



SUMMER

July 2016  
Vol. 3 No. 2

# LEGION NEW YORK

***Your  
American  
Legion in  
Action***



## LEGION NEW YORK

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# RENDER A BLUE STAR SALUTE

*By James V. Yermas, commander*

Throughout our country's history, our armed forces have fought and sacrificed to achieve and maintain our freedom. The fight continues today in our war on terrorism. These men and women, and their families are being asked to do more than ever for all of us.

This past Armed Forces Day (May 21), the members of The American Legion rendered what we call a Blue Star salute – because it not only hails our men and women in uniform, but also their families and the companies in our communities who support them.

If you see a Blue Star banner hanging at a home, you'll know that's a military family and their loved one may be away protecting us. So please join us in personally thanking our servicemen, our service-women and especially **their families** for all of their sacrifices.

## A TEAR AND A SMILE

We had a lot to reflect on this past Memorial Day. Veterans who are no longer with us. Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice. Veterans who had an impact on us.

For those veterans who personally touched us, Memorial Day allows us to savor their memory. To smile. And then, inside, to render a tearful salute.

Al Paviglianti is an example of a veteran who brings both a smile and a tear. This World War II Marine, who went to his eternal rest last year at the age of 92,



fought in bloody battles on Iwo Jima. He even escorted the Marines who raised the first flag atop Mount Suribachi – a flag raising that drew cheers from the Americans below. They didn't just raise a flag; they raised the spirit of the American fighting force.

After the war Al joined the American Legion. He believed in youth and the promise he saw in them for America's future. Al became an icon at American Legion Boys State – bonding with thousands upon thousands of high school youth.

Like the flag-raising on Iwo Jima, Al's life raised the spirit of America's future.



## ON THE COVER: AMERICAN LEGION COLOR GUARD

Legionnaires and their color guards have been out in force this spring and summer, from Memorial Day to Flag Day to the Fourth of July. Color guards like this one from 5th District's Utica Post 229 (with SAL member Dave Valentine in front) presented the colors at Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremonies and marched in parades. Photo by R. Stronach.

# NATIONAL COMMANDER VISITS NEW YORK

## 'YOU STAND UP TO DO THE RIGHT THING'

"You stand up to do the right thing" and "make a difference" in people's lives.

That's why American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett said he is excited about what the Legion does for community and nation.

Barnett spoke to members of the Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion (SAL) who packed banquet halls in his four-day swing through the eastern half of New York State. He began his visit in the Herkimer County City of Little Falls April 13, then headed to the Capital Region April 14, and finally downstate to Queens April 15.

Look at the Legion in Selma, Alabama, for an example of standing up for what is right, Barnett said in recounting a recent visit there.

Decades before Selma became the heart of a civil rights showdown, the American Legion sued the Ku Klux Klan over a World War I monument that neglected to include the names of veterans of color. A veteran is a veteran, they argued. The Legion won and the names were added.

"We need to stand up for our military, we need to stand up for our veterans."

The national commander said he likes to walk with the American Legion Family – to hear stories about how the Legion changed their lives.



*National Commander Dale Barnett addresses the Legion Family during his swing through Herkimer County. Photo by Bob Stronach.*

In his estimation, the Legion Family is not just members of the Legion, Auxiliary and SAL, but everyone the Legion touches through its programs – such as young Legion ball players, and Boy and Girl Staters.

He has fond memories of attending Boys State himself. "I learned I could make a difference."

His motto, he said, consists of three simple, yet powerful words – "duty, honor and country."

"You have a duty to your community, you have a duty to yourself to make this country better."

Honor comes from "wearing the uniform" and from "wearing the Legion cap." In other words, "it's an honor to serve."

He added: "There is no greater country in the world than the United States of

America. Freedom is not free. Our country needs us right now."

The April 13th banquet was at the Little Falls Travelodge, followed April 14 by a tour of the Watervliet Arsenal in Watervliet and a banquet at the Holiday Inn in Saratoga Springs. On April 15 Commander Barnett headed downstate for lunch with local Legion Family members at Crab-

tree's in Floral Park. In the evening he spoke at a dinner in his honor at Antun's in Queens Village.

He wrapped up his New York tour Saturday morning, April 16, with a visit to his alma mater -- the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Barnett was an army infantry officer from 1974 to 1996 and served in both Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.



*National Commander Dale Barnett in Queens with wife Donna, Past Department Commander V. James Troiola and Department Adjutant James Casey. Photo by Doug Malin.*



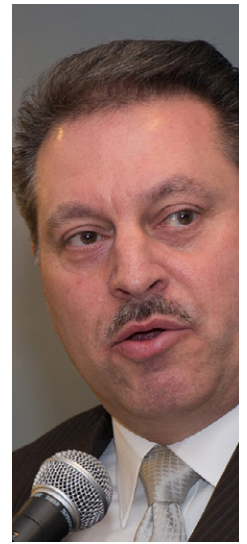
# ALTERNATIVE PTSD THERAPY IS NO. 1 PRIORITY

## HILL DAY COVERS NY LEGION'S TOP LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

ALBANY -- Declaring the health and welfare of veterans as “first and foremost,” New York State American Legion Legislative Chairman Harvey McCagg said the Legion’s number one legislative priority in the state is non-drug, alternative therapy for post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) and mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) – particularly, HyperBaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT).

