tax abatement law "to show their appreciation for the sacrifices of U.S. military veterans," Department Commander Ken Governor noted in a statement to news media March 24.

State property tax laws have allowed a partial tax exemption for veterans, but school districts were not included. "Now," Commander Governor said, "we

urge localities to do the right thing -- to extend this benefit to school taxes and send a message that, as New Yorkers, we recognize the sacrifices that veterans and their loved ones have made."

Many of the newer veterans have served multiple tours to Iraq and Afghanistan, Governor noted, and many are members of the reserve and Guard, putting

careers and family life on hold for each deployment.

"As Assemblyman Michael Cusick and Senator David Carlucci pointed out in sponsoring the legislation, we can never fully repay those who have risked their lives for our country, but we can offer some assistance to make their lives, and the lives of their families, a little better."

JUNIOR SHOOTING PROGRAM OFFERS BASIC MARKSMANSHIP COURSE

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is sponsoring a basic marksmanship course (BMC) Aug. 1-3, 2014 in Alexandria Bay. "This is the first time the

Department of New York is offering this course," notes Shooting Sports Chairman Lawrence Behling. The Department, he says, wants to support new and established

teams and grow the Shooting Sports Program. The BMC is not just for new shooters, he adds. Experienced shooters can benefit. "It takes them through everything

from A to Z. We train them to become a better individual shooter." The course is a 10-meter sporter air rifle clinic. Registration form is on nylegion.org; deadline July 24.



HARTNETT GRABS ORATORICAL TITLE

Department Commander Ken Governor poses with oratorical finalists (from left) James R Gallagher, Sara A Bogen, Andrew R Hartnett, Nidhi B Shah and Sarah Thomson. Photo by Doug Malin.

ALBANY -- Five high school students from around New York State competed March 8 in the New York American Legion Oratorical Contest at Sand Creek Middle School here, with **Andrew R. Hartnett** of Cobleskill-Richmondville High School grabbing the state title.

Hartnett received a \$6,000

scholarship and competed in national finals April 5-6 in Indianapolis, Indiana, where the top three orators share \$50,000 in scholarships, Department Commander Kenneth Governor noted. Hartnett was a senior at Cobleskill-Richmondville High, located in Richmondville, Schoharie County.

The contest features original speeches on some aspect of the U.S. Constitution, noted state Oratorical Chair Anthony L. Paternostro.

The other finalists are:

- **Sarah Thomson**, a home-schooled student from Rochester, Monroe County, who grabbed second place and a \$4,000 scholarship.

- **Nidhi B. Shah** of Horseheads High School in Chemung County, who won third place and \$2,500.

Runners-up were **James R. Gallagher** of Xavier High School in New York City and **Sarah A. Bogen** of Pius V School in Mellville, Suffolk County. They both receive \$2,000 scholarships.

SNOW COLLAPSES DOBBS FERRY AMERICAN LEGION BUILDING

News media reported expressions of community support for Dobbs Ferry American Legion Post 1048 after its building collapsed under the weight of heavy snow on Valentine's Day.

After a series of snowfalls, Legion members noticed a separation between the ceil-

ing and wall and asked the village to inspect the building. Building inspector Ed Manley visited the site and ordered the building closed two days before the collapse.

Post 1048 posted an announcement on its Facebook page: "The building collapsed, but the fellow-

ship and friendships of the American Legion veterans remain strong."

The Terrytown Daily Voice reported: "Response from the community was immediate as residents began supporting a rebuilding project" with an online fundraising page at <http://www.youcar->

ing.com/help-a-neighbor/american-legion-post-1048-rebuild-/139200

The paper quoted Dobbs Ferry Pizza owner John Tacij: "Tonight we lost the American Legion 1048 to a collapse. The building is lost but not what it stood for. We will rebuild."



AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE GRADUATES 86

The American Legion College Class of 2014 listens to team reports prior to graduation June 22 at Morrisville State College. Dean Michael F. Hannan said the 86 graduates ranged in age from 27 to 83, and included two from Connecticut (a Legionnaire and the Sons of the American Legion Detachment commander). "Our ranks are now bustling with Legionnaires and Sons from across the Department who are 'engaged' in forwarding the mission of our organization," noted Hannan. Photo by Doug Malin.

MID-WINTER FOCUSES ON VETS, MEMBERS, NEED TO GET WORD OUT PLUS FELLOWSHIP AND FUN WEAVE WAY THROUGH WEEKEND

ALBANY -- Not only does the public know little about what the American Legion does, but also many members, so getting the word out is a vital need.

That was a message from Michael Helm, the leading candidate for national commander, who stopped in at the Public Relations Workshop at the Department's Mid-Winter Conference, held Jan. 24-26 at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center.

"It's an absolutely amazing organization we have," said Helm, who hails from Nebraska. "But we have difficulty letting people know, both outside and inside the organization, what we're all about..."

"Public relations is the way to go...and we have to work harder."

PR was one of a host of breakout sessions on Legion programs and services (membership, finance, baseball, Sons of the American Legion, Legion Riders, legislative issues, historians, press association, Legionnaire of the Year program, ROTC/JROTC, Americanism, oratorical contest, junior shooting sports, children & youth, law & order, protocol, Boys State, economics, veterans issues, national security, compli-



Mike Helm
National leading candidate

ance, scouting, and special projects).

While Saturday's morning sessions were starting to wrap up, Helm and Department Commander Ken Governor briefed reporters from the Albany Times-Union and WTEN TV on such issues as jobs for veterans, suicide prevention and restoring the cost-of-living-adjustment for military retirees.

The weekend conference kicked off Friday evening with a few break-outs and a welcome reception. Saturday's full schedule of



Yankee Doodle Band performed an evening concert at the Mid-Winter Conference.

workshops was capped off by an evening band concert/reception and banquet. The concert featured stirring patriotic tunes performed by the American Legion Yankee Doodle Band from Fort Crailo Post 471 in Rensselaer. The banquet opened with a thunderous chorus of the Star Spangled Banner and ended with a rousing, hands-holding rendition of God Bless America. In between, the leading candidate for national commander reminded everyone about the Legion's four pillars and its

basic mission to fight for the veteran in need. Helm also asked New York to put a focus on membership growth by reaching out to Vietnam War veterans. "There are five million of them and only one million belong to the Legion...They're retiring now and looking for something to do." There also needs to be a focus on recruiting women veterans, he said. The Legion is pushing hard "to ensure that women veterans are treated equally all across this nation," and is "working to reduce the backlog" in VA claims. Pointing out that the Legion doesn't believe in the notion that other countries would like America if it becomes second rate, he asserted: "The American Legion will always stand for a strong national defense, second to none."



Jim George and Mike Bowen did some impromptu jamming at Mid-Winter Conference.



The hospitality "ghouls" of Queens County. Photo by Doug Malin.

Sunday morning's concluding general session featured a memorial service for Department Adjutant Emeritus Richard Pedro and remarks by Watervliet Arsenal Commander Col. Lee H. Schiller Jr.

Fellowship and fun weaved their way throughout the weekend.

In front of adjacent Rensselaer County and Oneida County hospitality areas, Utica Post 229 Vice Commander Jim George brought his 12-string guitar and did some jamming with Past Department Commander Mike Bowen, sporting his 72-base, German-reed accordion.

The Queens County delegation, determined to bring

a new motif to its annual Saturday afternoon hospitality, put on a "Monster Mash," with a number of Auxiliary members sporting a variety of ghoulish garb.

Frank Peters, leading candidate for Department commander, played host to a long line of well-wishers visiting his campaign hospitality suite. He took time to pose for a photo with every visitor and to talk up his "honoring all who served" theme.

