

# LEGION

## NEW YORK



WINTER/SPRING

2020

Vol. 7 No. 1



**NY's Doughboys in National Spotlight**



## LEGION NEW YORK

The American Legion  
Department of New York  
1304 Park Boulevard  
Troy, New York 12180.  
518-463-2215  
info@nylegion.net

COMMANDER  
**Michael McDermott**

ADJUTANT  
**James Casey**

VICE COMMANDERS  
Districts 1 & 9

**Gabe Mui**

Districts 2 & 10

**Harry Ransom**

Districts 3 & 4

**John McCullough**

Districts 5 & 6

**John Knapp Sr.**

Districts 7 & 8

**David G. Henry**

NATIONAL EXEC.  
COMMITTEEMAN

**William Kearsing**

ALT. NAT. EXEC.  
COMMITTEEMAN

**W. Michael Bowen**

TREASURER

**John C. "Jack" Clancy**

JUDGE ADVOCATE

**W. Patrick Falvey**

MASTER-AT-ARMS

**Richard F. Calbo**

CHAPLAIN

**Rev. Robert J. Sweeney**

HISTORIAN

**Frank Carletta**

EDITOR

**Robert Stronach**

To submit photos, news,  
articles, email the editor at:  
news@nylegion.net

Volume 7, No. 1  
WINTER / SPRING  
2020

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SELFLESS SERVICE

by MICHAEL McDERMOTT

Medal of Honor recipient Francis S. Currey (a 75-year Legionnaire from up-state New York) took on German tanks and infantrymen who were advancing on his fellow soldiers in a Belgian town during the Battle of the Bulge. With a bazooka, anti-tank grenades and his rifle, the 19-year-old Currey disabled several tanks and forced the enemy to pull back.

While his valor is exceptional, his mindset is common within the women and men who serve our great nation.

Like Army Private First Class Monica Lin Brown, a combat medic deployed to Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

On April 25, 2007, a roadside bomb tore through her convoy, wounding five soldiers. The 19-year-old Brown ran through insurgent gunfire and used her body to shield her wounded comrades. Her actions led her to become the first woman to earn the Silver Star in Afghanistan, and just the second woman to do so since World War II.

Veterans all have stories to tell, whether they were in combat or not, because these women and men raised their right hand and pledged to give their life for their country if needed.

Veterans find community in each



Department Commander Mike McDermott

other. Call it comradery, esprit de corps, or whatever. They find it at American Legion posts and in unit Facebook groups.

For more than one hundred years, The American Legion has been dedicated to serving those who have served. The commitment to caring for America's veterans is one that transcends partisanship. It is a commitment that covers all races, all genders, and all faiths. The American Legion knows that service doesn't stop when the uniform comes off.

Thank you for your selfless service.

## COVER: THE DOUGHBOYS

*The Doughboys Color Guard from Winnek Post 396 in Geneva, NY, was in the spotlight at the National Convention – both in the parade and on the convention stage – as the national commander's color guard. The Doughboys had the honor of presenting the colors for the newly elected commander of The American Legion near the close of the 101st national convention on Aug. 29 in Indianapolis. After James W. "Bill" Oxford of North Carolina was elected national commander, the Doughboys were called up to the stage to present his colors, and then returned to the stage to retrieve the convention's colors to bring the event to a close. More National Convention news on Pages 13-15. Photo by Doug Malin.*

## NEW DEPT. HQ

The American Legion Department of New York has a new home for its headquarters in Troy, NY. In August, the Department HQ moved from its long-time Albany site (top floor of the Albany County Office Building on State Street) into its own building at 1304 Park Boulevard, Troy.

# LEGION LEADERS VISIT COUNTIES

## McDERMOTT: VETS MAKE BETTER ROLE MODELS

by ROBERT STRONACH

“Young people look up to veterans.”

That’s something New York State American Legion Commander Michael McDermott says he discovered in his travels around the state.

Speaking at a various testimonial dinners (including one in Rome Oct. 4), McDermott encouraged Legion Posts to hold or sponsor more activities for youth and families. It’s something he remembers fondly participating in as a kid himself.

The 130 attendees erupted into cheers and applause when he went on to say:

“Isn’t it a lot better to have a veteran as a role model than a football player who refuses to stand up for the national anthem?”