Speaking at the annual “Hill Day” legislative breakfast March 1 at the Empire State Plaza, McCagg told some 140 Legion Family members and legislators that the American Legion was asking the governor and state legislature to create and fund a TBI and PTSD Biological Repair Treatment and Recovery Law.

With 22 veteran suicides a day, the signature wounds of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are TBI and PTSD, for which the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) refuse to provide all known effective treatments. Among the most promising, he said, is HBOT. Traditionally mild TBI and PTSD have been treated as psychiatric disorders with drug therapy, but growing evidence suggests that mild TBI and PTSD may be the result of multiple concussive exposures and should therefore be treated



*Harvey McCagg, Sen. Thomas Croci, Assemblyman Michael DenDekker, Sen. Joseph Addabbo Jr.*

as medical conditions, which may be healed by providing extra oxygen to the brain in a hyperbaric chamber.

**Other legislative priorities, McCagg said, include:**

- establishing veterans cemeteries in underserved areas.
- mandating that school districts hold a public forum on whether to provide a veterans tax exemption. While some districts have provided an exemption, many have refused to even bring it up for discussion.
- a \$150,000 grant for American Legion Boys State

on the SUNY Morrisville campus.

• \$1.1 million in funding for the Veterans Defense Program (VDP), created two years ago to assist veterans in the criminal justice system struggling with service-connected behavioral health issues.

Several veterans affairs legislative leaders also spoke, with Sen. Thomas D. Croci pointing out that his monthly drills as a reservist provide a perspective that “helps me, I think, in my role as chairman of the (Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and

Military Affairs) committee.”

He described his approach to working on veterans issues with legislators of both parties and houses this way: “I don’t care what uniform you’re wearing as long as we’re shooting in the same direction.”

“Every legislator in our conference,” he added, “recognizes the service of our veterans.”

Assemblyman Michael G. DenDekker, chairman of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee, also referred to the cooperative spirit on veterans issues.

He noted that “900,000 veterans in the State of New York” “make up 5 percent of the population.”

“When you make up five percent of the population, I think you should proportionately get five percent” of the state budget, he said to applause.

Another Senate veterans



*Some of the Legionnaires participating in Hill Day.*





*Legionnaires from Staten Island discuss the need for alternative therapy for post traumatic stress with Assemblyman Michael Cusick (left) following the Legion's Hill Day legislative breakfast. The Legionnaires are, from left, Fred Lamarsh, 2nd District legislative chair; Anthony Pergola, 2nd District commander; Mary and Dennis McLoone (who conducted the POW/MIA remembrance ceremony at the legislative breakfast); and Past Department Commander Frank Peters.*

committee member, Sen. Joseph Addabbo Jr., pointed to post traumatic stress, suicide, homelessness and unemployment as top veterans issues.

"The suicide rate among our veterans is far too high. We can lower that." He also said they should be able to decrease the number of homeless and unemployed vets.

"You have a voice," he told

Legionnaires, "and you're making it heard."

There are a "ton of people advocating for many things" with the state legislature. "In my opinion, the veterans go to the head of the line."

Assemblyman Kieran Michael Lalor, a member of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee, referred to the fact he had been a social studies teacher before he joined the Marines, then

donned his American Legion cap and launched into a history lesson on the number of veterans who fought or stood watch from World War II to the present. He also pointed to TBI/PTSD, homelessness and suicide as "real priorities."

"The suicide rate among veterans is astronomically high. We need to address that in a way that brings healing."



*Assemblyman Kieran Michael Lalor*

## MEET YOUR STAFF

*Dept. Adjutant Jim Casey introduces staffers on a rotating basis. In this issue he spotlights Ann Brown, Boys State program coordinator.*



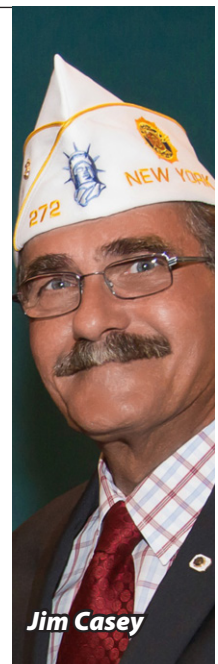
**Ann Brown**

One might say that Ann Brown is the face of Boys State – or at least, one of the most familiar staff faces at the annual week-long affair that immerses high school students in citizenship and leadership.

She is the Department's Boys State program coordinator, which means she works year-round planning for the annual event held at Morrisville State College, and then is present to assist the Legion leadership running the on-campus operation. And when Ann is not working on Boys State stuff, she handles post and officer

certifications along with other headquarters duties. She is a member of Auxiliary Unit #731, currently serving as first vice president. Ann attended Stillwater High School and then Cosmology school to become a licensed beautician. She went to work for the State Department of Corrections, retiring after 37 years, and then came to work for The American Legion.

Ann enjoys baking, cooking and spending time at her camp in the Adirondacks with her dog Turbo. She has a son and daughter, and four grandchildren.