College students Amanda Rhodes and Leann Green, state FFA (Future Farmers of America) leaders, stopped by the American Legion College Alumni Association booth on their way to give a presentation at the Children

& Youth seminar. Legion College Dean Michael Hannan discovered Amanda's father, Gary, served in Desert Storm, and Leann's grandfather, Richard Friends, was a World War II vet, and immediately offered them American Legion Auxiliary applications.

The jolly ole saint from the North Pole made a couple of appearances (or at least his Legion stand-ins did). Donald Guernsey of Broadalbin Post 337 never tires of seeing children's "eyes pop out of their heads" as they pull on the beard and realize it doesn't come off. "I like to play Santa all the time," said Guernsey, who is also a Legion Rider active in

the Legacy and Honor Flight runs.

Wayne Geveling of Dunbar Post 1642 in Syracuse enjoys being a stealth Santa rather than putting on the red suit. If he is in a restaurant and sees a couple of kids acting up, he takes out his notebook and pretends to jot down their names. The kids suddenly sit quietly, and the mom whispers a "thank you". Or, if he hears a child ask a parent if he's Santa Clause, he can't resist a booming "Ho Ho Ho!"

There's a downside, though. "My wife gets mad every time I do that."



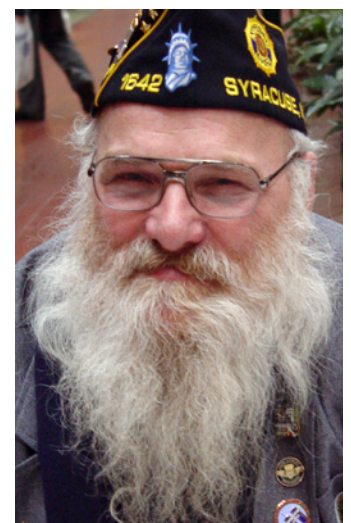
"Santas" Donald Guernsey & (below) Wayne Geveling.



*Frank Peters
Leading candidate for
department commander.*



Legion College Dean Michael Hannan with FFA leaders Leann Green (left) and Amanda Rhodes, who gave a presentation at the Children and Youth seminar.



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE HONOR DEDICATED SERVICE

In his visits around the state this past winter and spring, Department Commander Ken Governor presented the Department Commander's Award of Excellence to a number of Legion Family members and organizations for outstanding efforts on behalf of veterans and/or their communities. They included:

ULSTER COUNTY

KINGSTON -- During dinner at Joyce-Schirick VFW Post 1386 in Kingston on March 15, Governor presented the Department Commander's Award of Excellence to **Steven Massee**, a member of Woodstock American Legion Post 1026. He praised his leadership roles on the county and post levels. Governor hailed Massee's initiative to assist homeless veterans, his fundraising efforts to help veterans and their families, and his planning for local veteran rehabilitation facilities. Massee, a U.S. Navy captain, served in Iraq and received the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal and Navy Commendation Medal. He is director of Ulster County Veteran Services Agency in Kingston.

EIGHTH DISTRICT

In a swing through western New York counties in the 8th District Feb. 27-March 2, Department Commander Kenneth Governor honored four Legionnaires with the Department Commander's Award of Excellence. They



Steven Massee receives Award of Excellence from Department Commander Ken Governor.

honorees are:

- **J. Donald Griffin**, a 90-year-old World War II veteran and former prisoner of war who is a 70-year member of Kensington American Legion Post 708 in Cheektowaga, Erie County. During dinner at Niagara Frontier American Legion Post 1041 in Buffalo, Governor praised his leadership roles as past Erie County commander, former 8th District American Legion Baseball chairman, and, for some 50 years, as a delegate to state and national conventions. Governor said Griffin promotes respect for the

flag by giving talks at local schools on both the flag and the veterans who fought in World War II.