A Navy combat vet who served with U.S. Marines in Vietnam, McDermott was



*Department Commander Mike McDermott addresses the Legion Family at Utica Post 229 during a visit to Oneida County on Oct. 4. At right are Auxiliary Department President Linda Tome and Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Dennis George.*

joined by the Legion’s other state-level, or Department of New York, leaders – Department Auxiliary President Linda Tome and Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Dennis

George.

They were making a swing through Herkimer and Oneida counties to bring messages of support for veterans and families. Oneida County Legion Commander

Jim George welcomed them, and earlier in the day, escorted the trio, along with a contingent of Legion Family members, on a tour of Sitrin Healthcare’s Military Reha-

*Continued on next page.*



*Oneida County Commander Jim George addresses the Legion contingent during a visit to Sitrin Healthcare on Oct. 4.*



*Continued from previous page*

bilitation Program.

McDermott said he was impressed by the alternative therapies that Sitrin offers for veterans with post-traumatic stress (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI).

The equine-assisted program, he said, “is amazing.” Sitrin partners with Spirit Dogs Farm in Frankfort, which, like Sitrin, helps veterans for free. Vets bond with Spanish mustangs, instinctively learning calming behavior.

A mustang taught Air Force vet Walter “Jerry” Reid III gentle body language, which, Reid said, helped him with his relationships with others, including his two-year-old son, Daniel. The boy accompanied Reid to meet the Legion members. Jackie Warmuth, a multi-



**Jackie Warmuth briefs Legion Family leaders on the Military Rehabilitation Program at Sitrin Healthcare in Utica.**

certified therapist who heads the military rehab program, quickly made Daniel feel a welcomed part of the briefing. By the time it was over,

the two-year-old was chatting it up with McDermott.

During his dinner talk, McDermott noted that the equine-assisted program

was particularly appealing to him because one of his special projects for his year as department commander

*Continued on next page.*

## VISITATION CANDIDS

*photos by Wayne Dunckel.*

**Department Commander Mike McDermott renders salute as Department leaders arrive for the Jefferson County visitation.**



**Department leaders visit a 9/11 memorial during their swing through Putnam County. FROM LEFT: Detachment Commander Dennis George, Department Commander Mike McDermott and Department President Linda Tome.**





Continued from previous page involves another animal-assisted program called America's VetDogs.

He recounted how he met a wheelchair-bound vet in a park who had a service dog with an "America's VetDogs" badge. The vet, who suffered from PTSD, demonstrated what the dog could do. He dropped his cell phone on the ground, and asked the dog to retrieve it. The dog picked it up in his mouth and brought it him, McDermott said. "He can do the same thing if I drop a pen or a credit card," the vet told McDermott. "But the best thing is that when I'm having flashbacks, the dog senses it and puts his paws on my chest, and everything is okay again."

With the Department of Defense announcing an upsurge in suicides among service personnel and veterans, Department Auxiliary President Linda Tome spoke of her special project, "Stop Soldier Suicides," a not-for-profit that aims to make it easy to link vets with programs and therapies to prevent suicides.

"Sons" Detachment Commander Dennis George pointed to the countless volunteer hours put in by members of the Legion, Auxiliary and Sons – valued at tens of millions of dollars. Pointing to his theme as commander, George told the dinner audience, "You Are the Key" to recruiting members to grow the Legion's support for veterans and families.

## VISITATION CANDIDS

photos by Wayne Dunckel.



**New York leaders Linda Tome, Michael McDermott and Dennis George tour the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt in Hyde Park during their visit to Dutchess County. BELOW: They enjoy a ride during their visit to Broome County. BOTTOM: They pay their respects to the fallen in Chemung County.**







## Lackawanna Banner Honors Past National Commander

*Lackawanna is honoring veterans by displaying their service on banners hanging throughout the community.*

*More than 60 veterans were added Sept. 3 to the growing list of Lackawanna's Hometown Hero Banners, bringing the total to 213. Among the new honorees is Past National American Legion Commander Michael J. Kogutek.*

*A banner honoring PNC Kogutek was unveiled by Lackawanna Council President Annette Iafallo, along with PC Bernie Romanowski (on the left), and Matthew Glab Post 1477 Commander Daniel Kowalczewski.*

## WARSAW POST TURNS CENTENNIAL INTO 2-DAY EVENT



**Winners of the Children's Patriotic Parade that kicked off the second day of the celebration at Walter Klein Post 532.**

WARSAW — A number of Legion posts across the state that were founded in 1919 celebrated their centennials throughout 2019 by holding special events.