**Jim Casey**



# FEBRUARY-MARCH BUSY WITH OFFICIAL VISITATIONS

## ROCHESTER'S VIETNAM MEMORIAL AMONG MEMORABLE STOPS

American Legion state leaders made official visits to a number of counties in February and March, dining with Legion Family members and visiting local sites.

One of the memorable stops, arranged by Monroe County Legion, was the Greater Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rochester, which was followed by dinner at Rick's Prime Rib House in the suburb of Gates.

The dinner attracted Legion Family members from across the county and the 7th District.

SAL Detachment Commander Joseph L. Santa-Croce Jr. and Department Auxiliary President Janet Mahoney described the memorial tour as "outstanding." Department Commander James Yermas echoed that sentiment and noted that the tour also was emotional for Vietnam vets like himself.

"When you walk down that path and read all the names (of area veterans killed in Vietnam), it's tough to go through it." The winding path is lined with stanchions, or bollards, bearing the names of the fallen, along with stone markers telling the history of the Vietnam war.

"You should be proud of what you have here in Rochester," Yermas told banquet attendees.

The dinner was hosted by William Doud Post 98,



**Legion Family leaders at the Greater Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial.** Photo / R. Stronach.

which meets at the restaurant. Interestingly, Post Commander Chuck Zeiner explained, the facility was originally the post home before it was sold to restaurateurs.

One might ask whether post members that pray together, stay together – because among the dinner attendees were three people from Chili Post 1830 who all hold chaplaincy positions

on the district level. Connie Corwin is 7th District Legion chaplain, Sharon Beeke is 7th District Auxiliary chaplain and Jim Daly is 7th District SAL chaplain.

There were signs of an active Legion Family. For example, Wayne County Auxiliary President Maret Rose was accompanying her husband, 7th District SAL Commander Charlie Rose, on the March visitation

swing through the district.

They have been moving up the ranks in both organizations. "We're both going through it at the same time so it's working out well," Charlie said. "Yeah!" Maret concurred.

The 7th District SAL, by the way, sponsored a big "welcome home" event May 22 for post-9/11 veterans and their families, with the assistance of VA Medical Centers in Bath and Canandaigua.

The next day on the 7th District swing, the visitors lunched at Bradley-Jessup Post 660 in Dundee, where they got to meet a family that the Department and County Auxiliary assisted.

The Department and Yates County Auxiliaries raised \$15,000 to provide a service dog to a child prone to suffering seizures, noted  
*Continued on next page.*



**7th District Chaplains (from left) Connie Corwin, Jim Daley and Sharon Beeke are all from Chili Post 1830.**



# HOME-SCHOOLER IS ORATORICAL CHAMPION

## 5 STUDENTS COMPETE IN STATE-WIDE FINALS

ALBANY — Melissa Woodford, a home-schooled graduating senior from New City, NY, is The American Legion New York State oratorical champion for 2016, Oratorical Chairman Anthony Paternostro announced.

Melissa competed against four other finalists from a cross section of the state in the 79th Annual American Legion Department of New York Oratorical Contest.

Melissa won a \$6,000 scholarship and represented New York in the National Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis, IN in April. She was sponsored by Moscarella Post 199 (Rockland County, 9th District).

The “Constitutional Speech Contest” took place March 5 at Sand Creek Middle School in Colonie.

The other finalists:

- Nicholas Honor, a junior at St. Pius V School in Mel-



*New York Oratorical Champ Melissa Woodford is shown with National Commander Dale Barnett and National Americanism Chairman Richard Anderson. She was one of 53 contestants competing for national honors in the Legion's oratorical contest held in Indianapolis, Indiana in April. While she didn't make the final round, she said the competition was an opportunity for her to "perfect" her speaking skills and "give respect to the veterans who served our country." She spoke on the 26th Amendment and how it gave veterans a right to vote at the age of 18. "I found that such a privilege and joy to be able to talk about."*

ville, won a \$4,000 scholarship. He was sponsored by the Greenlawn Post 1244 of Suffolk County, 10th District.

- Joseph Giulian, a senior at Taconic Hills High School in Columbia, received a \$2,500 scholarship. Joseph was sponsored by Copake

Falls Post 1160 & Philmont Post 252 of Columbia County, 3rd District.

- Meredith Patterson, a senior at Charles D'Amico High School, was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship. Meredith was sponsored by Sheret Post 35, of Orleans County,

8th District.

- Dylan Kernehan, a senior at Alexandria Bay Central School, won a \$2,000 scholarship. Dylan was sponsored by John B. Lyman Post 904 of Jefferson County, 5th District.

*Continued from previous page.*

Department President Jan Mahoney. The girl, Claire Dillon, whose father is a veteran, received the dog two years ago when she was two. The dog, Sebastian, somehow senses when a seizure might occur, and alerts the family so they can be ready to provide medical intervention to arrest an active seizure, explained the girl's mom, Nicole. The dog also comforts Claire, helping to keep her calm.

“You guys are wonderful,” said Nicole. “We couldn't have done this without your support.”