- **Robert Sondel**, a 46-year member of Sikora American Legion Post 1322 in North Tonawanda, Niagara County. During dinner on March 1 at LaSalle American Legion Post 1142 in Niagara Falls, Governor praised his leadership as past 8th District commander, current 8th District adjutant and judge advocate, and as chairman of numerous Niagara County Legion committees. For his Post, Sondel serves as steward and volunteer manager.



Department Commander Ken Governor honors WWII vet J. Donald Griffin. At right is Department Auxiliary President Barbara Corker.

- **Don Nagle**, a member of Sackett-Merrill-White Post 575 in Bergen, and **James B. Neider**, a member of Glenn S. Loomis Post 332 in Batavia, both in Genesee County. They were honored during an afternoon dinner at Botts-Fiorito American Legion Post 576 in LeRoy. Governor cited both men's leadership as past post and county commanders, and as adjutants. Nagle is a World War II veteran with long-term service as historian on the post, county, district and state levels, Governor noted. He praised Neider's "passionate involvement in Flags for First Graders and the Four Chaplains Programs."

SEVENTH DISTRICT

Four 7th District Legionnaires were honored with the Department Commander's Award of Excellence when New York Legion leaders visited Seneca, Monroe, Wayne and Ontario counties Feb. 20-23.

Department Commander Kenneth Governor presented the awards, one posthumously, to:

- **Robert Laprade**, past commander and long-time adjutant of Manning-Lilla American Legion Post 463 in Ovid, Seneca County. Governor praised his leadership and hailed his "passionate involvement" in honoring veterans, including serving as chairman of the committee to host the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall and

continued on next page

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE HONOR DEDICATED SERVICE

continued from previous page

a steak dinner for all Seneca County veterans.

- **Rene Vanmulem**, a member of Eike-Jordan-Bauer American Legion Post 1501 in Fairport, Monroe County. Governor praised his leadership roles on the post, county, district and state levels, including having served as a Department vice commander. He hailed Vanmulem's "expert chairmanship of numerous committees from the post to the national level" during his 46 years as a Legionnaire.

- **Daniel Abaied**, who served as commander of Meyers-Ingraham Post 428 in Ontario for the past three years until his death on Jan 16. Wayne County Legion Chaplain Harry Pickard accepted the award on behalf of the Abaied family. Governor praised Abaied's leadership roles on the post and county levels, as chaplain for the Sons of the American Legion, and his passionate involvement in numerous Legion programs during his 28 years as a Legionnaire. Governor noted that Abaied was the post's 2013 Legionnaire of the Year.

- **Rena M. Nessler**, a member of Winnek Post 396 in Geneva, Ontario County. Governor praised her leadership as past county commander, 7th district vice commander, and, for the past five years, as adjutant of Winnek Post 396. He also hailed Nessler's "valuable



Robert Laprade

contributions to various national committees."

MORE 8TH DISTRICT

An American Legion post and two Legionnaires received the Department Commander's Award of Excellence when New York State Legion Family leaders made a visitation swing through Wyoming, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany counties Feb. 13-16.

During dinner at Breezy Hill Party House in Warsaw Feb. 13, Department Commander Ken Governor presented the award to **Hugh-Lynch American Legion Post 737**. He praised the Post's adopt-a-platoon program, participation in Arcade Winter Fest and other events, and support of Armed Forces Day Wound-



Rene Vanmulem

ed Warriors Motorcycle Run.

During dinner at Dunkirk Memorial Post 62 in Dunkirk Feb. 14, Governor honored **James Hayward** of Cassadaga Memorial Post 1280. He cited his service as commander of both his post and Chautauqua County American Legion, plus numerous other roles in the post and county. He also hailed Hayward's "passionate involvement in Scouting, Veterans Affairs, homeless veterans and Americanism."

During dinner at Norton-Chambers Post 1434 in Hinsdale Feb. 15, Governor presented the Award of Excellence to **Steve Stimson**, a member of Norton-Chambers Post. He praised his service as commander of both his post and Cattaraugus County American Legion,

plus numerous other roles in community, including serving as president of the Joint Veterans Van Service.