In Warsaw, NY, Walter Klein Post 532 turned its September centennial into a two-day celebration with an open house and community involvement.

"Incredibly awesome," Legionnaire Dan Walczak told the Batavia News. "Beautiful turnout, beautiful weather ... We've had people in and out all day. Between yesterday and today we signed up new members. People are really getting a glimpse of what our history was and some of our people have been involved in."

"The two words I think of when I think of this post and these people are 'selfless service,' Mayor Joseph Robinson told the newspaper.



**Susan Stone retired as a clerk typist in November after 23 years at the Buffalo Service Office. Presenting her with a certificate of appreciation are service officers Earl Schmidt, left, and Bert DeVirgilio.**

## LEGION FAMILY AT NYS FAIR

Imagine an American Legion booth at the New York State Fair, attracting Legion Family memberships from among the 1.3 million fair-goers.

That's exactly what Eastwood Post 1276 and Onondaga County American Legion organized – with a membership booth in a high foot-traffic area in front of the veterans memorial at the fairgrounds in Syracuse. The fair ran from Aug. 21 to Sept. 2. In addition to "positive community awareness, fundraising (poppy sales) and veteran services outreach," the goal was "membership recruitment," noted fair chairman Ron Hulgán, an Iraq/Afghanistan U.S. Army vet.





*Legion Family members joined other veterans to weld and paint metal poppies for the Livingston County Veterans' Monument. At right is Tim Collmer, dean of American Legion Family College of New York and a member of Daniel Goho Post 87 in Dansville, NY.*

## LIVINGSTON COUNTY TRIBUTE TO VETS

### LEGION FAMILY WELDS POPPIES FOR MONUMENT

by DAVID TERRY

Members of The American Legion, Sons of the American Legion, and American Legion Auxiliary of Livingston County joined forces with other veterans and their families to create a unique Livingston County Veterans' Monument – a field of some 250 metal poppies in the shape of the American flag.

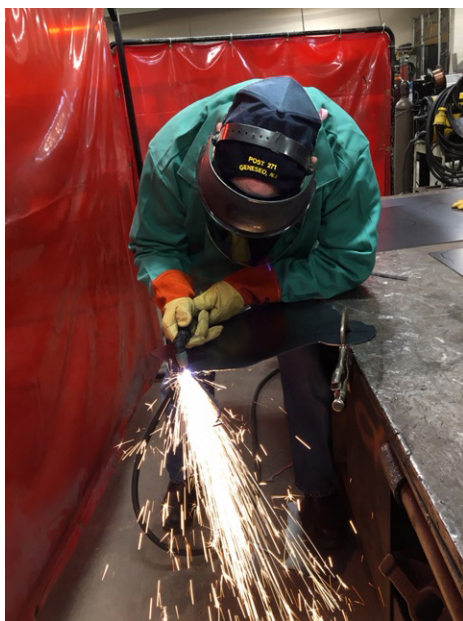
Jason Skinner, director of Livingston County Veteran Services Agency, first pitched the idea to Olie Olson, Metal Trades teacher to junior and senior high school students at Genesee Valley Educational Partnership in Mt Morris in October of 2018. He showed images of 800,000 poppies flooding areas surrounding the Tower of London looking like a

moat filled with a sea of red and smaller wrought iron decorative arbors adorned with red poppies. Knowing the symbolic representation of the red poppy in Europe and Canada, Skinner pitched an idea to make a smaller

monument, but asked how to Americanize it and make it specific to represent Livingston County veterans. Within two weeks, Olson came up with the design of the American flag. Initially, Olson said about 100 red

poppies would be needed to represent the red stripes. But he had one condition; he would teach veterans to weld and make their own poppies. Skinner brought the idea to the Livingston County Board of Supervisors. With many unknowns at the time and a unanimous vote of approval, the start of the Livingston County Veterans' Monument was born and scheduled to be completed by November 11, 2019.