Coincidentally, Department President Jan Mahoney and Yates County President Charlotte Ridley were Department and County Children and Youth chairs, respectively, when they learned of the girl's plight and decided to do something about it.



*Department Commander James Yermas pets service dog while Department President Janet Mahoney chats with Nicole Dillon, Claire's mom. Behind them are SAL Detachment Commander Joseph SantaCrocce Jr. and Yates County President Charlotte Ridley.*



# WWII VET IN SPOTLIGHT AT CAYUGA COUNTY VISIT

## KOREAN WAR-ERA TANK FINDS ITS WAY TO AUBURN POST

AUBURN -- A World War II Navy veteran was in the spotlight March 22 at the Cayuga County Legion luncheon for American Legion state leaders making an official visitation swing through the 7th District.

When it was Department Commander James Yermas' turn to speak, he left the podium to recognize Warren Carpenter, an 88-year-old member of Weedsport Post 568 who served aboard the heavy cruiser USS Los Angeles in the Pacific. Yermas thanked the WWII vet for his service and presented him with a few personal gifts – a challenge coin, a commander's pen, and because Carpenter had recruited more than a few members during his years with the Legion, the commander's membership recruiting pin.

Carpenter had two Marine escorts from the Weedsport Post – Korean War vet and Post Commander Charlie Kreplin, and Vietnam war vet and Past Post Commander Bob Jorolemon.

The Korean war-era M41 Walker Bulldog tank also was a topic of conversation among luncheon attendees – because in February the M41 tank that had been on display for over half a century at Donald R. Ward Post 1259 in Cayuga was deliv-



*Department Commander James Yermas thanks World War II veteran Warren Carpenter.*

ered by crane and truck to S-K (Swietonoiwski-Kopeczek) Post 1324 in Auburn.

"It's going to be a landmark for our post," noted First Vice Commander Ed King, who coordinated the move. He said the tank came from Fort Drum in 1964, and that members of the Cayuga Post decided to find the tank a new home.

Post Commander Mark Barrett said they planned to repaint the tank and hold a dedication ceremony later in the year.

**Korean war-era  
M41 Walker  
Bulldog tank at  
S-K Post 1324 in  
Auburn.**





# LEGIONNAIRES OUT IN FORCE FOR MEMORIAL DAY

The American Legion led or co-sponsored Memorial Day ceremonies across the state May 30 as well as over the weekend. They joined in numerous community parades, too.

Past Utica Post 229 Commander Chris Urban was typical of those leading or addressing crowds gathered around flag and wreath-laying ceremonies in honor of the fallen and other veterans no longer with us.

"All veterans share a common bond," Urban told the crowd at Utica's Soldiers and Sailors Monument – the first of six stops at monuments across the city.

That bond, he continued, is the oath they take "to defend something greater than themselves – the Constitution of the United States of America."

"All of us who served in the military take this oath."

South of Utica in the Village of Oriskany Falls, another speaker spoke of the sacrifices that families make in the defense of freedom. In ceremonies at the village park, following an American Legion-led parade, Chenango County Court Attorney Barry Fitzgerald spoke of the absence of local fathers, sons, husbands, brothers, and the what-ifs.

Fitzgerald, whose family is involved in the American Legion's Kelley Phillips Post 569 in Oriskany Falls, has five brothers who served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.



**Utica Post 229 Color Guard presents the colors at the city's Memorial Day ceremonies.**

**BELOW: Chris Urban renders salute after speaking in Utica while Chenango County Court Attorney Barry Fitzgerald speaks of absent loved-ones in Oriskany Falls. Photo by Brigid Fitzgerald.**



In another example, American Legion Post 20 up north in Plattsburgh attracted nearly 100 people to ceremonies.

"Those who served in our military and, in particular, those who sacrificed their lives deserve our undying gratitude," News Channel



5 quoted veteran Daniel Kaifetz.

The TV station also quoted local American Legion Auxiliary President Joyce Hinds: "Today is not just a day off from work, a day at the beach, a parade or a family picnic. It's a time to remember."

American Legion Riders also were out in force to honor the memory of veterans. In Lima, NY, for example, some 27 members of Riders Chapter 282 participated in a parade from Lima School to the Town Hall, where a service took place.



## STATE DIRECTORY IN THE OFFING

The Department of New York is working with Publishing Concepts to produce a state-wide directory of Legionnaires.

To accomplish this, Publishing Concepts is contacting members via mail, email and telephone to see who would like to be included in the directory. For those interested in participating, the directory can include photo and biographical info.

Those wishing to purchase a copy of the directory may pre-order it so the publisher will know how many to print.



## NEW CITY POST HONORS 2 POLICE OFFICERS

New City American Legion Post 1682 honored two Clarkstown police officers in April for their roles in stopping a shooter during a standoff with police last year.

The incident involved a man who threatened to kill family members and fire shots at the public and police. After negotiations failed, a tactical team stormed the house and exchanged gunfire with the man, fatally wounding him.

Post Commander Maureen Morgan presented the awards to Clarkstown officers Robert Fortune and Thomas Flanagan.

## NYALPA AWARD NAMED AFTER PNC FANG WONG

The New York American Legion Press Association (NYALPA) has named one of its awards after Past National Commander Fang Wong, who is also a past department commander.