MORE 7TH DISTRICT

In his visitation swing through the 7th District Feb. 6-9, Commander Kenneth Governor presented the Department Commander's Award of Excellence to four Legionnaires, citing their "dedication to our men and women in uniform, our veterans, their families and your community."

The honorees were:

- **Warren Carpenter**, a 22-year member of Clark Heck Post 568 in Weedsport, Cayuga County.

- **Holly Trueman**, a member of Bradley-Jessop Post 660 in Dundee, Yates County.

- **William Miller**, a member of Theodore R. Van Tassel Post 408 in Wayland, Steuben County.

- **Mel Keenan**, a member of Matthew Cleary Post 255 in Caledonia, Livingston County.

ANOTHER SENECA CO.

Ken Governor took time at his Department Commander's Rennselaer County Homecoming Dinner May 17 to present Seneca County Commander Fred Percy with the Award of Excellence. He cited Percy's leadership as county and Manning-Lilla Post 463 commander and service at district, department and national levels over a 46-year period.



Commander Governor with Steve Stimson.

'I WAS BORN INTO THE AMERICAN LEGION'

Judi Beischel, a Coast Guard veteran, traces her American Legion roots to her upstate New York birth.

"I tell people I was born into the American Legion because my dad has been a Legionnaire longer than I've been alive."

Her father, Francis Slate – a 93-year-old World War II Army veteran and four-time Camden Post 66 commander – is now celebrating his 70th year as a Legionnaire. Beischel's brother, Kevin, served in the Navy and is a Legionnaire, too. Her mother belonged to the Auxiliary, along with her sisters (including Karen Kenealy, who with her Sons-of-the-American-Legion husband, Ted, accompanied their father to a dinner in honor of National Commander Daniel Dellinger's visit to the 5th District April 9 at Robert Edwards Post 358 in Pulaski).

"I was always proud that my dad was very active in the post," says Beischel,



Arizona Department Commander Judi Beischel, daughter of New York Legionnaire Francis Slate, 93, shown below chatting with NY Department Commander Ken Governor during National Commander Dan Dellinger's visit to upstate New York.



Arizona's 2013-2014 department commander. "It's something that you pass on to the kids. We've got four

grandchildren, from 7 to 2, and they have all been members (of the Legion Family) since they were born. You've

got to start them out young."

Born on Memorial Day, she spent much of her childhood at her father's post in Camden. One of her earliest memories is marching in a Memorial Day parade at age 4.

Today, Beischel works to prop up veterans who are down on their luck. As department commander, she has been overseeing an initiative to build a 24-unit facility for homeless women veterans. "We're seeing a lot of young homeless veterans because they don't have jobs or family to come back to," she says. "It's difficult."

Beischel's passion to help others comes from her close-knit families..

"From the time I was very young, I knew my dad lost his brother at Normandy on June 6," she says. "I've always felt a need to welcome veterans. So many Vietnam veterans came back and were treated poorly. We try to make sure that doesn't happen again."

BOYS STATE GETS FUNDING TO HELP COVER COST OF HOSTING STUDENTS



From left: Boys State Exec. Director John Murphy, Program Director David O'Brien, Colin Schmitt (Sen. Ball's director of operations), and Boys State staffer Al Paviglianti. Photo/William Bulger

MORRISVILLE -- With nearly 1,100 students immersed in an intense leadership and democracy experience at American Legion Boys State June 27 to July 3, State Sen. Greg Ball's Operations Director Colin Schmitt took the opportunity to present a \$150,000 symbolic check to The American Legion. The check represents Boys and Girls State funding included in the New York State budget for the first time -- with \$100,000 going toward the cost of hosting the students at Morrisville State College. Schmitt delivered the opening keynote address at the New York Boys State.