Would anyone want to build his or her own poppy? Olson took his vision along with his teacher aid, Rory Benkleman, and went to work. Volunteering their own time, they taught and guided veterans and family members after school. Starting on Valentine's Day  
*Continued on next page.*



*A Legionnaire from Post 271 in Geneseo works on welding a metal poppy for the Livingston County Veteran's Monument.*





**Veterans, their families and others created 250 metallic poppies for the Livingston County Veterans' Monument. Here Legionnaire David Terry, wife Jill and daughters Jenna & Sophie put a coat of paint on their poppies. David is a member of J. Livingston Wadsworth Post 271 in Geneseo, NY.**

*Continued from previous page.* 2019 and by the end of June before school break, 250 poppies were completed. A bigger monument had to be created than what was first envisioned. While creating his own poppies, veteran Joe DiTucchi of American Legion Post 294 in Avon came up with the idea that each participant receive a personally engraved dog-tag-shaped name plate. Each plate would be made of up to four lines of personal inscription to dedicate to one's own service or in honor of someone else. Each inscription and each poppy would be unique.

While veterans were completing poppies and attaching their dog tags to their own creation, the site development was under the leadership of Marine Corps veteran and Patriot Guard leader Don Higgins, who is superintendent of the Livingston County Highway Department. Over 5,000 tons of gravel and crusher run material were spread and compacted as a foundation for the monument. Extensive drainage systems were put in place to ensure the integrity of the site over time. Four local concrete businesses worked together to complete a 6-inch-thick

concrete pad which serves as the 125.5 feet x 65 feet flag shaped monument. An adjacent parking lot was created for convenient access to the monument. Representing the seven red stripes of the American flag, ranging from one to five feet tall, these veteran made poppies were laid in position to emulate a waving flag. While on a swivel into the ground they will rotate and move with prevailing winds. The six white stripes will be sidewalks between the poppies so they can be viewed close up, while the blue canton hosting the 50 stars is reserved for ceremonies and

host to other events.

"This monument has been garnering attention from across the state because of its uniqueness, symbolism, partnerships and public involvement," stated Higgins. He attributes the success of this project to extensive collaboration among Livingston County's leadership, the Highway Department, Veteran Services, Genesee Valley Educational Partnership, the veteran community, and all those who have donated time and materials.

"I would especially like to thank County Administrator Ian Coyle and the Board of  
*Continued on next page.*





*The veteran-crafted poppies were installed on a temporary base for a dedication ceremony planned for Veteran's Day. However, inclement weather forced the ceremony's cancellation. It will be rescheduled after the metal poppies are installed on a permanent concrete base.*

*Continued from previous page.*

Supervisors for believing in this project from the very beginning," Higgins said. "Their unwavering support signifies a genuine appreciation for all Livingston County veterans who have served our country."

Skinner noted, "This county project has been wildly popular with our veteran community. It has brought many veterans together and has strengthened their bonds in an already resilient community." The participants range from a four-year-old painting poppies with family to a 98-year-old who fought on the beaches of Normandy. Every veteran has a story and this monument brings all generations together.

There is a great pride in a project when a community comes together to celebrate veterans. There is something to be said about a project that was made by veterans, high school students in an education setting, community members as a whole, and the entire American Legion family coming together to celebrate the veteran community.

...

*On November 11, 2019, the dedication ceremony -- scheduled to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Veterans Day -- was cancelled due to inclement weather.*

*Livingston County plans to reschedule the dedication ceremony once construction of the monument is fully complete.*

*Remaining work includes:*

- the addition of a recycled rubber surface designed to emulate the American flag,
- permanent installation of 250 veteran-crafted metal poppies,
- general landscaping.



*Debbie and Jake Davis were among the many Legion Family members who welded and painted poppies for the Livingston County Veterans' Monument. Jake is a past county commander and Debbie is a past auxiliary president. Their home post is Matthew Cleary Post 255 in Caledonia, NY.*



# DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

## AWARDS HIGHLIGHT OPENING SESSIONS



FROM LEFT: Legionnaire of the Year Shirley Connolly, EMT of the Year Steve Smith, Corrections Officer of the Year Ricky Jenison, and Chatham Fire Chief Paul Rideout, who accepted Fire Department of the Year Award. Photos by Robert Stronach.

by ROBERT STRONACH

Law and Orders Awards took center stage during the opening session of The American Legion Department of New York's 101st Annual Convention on Thursday, July 18.