During a meeting at the Department Mid-Winter Conference in Albany, NYALPA members approved the Fang Wong Public Relations Person of the Year Award.

President Robert Stronach announced the honor to a surprised PNC Wong when he later showed up at the meeting, and Secretary Kevin Harrington, who proposed the award naming, read aloud the resolution naming the PR Person of the Year Award after PNC Wong.



*PNC Fang Wong is congratulated by Press Association Secretary Kevin Harrington after members of the association voted to name the Public Relations Person of the Year Award after Wong.*



# LEGION RIDERS GATHER AT SPENCERPORT WALL



Members of American Legion Riders Chapter 1830 were out in force for the opening of the Vietnam Moving Wall June 16 in Spencerport. Ferris-Goodridge Post 330 sponsored the Moving Wall, which was in Spencerport until June 20. Photo by Jerry Ketchum.

## FERRIS-GOODRIDGE POST 330 HOSTS 'MOVING WALL'

SPENCERPORT — Patriotism was on full display here in June, as Time Warner Cable News put it.

The American Legion's Ferris-Goodridge Post 330 hosted the Moving Wall June 16-20 to commemorate

the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

It's a half-size replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. Organizers say this visit may mean more than the last time the wall was in Spen-

cerport in 2000.

Post 330 Commander and Moving Wall Chairman Joe Laucht told TWC News:

"To me, and I hate to say it this way, but this may be the last time that Vietnam era veterans get to pay their

respects to their fellow comrades. Their ages, they're up in their 70's now...late 60's early 70's, so they might not get another chance to see it. And it's easy for people who can't go to Washington, to come here and see it."



Spencerport Post 330 photo

## FORT ANN POST GETS FEDERAL BATTLEFIELD GRANT PROJECT AIMS TO STUDY, PRESERVE REVOLUTIONARY WAR SITE

FORT ANN – The American Legion Post here is one of 20 groups across the country to receive a 2016 American Battlefield Protection Program grant from the National Park Service.

Raymond W. Harvey Post 703 is being awarded \$80,000 to conduct an archaeological study to define the borders of the Revolutionary War's Battle

of Fort Anne. In July 1777, early in the Saratoga Campaign, a larger British army defeated a Continental force that was retreating from a loss days earlier at Fort Ticonderoga.

Through an archeological study and development of an overall preservation plan, the project will engage the public and present a history of the battle for future visitors and re-

searchers, the Park Service announcement said.

The Glens Falls Post Star reported that determining the major features of the land where the battle was fought is crucial, because a developer has proposed mining land on Battle Hill.

The newspaper quoted Post Commander Christine Milligan, who has led the effort to preserve the battlefield: "We are excited

to be able to continue on with further research of this historic site. I am sure we will succeed in our goal of preserving this site and honoring those who made the ultimate sacrifice on that battlefield."

This is the second National Park Service grant the Post has received. In 2013 a \$47,700 grant made possible a preliminary archeological survey of the site.



## LEGION, SAL DONATE GIRL SCOUT COOKIES TO BATH VA



*Mikayla and Birgit Lee get ready to unload boxes of Girl Scout cookies at the VA Medical Center in Bath, NY. Photo / David Lee.*

The American Legion Department of New York purchased Girl Scout cookies to give to veterans at the

Bath VA Medical Center in Steuben County.

The boxes of cookies were loaded into a car and deliv-

ered to the VA on March 5 by Sons of the American Legion (SAL) member David Lee and his wife, Birgit, and

their Girl Scout daughter, Mikayla. David serves as finance officer for the SAL Detachment of New York.

## DEPT. KICKS OFF JOINT LEGION FAMILY HOMECOMING

In the spirit of coming together as American Legion Family, the New York State American Legion held a joint "Homecoming" celebration May 13-14 in honor of Department Commander James V. Yermas, Department Auxiliary President Janet Mahoney and Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Joseph L. SantaCroce Jr.

This inaugural "Legion Family Homecoming" took place at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center in Albany.

The highlight event was the Homecoming dinner Saturday evening. Friday evening and Saturday afternoon featured hospitality.

All members of New York's Legion Family were invited.



*In the spotlight at the inaugural Legion Family Homecoming were, from left, Department Commander James Yermas, Department President Janet Mahoney and Detachment Commander Joseph SantaCroce Jr. Photos by Doug Malin.*





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# LEGION RIDERS CRUISE IN AVON ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

AVON— American Legion Riders from Bath, Lima and Springwater came together March 12 to ride in Livingston County's 2nd Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in Avon, reports state Vice Director Jerry Ketchum.

They were among a number of groups, floats and marching units participating in the parade, which got underway at 1 p.m. at Avon High School and proceeded down Clinton Street to the circle and the Avon fire hall.