Also in the spotlight was Legionnaire of the Year Shirley Connolly of Marne Post 270 in Caramel (Putnam County, District 9). In presenting the award, Committee Chair Mike McDermott cited her involvement in and impact on the Post as well as her serving as a Legion ambassador to the community and other veterans organizations.

Pointing to first responders, Law and Order Chair David R. Riley Sr. noted:

"They are the ones who respond to the emergencies in our communities 24/7; many times without receiv-

ing any thanks, nor do they go looking for these thanks. It is our responsibility, The American Legion, to honor these heroes."

He went on to present the following prestigious honors:

**EMT OF THE YEAR:** Steve L. Smith of Brocton Volunteer Fire department (8th District, Chautauqua County). Despite a fall in 2002 that left him with two broken vertebrae and paralyzed from the waist down, Smith was determined not to be confined to a wheelchair. Through physical therapy and the fitting of a brace, he was able to begin walking again.

His determination didn't stop there. He went on to complete firefighter training in 2014 and then emergency medical technician training in 2016, and is giving back

to the fire department that came to his rescue years earlier.

**CORRECTIONS OFFICER OF THE YEAR:** Ricky Jenison of Groveland Correctional Facility (7th District, Livingston County). While driving to work the previous year, he noticed billowing smoke and pulled up to a house where children were screaming for their mother as they pointed to a vehicle on fire.

He ran towards to vehicle when a small explosion occurred, and then he was attacked by four pit bull dogs. He sustained numerous bites that required 50 stitches and follow-up surgeries.

"Officer Jenison is to be commended for his swift actions and willingness to help others in need, regardless of his safety," said Riley.

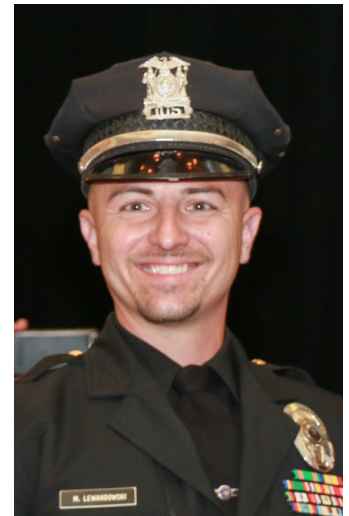
**FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR:** Chatham Fire Department (3rd District, Columbia County), with Fire Chief Paul Rideout and Firefighter Gregory Horst accepting on behalf of the department.

Composed of two companies (the Ocean Fire Department #1 and the S.W. Smith Hook and Ladder Fire Company), the Chatham FD responded to 143 fire calls in the past year. One of them involved an apartment complex for the elderly and handicapped. It turned into a mutual aid call. Nevertheless, Chief Rideout and Assistant Chief Eric Barnes "completed an initial attack and contained the fire to the first floor," Riley noted, while Firefighters Alex and Gregory Horst gained entry

*Continued on next page.*



# DEPARTMENT CONVENTION



**Firefighter of the Year Edward Sharpe with Law-and-Order Chair David Riley Sr. (left) and outgoing Department Commander Gary Schacher. At right is Michael G. Lewandowski, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.**

*Continued from previous page.*  
to a blocked bedroom and rescued a gravely injured 71-year-old male resident.

Additional firefighters conducted primary and secondary searches of the complex, rescuing numerous residents who had become trapped. "Due to quick response, actions and bravery taken by the initial volunteer responders, numerous lives were saved," Riley said.

**FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR:** Edward D. Sharpe of Lakeville Volunteer Fire Department (7th District, Livingston County). Edward has been a member of the Lakeville FD for 56 years, and also had been a paid firefighter with the Rochester Fire Department for 25 years. He was known for his professional skills as a driver, pump operator, and interior firefighter. He often was called upon to perform emergency medical services prior to the arrival of an ambulance to

an incident. Ed Sharpe has mentored numerous young firefighters, and was a founding member of the Lakeville Volunteer FD's Scuba Squad, which responded to searches on Conesus Lake before the Livingston County Sheriff's Office formed its Dive Team. Sharpe was instrumental in the purchase of land and construction of the LVFD Training Grounds facility. He is currently president of the fire department. A Marine veteran, Sharpe has been a member of Harrison-Lee

Post 283 for 46 years.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF THE YEAR:** Michael G. Lewandowski of the Town of Tonawanda Police Department (8th District, Erie County). A Marine combat veteran, Lewandowski served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has received numerous letters of recognition and commendations since joining the police department in 2011. For example, he created a 2,000-hour military veterans police officer trainee curriculum that was accepted by

the VA for GI Bill benefits. He also was cited for his actions last fall that resulted in the arrest of an armed and dangerous felon, Riley noted. He responded to a female victim of domestic violence, and ended up chasing and apprehending the suspect, who was armed with a 9 mm handgun and had marijuana and cocaine in his possession.

## SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

**BUFFALO --** One of the highlights of Friday's assembly at The American Legion state convention was the awarding of the Service Officer of the Year. The honors went to Jeremy Marshall, director of Ontario County Veterans Service Agency.

He also received a National American Legion Citation for Meritorious Service. Marshall was cited for "an aggressive outreach program to reach as many of the county's 8,200  
*Continued on next page.*



**Service Officer of the Year Jeremy Marshall.**



# DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

*Continued on next page.*

veterans as possible,” including, among other things, working with Canandaigua VA Medical Center and helping to form a Veterans Treatment Court for vets within the criminal justice system. A past commander of American Legion Post 256, Marshall served in the Marines and then later in the Army. During his last deployment to Afghanistan, he was severely injured by an improvised explosive device.

## EMPLOYMENT AWARDS

The American Legion advocates for veterans’ employment, and recognizes service officers that excel at placing vets in jobs and employers who hire veterans.

Employment Committee Chair Thomas Rielly singled out two service officers along with an employer of the year during Friday’s assembly at the 101st Convention.

**Decrecente Distributors in Mechanicville (Saratoga County) is Employer of the Year.** The company hired 22 veterans last year, Rielly noted. Earl J. Manning Post 490 in Stillwater nominated the firm.

**Disabled Veterans Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year** is Nicholas Brown of Rochester Works One Stop Career Center. In the

past year he placed 30 veterans in full time employment, including 23 disabled vets.

**Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year** is Salvatore Baggetta of Working Solutions Career Center in Herkimer. He placed 10 vets in full time jobs.

## TOP SCOUTING AWARDS

Pointing to The American Legion’s long and unwavering support for the Boy Scouts of American, Department Scouting Chair Stephen Mataraza reported that “we currently charter 223 units”, with “well over 6,100 youth in the Department of New York.”

Mataraza also announced at the 101st Annual Convention the following top Scouting awards.

**Pack of the Year** is Pack 10 chartered to Post 800 in Groton, NY, Tompkins County, 6th District.

**Troop of the Year** is Troop 43 chartered to Mohican Post 983 in Greene County in the 3rd District..

**Adult Scouter of the Year** is Charles D. “Chuck” Pettibone from Monroe County, 7th District.

**Eagle Scout of the Year** is Steven King from Troop 42, Chartered by Post 291, Greene County, 3rd District.

## JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS

The NYS American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program has been extremely active in competitions statewide and nationally, reported Junior Shooting Sports Chair Lawrence Behling.

American Legion teams in both Sporter and Precision Air Rifle have taken part in American Legion National matches, CMP, USA, US Army, Junior Olympic and Orion matches this past year with several individuals and teams taking national honors.

Abigail Paddock from Warsaw Air Rifle team finished 2nd in the National CMP competition held at Camp Perry.

Central Square and Middletown teams were invited to Alabama for the national finals in the CMP Junior Olympics.

On February 15, 16 and 17 the NYS American Legion League Championship took place at Cicero American Legion Post in Cicero, New York.

Middletown Post 151 took first place in Sporter Air Rifle with a team score of 2084-45-2400. Team members were Joseph Downs, Ashley Mendez, Victoria Miglion and Brandon Beasley.

Central Square Post 915 Precision Rifle team took 1st

place with a score of 2312-123-2400. Team members were Ellise Penrod, Kamile Zakreski, MaryAnn Sobel and Brianna Purdy.

Several New York teams are ranked upwards in the top 50 teams in the United States, Behling noted.

## RECRUITER OF THE YEAR

Leo B. Mackin Jr. was named Department Recruiter of the Year.

He recruited 25 new members and hails from Post 616 (Otsego County, Dist. 6).

## AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS

Department Director Robert F. Wallace reported: “Through our Consolidated Chapter Reports, we learned that our Riders have donated \$93,501.54 to other charities within their communities and have driven 83,975 miles while taking care of veterans, our military and their families and their communities. Yet with only about 25% of our Chapters reporting, we realize these numbers are very underreported. With the data we do have, we estimate that our ALR Chapters are comprised of approximately 44% Legionnaires, 31% Sons and 25% Auxiliary for approximately 3000 ALR members in the Department of New York.”



# NATIONAL CONVENTION

## SQUADRON 457 COLOR GUARD TAKES CLASS VICTORY

New York had a color guard unit in national competition Aug. 23 during the 101st American Legion Convention in Indianapolis.

Sons of The American Legion Squadron 457 (Seeley B. Parish Post 457 in Phelps, NY) won in its class. The squadron also scored a 94.0 in the “Advancing/Retiring of Colors” performance, only three tenths of a point behind the top performers.

The “grand prize” of the color guard contest -- to be the national commander’s color guard at the 2020 convention -- came down to half a point between two of the decade’s dominant competitors: Newport Harbor Post 291 of Newport Beach, Calif., and Harrisburg Post 472 of Houston. The Houston unit took the title.



*SAL Squadron 457 from Detachment of New York performs during the Color Guard Competition at the 101st American Legion National Convention Friday, August 23, 2019 in Indianapolis. Photo by Ryan Young/The American Legion.*

## TONAWANDA BAND SOARS TO NATIONAL TITLE AGAIN

The American Legion Band of the Tonawandas, sponsored by Post 264 in Tonawanda, entertained and inspired with its lineup of pieces, winning the title of national champion in concert band competition on Saturday, Aug. 25, during the 101st American Legion Convention in Indianapolis. The appearance was sponsored by the Department of New York.

Not only was their performance enthralling, but also the fact that this is their 22nd national championship. The band’s eclectic lineup included:

- “Esprit de Corps” by Robert Jager.
- “The Gallant 7th” by John Philip Sousa.
- “Ballet Sacra” by David Holsinger.



*Members of the Band of Tonawandas perform during the national concert band competition Saturday, Aug. 24. Photo by Ben Mikesell/The American Legion.*



*Photo by Doug Malin*

## NEW YORK MARCHES IN NATIONAL PARADE

Department Commander Michael McDermott and the Department Color Guard led the New York contingent in the National American Legion Parade through downtown Indianapolis Sunday, Aug. 25. The Vietnam veteran commander rode a scooter as he saluted his way past the reviewing stand.

The New York contingent included the Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and Legion Riders.



# NATIONAL CONVENTION

## NY BATS ARE A HIT AT CONVENTION

Immediate Past Department Commander Gary Schacher and Department Adjutant James Casey brought a bit of Cooperstown to the stage at The American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis Monday, Aug. 27.

They wielded American Legion Centennial baseball bats, made for the Department of New York by Cooperstown Bat Co. for the Baseball Hall of Fame's American Legion weekend last March in celebration of both the centennial and American Legion Baseball.



*Immediate Past Dept. Commander Gary Schacher and Department Adjutant Jim Casey present Cooperstown bats to Past National Commander David Rehbein (left), chair of the 100th anniversary observance committee, and outgoing National Commander Brett Reistad (right). Photo by Doug Malin.*

## NY PRESENTS LEGACY CHECK FOR \$7,350

New York delegation members joined the stage at The American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis Monday, Aug. 27, to present \$7,350 in funds raised by immediate Past Department Commander Gary Schacher for the Legacy Scholarship.

The presentation took place during ceremonies for the Legion Riders Legacy Run fundraising.



*Department Commander Mike McDermott, Immediate Past Dept. Commander Gary Schacher and Department Adjutant Jim Casey took to the stage at the national convention to announce New York's donations to Legion charities. Photo by Doug Malin.*

## NY IS CENTER STAGE WITH OVER \$54,000 IN DONATIONS

Immediate Past Department Commander Gary Schacher announced from the podium at The National American Legion Conven-

tion in Indianapolis on Tuesday, Aug. 28, that the Department of New York was donating \$51,239 to the National Emergency Fund (NEF).

He also announced \$3,010 for Operation Comfort Warrior, and that Post 942 was giving \$500 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Joining him in the checks

presentation to outgoing National Commander Brett Reistad were Department Commander Michael McDermott and Department Adjutant James Casey.