*American Legion Riders in Avon Parade. Photo by Jerry Ketchum.*

## ERIE CO. LEGION DONATES EQUIPMENT



*Erie County American Legion donated exercise equipment to the Buffalo VA Cardiac Rehab program. "Donation was from our 2015 Buffalo Department Convention Committee," reports 2015 Convention Chairman Jim Bojanowski. Erie County legionnaires are shown with hospital staff*

*and donated equipment. Buffalo VA staff in the picture are Brian Stiller, director, VA WNY Healthcare System, and Cardiac Rehab Nurse Nicole Braun. Legionnaires are, left to right: Marty Moot, Bill Miskell, Wayne Sorrentino, Tim Van Patten, Paul Steward, Jim Bojanowski, and Joe Porempski.*

## GREENLAWN POST COLLECTS ITEMS FOR VETS IN NEED

Greenlawn American Legion Post 1244 has been collecting public donations of personal care items and non-perishable food for veterans in need and their families being served at United Veterans Beacon House at the Northport VA Medical Center.

The effort has been led by Legionnaire Al Statton.

## 6TH DISTRICT TAPS SCOUT AND OFFICER OF YEAR

Troop 14 Eagle Scout Gannon Frisbee of Downsville and Roxbury constable Stephen Williamson were honored as Eagle Scout of the Year and Law Officer of the Year, respectively, on June 12 at the Annual Convention of the American Legion, Sixth District, Department of New York, held at Post 465 in Homer.



# LYNBROOK POST HONORS 70-YEAR MEMBER

Lynbrook American Legion Post 335 honored World War II veteran Francis X. Becker Sr. on April 7 for 70 years of devoted membership in The American Legion. A month later the 90-year-old Legionnaire passed on to Post Everlasting.

Becker was a former Lynbrook mayor and retired State Supreme Court justice.

"I can't thank the American Legion enough for the wonderful honor bestowed upon my dad, Francis X. Becker," said Village Trustee Hilary Becker, the Long Island Herald reported. "The American Legion was one of the first organizations in our great country's history to make sure that our veterans are being properly cared for..."



*Family, friends and Legionnaires gathered to honor Francis X. Becker Sr. (center) for 70 years of devoted membership in The American Legion.*

# LEADING CANDIDATE INDUCTED INTO VETS HALL OF FAME

ALBANY – A number of Legionnaires were inducted into the New York State Senate's Veterans Hall of Fame this past May. Among them was Vietnam-era veteran John B. Sampson, the leading candidate for 2016-2017 commander of the New York State American Legion.

Sampson was nominated by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- 57th District), who noted:

"John Sampson has a distinguished service record and time-and-again has proven himself dedicated to his fellow veterans. Members of the Navy often use the phrase 'Non sibi sed patriae,' which in Latin means 'Not for self but for country,' and I can think of no better description for how Mr. Sampson has lived his life."

Sampson served in the U.S. Navy from August 1967 to February 1972 with assignments on the USS Freemont,



*Leading Candidate John Sampson with State Sen. Catharine Young.*

APA 44 and at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, as part of a joint military command. He was honorably discharged with the rank 2nd Class Personnel Man (E5). He earned a number of awards, including an Air Force Commendation, a Navy Good Conduct, a National Defense Service Ribbon, and following his service, a New York State Conspicuous Service Medal.

After completing his military service, Samp-

son became an accredited Veteran Service Officer for Cattaraugus County, a position he held for over two decades. During that time he developed protocols and procedures that are now used statewide.

In the American Legion, Sampson has held positions at post, county, department and national levels. If elected department commander, he will become the first person from Cattaraugus County to hold the title in the Legion's

nearly 100-year history. In addition, Sampson has served as national chairman for Veterans Education, Other Benefits and Homeless; vice chairman, National Americanism Commission; department chairman, Rehabilitation Committee; department chairman, Resolutions Committee; dean, American Legion College of New York; and past Department Service Officer of the Year. He is also a member of the Sons of the American Legion.



# ARSENAL NOT LIKE THE MOVIES

## LEGION COMMANDER AMAZED AT WEAPONS-PRODUCING CAPABILITY

By JOHN B. SNYDER  
*Watervliet Arsenal*

WATERVLIET -- A former General Electric machinist obtained a place at the table on January 21 with senior leaders at the oldest, continuously operating manufacturing center in New York's Capital District -- the Army's Watervliet Arsenal.

James Yermas, the New York State American Legion commander and former machinist at the General Electric plant in Schenectady, was in town preparing for his organization's Mid-Winter Conference in Albany when Arsenal Commander, Col. Lee H. Schiller Jr., leveraged a rare opportunity by inviting Yermas to the Arsenal for a command briefing and tour.

Every year, the Arsenal hosts a variety of visitors to its manufacturing center, from four-star generals to elected officials. But what made this visit different than all others is Yermas' background as a machinist.

Machining is a profession that the Arsenal workforce knows well as its 202-year history is tied to those artisans who through the years have turned raw stock material into some of the finest weapons systems known to the U.S. military.

Despite Yermas' extensive machining knowledge



***New York American Legion Department Commander James Yermas is viewed through the ring of a recently machined howitzer part. Photo by John B. Snyder.***

and having lived about a 45-minute drive away from the Arsenal, he admitted that he learned more about military manufacturing Jan. 21 than he had ever known.

"This visit is truly great because I am able to see firsthand many of the weapon systems that I have seen on television or in the movies and they look more impressive close up," Yermas said. "I am amazed at not only the Arsenal's distinguished history, but also in the capability the Arsenal has in manufacturing the weapons for our troops."

Beyond sharing common technical experiences, the Arsenal's leadership and Yermas also shared a common, historical bond to the nation's military.

New York's American Legion, some 113,000 members strong, has a nearly 100-year history of standing up for Veterans and their family members. There isn't a community event today, from supporting youth baseball to funding college scholarships to building homes for Veterans, where the Legion does not have an active involvement.

Nevertheless, by the time the American Legion had been established in 1919, the Arsenal had been in operation for more than 100 years. Ever since that warm summer's day in 1813 when the Arsenal's gates first opened, it has also supported the nation's military with its sweat and blood.

Similar to the American Legion, the Arsenal's workforce can often be found today in community events, from building baseball fields to marching in parades to working as volunteer firefighters.



# DAVIS RE-ELECTED STATE DIRECTOR OF LEGION RIDERS

The American Legion Riders in New York State aim to raise \$100,000 this year for the Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund, which provides college scholarships for children of fallen warriors.

Dave Davis announced that goal soon after being re-elected state director of the Legion Riders at the Department of New York's Mid-Winter Conference, held Jan. 22-24 in Albany.

The Legion motorcycle enthusiasts participate in an annual Legacy Run, gather-



*Diane and Dave Davis.*

ing pledges and donations that are brought to National

Legion Convention at the end of August. Last year Riders

from across the country raised \$1.25 million.

Also elected to one-year terms were:

- **Don Guernsey**, vice state director (Districts 3 & 4).
- **Don Logn**, vice state director (Districts 5 & 6)
- **Jerry Ketchum**, vice state director (Districts 7 & 8).
- **Peter DiAngelis**, vice state director (Districts 1, 2, 9, 10).
- **Larry Mischuk**, state secretary.
- **Nadine Szewczyk**, state chaplain.
- **Diane Davis**, state historian.



*American Legion Riders were out in force for January's Mid-Winter Conference.*



## \$10,000 FOR VETS IN NEED

*Jim Bojanowski, chairman for the 2015 Department Convention held in Buffalo, presented a \$10,000 check to Department Commander James Yermas to be used for New York State veterans in need of temporary financial assistance. The check presentation came during the Mid-Winter Conference general session Jan. 24.*

## VET, FIRM HAILED FOR SUPPORT OF VETERANS

The Department of New York honored army veteran Matthew Tully and his law firm, Tully Rickey PLLC, at the Mid-Winter Conference for their support of veterans.

The award of appreciation cited their efforts, in conjunction with Hannaford Supermarkets, to provide over 1,000 Thanksgiving turkeys to active duty service members and veterans, and for working with the Albany Housing coalition to provide clothing to homeless veterans.

Tully received a Purple Heart after sustaining



*Matthew Tully*

injuries in a suicide bombing and a Bronze Star for his service in Afghanistan.



# MID-WINTER CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

ALBANY – Veterans’ issues, including the care they receive through the VA health system, were on the minds of over 1,000 American Legion members as they gathered Jan. 22-24 for the Department of New York’s 97th Annual Mid-Winter Conference at The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center here.

Believing that VA health care “is a system worth saving,” a New York State American Legion task force has visited nearly half of the VA medical facilities in the state and held “town hall” meetings with veteran/patients, Department Adjutant James Casey told news media. While the VA system has problems, they have found the staff at medical facilities in New York to be very caring and trying to provide the best medical care for veterans.

Other related issues highlighted at the conference included veteran suicide and Post Traumatic Stress. In



*Adjutant Jim Casey talks to news media. RIGHT: National Commander-Candidate Charles Schmidt.*



addition, seminars covered such topics as children and youth programs, national security issues, troop support, family support, membership recruiting, law and order, junior shooting sports, Scouting, American Legion Baseball, ROTC/JROTC, oratorical contests, Boys State.

## QUEENS’ BASEBALL HOSPITALITY

The Queens County Legion and Auxiliary provided a refreshing break Saturday

afternoon with their annual themed-hospitality, donning NY Mets and NY Yankee jerseys and serving up peanuts and Cracker Jacks, among other things.

## BAND CONCERT LEADS TO BANQUET

The Yankee Doodle American Legion Band from Fort Crailo Post 471 in Rensselaer turned the hotel’s interior courtyard into a darkened concert hall Saturday evening, perform-

ing a stirring selection of show tunes and patriotic pieces. The performance was the highlight of the reception that preceded a jam-packed banquet, where **Charles Schmidt** of Oregon, leading candidate for national commander, was the featured speaker.

“I’m proud to say I’m an American Legion member,” said Schmidt, a retired Air Force major.

He referred to the bond that “carries on after we leave basic  
*Continued on next page*



*Queens Legion Family served up peanuts, Cracker Jacks and other refreshments at Queens County hospitality area.*



*Fort Crailo Post 471 American Legion Band performed prior to Mid-Winter Conference banquet, with Cheryl Pivorano playing the bass saxophone.*



## MID-WINTER CONFERENCE *continued from previous page*

training” – a bond of looking out for one another, which continues with Legionnaires advocating for veterans.

“Our credibility with (the U.S.) Congress is outstanding,” he said, because Washington knows “we are non-partisan” and focus on “what’s best for America.”

“It’s amazing – the American Legion has sustained itself taking care of veterans for 97 years,” Schmidt said to rousing applause. Headed to 100 years, “the American Legion cannot rest on its laurels. We need to continue to grow in membership and in programs.”

He added: “We inherited a legacy – and it’s our watch to carry the legacy forward.”

How? With a little personal investment, you’ll discover “opportunities to make something good happen for your post, unit and squadron.” Just like the post in Astoria, Oregon that decided to sponsor a Boy Scout unit, providing opportunity for youth – a few of whom in turn took the opportunity to bicycle 3,600 miles across America to Ground Zero in New York City this past summer and raise \$22,000 for the Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors.

National Auxiliary President Sharon Conatser of Champaign, Ill., also spoke, pointing to the Legion Family – the Legion, the Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion – as supporting one another in programs and membership. At 96, the Auxiliary has been walking with Legionnaires for



*Watervliet Arsenal's Col. Lee Schiller*

nearly as long as the Legion has existed.

### **PATRIOTIC DRESS AND SPARRING NECK TIES**

Vietnam-era army veteran Andrew Rosa, a 38-year member of Margaretville Post 216, came to the banquet wearing a piece of his-

tory on his lapel – a membership pin that belonged to his father, Henry, a World War I vet and charter member of the post. And in a sea of patriotic and military-themed neckties, Fifth District Commander Leslie Crossett and Junior Shooting Sports Chairman Lawrence

Behling stood out with their competing red-white-and-blue bow ties.

### **THE BOND OF MILITARY SERVICE**

The conference concluded with a general session Sunday morning, where Watervliet Arsenal Commander and Legionnaire Col. Lee Schiller noted that “service to country... has meant that we have done something different,” and it has forged a “kinship” that “the average American cannot understand.” As military veterans, there’s no “thinking twice about helping your buddy.” The colonel is retiring from the army this summer after serving for 28 years.

The bond among veterans, Department Commander James Yermas noted, is what naturally drives Legionnaires and The American Legion as an organization to advocate for all veterans – and is part of the message that Legion posts need to get out to the public.

Charles Schmidt, who hopes to be elected national commander in September, issued a challenge to “make something good happen for the American Legion.” His focus as national commander will be to “carry the American Legion legacy forward,” and to do that, “we need to make something good happen at our posts.” And then get the word out about what the Legion is doing. “Let’s share our stories.”



*Leslie Crossett and Lawrence Behling sport patriotic bow ties.*



# SOUTHOLD POST CREATES FIELD OF POPPIES

## HANDMADE FLOWERS A REMINDER OF WARTIME SACRIFICES

By DENISE CIVILETTI  
*Southoldlocal.com*

**SOUTHOLD** -- A field of bright red oversized poppies sprung up a week before Memorial Day on the front lawn of the Southold American Legion Post 803.

Every one of the 329 poppies was handcrafted by Legion member Joseph St. Pierre out of plastic soda bottle bottoms. St. Pierre worked on the flowers throughout the past year, since his wife Donna, a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, came up with the idea around Memorial Day last year.

For the flowers, St. Pierre cut the bottoms off 2-liter plastic bottles donated by Poliwoda Beverage. He spray-painted them with bright high-gloss reds and oranges. He painted the washers and nuts he used to affix them to their "stems" made from threaded rods. Each poppy took him about 45 minutes to make, he said.

"We originally thought maybe we'd make 100 of them." But the idea took root and St. Pierre, a retired builder, made more than triple the number he'd originally planned.

The Auxiliary requested a \$20 donation for each poppy, in memory or in honor of veterans and active members of the armed forces, both living and deceased. Each poppy bears a satin ribbon



**Legionnaire Joseph St. Pierre, with the oversized poppies he hand-made over the past year.** Photos by Denise Civiletti.

inscribed with the name, rank and branch of service of the military member in whose honor it stands. The proceeds of the poppy sales are being donated to Boots on the Ground NY, a Ronkonoma-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting and assisting veterans.

Fellow Vietnam vet Carl Deliteris bought a poppy in memory of each of three buddies killed in action.

"This looks incredibly fabulous," said Deliteris, standing on the lawn.

Auxiliary members, who distribute red paper poppies every year before Memorial Day, accepting free-will donations to support veterans' groups, are finding that each year, fewer people know what the poppies symbolize, said Donna St. Pierre.

"More and more people ask us what the poppies are

about and why we're distributing them," she said.

The paper poppies (and now their large plastic counterparts) -- reminiscent of the wild poppies blooming in the battlefields of France during WWI -- are symbols of the sacrifices made by the men and women who served and died for their country during a time of war.

Distribution of the red paper poppies, many (though not all) of which are made by hospitalized veterans, has been an American Legion national program since 1924. It can be traced to a New York City woman named Moina Michael, who was so moved by the words of the poem, "In Flanders Fields" that she began distributing fresh poppies in 1918 and spearheaded a campaign that would result in the adoption of the poppy as the national symbol of sacrifice.