# NATIONAL CONVENTION



*The Doughboys Color Guard from Winnek Post 396 in Geneva, NY, was in the spotlight at the National Convention – both in the parade and on the convention stage – as the national commander's color guard. Photo by Doug Malin.*

## 4 PLAYERS AWARDED BASEBALL SCHOLARSHIPS

Four American Legion Baseball players won scholarships from the Department Baseball program, Baseball Chair Bruce Mayfield announced.

**Braden Hoffman** of Ilion, NY was awarded a first-place \$1000 scholarship. He plans to pursue a teaching degree at SUNY College at Cortland, then a master's degree, so he can teach school and coach sports. Braden was in the top 10 percent of his class at Central Valley Academy.

Three other players received \$500 scholarships. They are:

- **Sean Liquori** of Thiells, N. He plans to major in

business and play baseball at SUNY Oneonta. Sean was in National Honor Society and played varsity baseball at North Rockland High School.

- **Samuel LoTempio** of Eden, NY. He plans to pursue computer engineering at University of Buffalo. Samuel played varsity soccer and baseball at Eden High School and attended American Legion Boys State in 2018.

- **Tyler Kopolow** of Binghamton, NY. He plans to major in business and play baseball at Keuka College. Tyler was in the National Honor Society and played varsity golf and baseball at Binghamton High School.

## NO VETERAN WILL BE BURIED ALONE

"A veteran with no family will not be buried alone," stated 10th District Commander Paul J. Schottenhamel, who reported that the Queens County Committee of The American Legion presided over a December funeral for a Vietnam War era vet who had no known family.

"We know little about Angelo Luina. He was born in Manhattan on 10 October 1946. He entered in the US

Army during the Vietnam War Era on 30 April 1968. He lived in the Bronx. He died on 26 October 2019."

A short service took place on Sunday Dec. 8 at Werst Labella Funeral Home in Glendale, with the funeral taking place on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at Calverton National Cemetery. The legionnaires were joined by other veterans and patriots.



# NATHAN WANG IS BOYS STATE GOVERNOR

ShuangHeng “Nathan” Wang of Shaker High School in Loudonville was elected the 2019 Boys’ State governor. He represented New York at Boys’ Nation, along with New York’s other delegate, Connor John Hunt of Charles W. Baker High School in Baldwinsville.

Nathan was sponsored by Joseph E. Zaloga American Legion Post 1520. Connor was sponsored by Vernice Suttle American Legion Post 113.

Boys State’s annual leadership and citizenship development program took place June 27 to July 2 at SUNY Morrisville.



*2018-2019 Department Commander congratulates Nathan Wang on his election as governor of Boys State.*

# 5TH DIST. RAISES FUNDS FOR AIRPORT MILITARY LOUNGE

Thanks to the Department of New York’ 5th District, the Gregory J. Harris Military Courtesy Room got a \$3,000 boost to serve military men and women traveling through Syracuse’s Hancock International Airport.

It all began with a visit to the lounge in October, during which 5th District Commander Lawrence Behling challenged his Auxiliary and Sons counterparts (Diane Butler and Shawn Mills) to help raise funds for the military courtesy lounge by Dec. 8.

District Commander Behling returned with several others on Dec. 10 to present the \$3,000 check.

The lounge is “one of only a handful of privately



*5th District Commander Lawrence Behling presents funds to an unidentified lounge volunteer, along with Jefferson County 3rd Vice Commander Judy Wallace (left), 5th District Auxiliary President Diane Butler (2nd from right), and Department Commander’s Aide Leslie Crossett (right).*

funded military lounges in the nation,” according to its website. “...We provide our servicemen and women with snacks, beverages and a comfortable place to wait and rest for flights or transportation to many of

the local military installations, in particular Ft. Drum — a US Army base located a little over an hour north of Syracuse. Ft. Drum is home to the 10th Mountain Division and the majority of the military traffic we see comes

from these amazing men and women. It truly is an honor to serve them.”

The lounge is named after a Marine radioman who was captured in Vietnam in 1966 and is still MIA (missing in action).



# GOLF CLUBS FOR DEPLOYED TROOPS



*Four GIs pose with golf clubs sent to them at Camp Taji, located less than 100 miles from Baghdad, Iraq.*

by RENE VANMULEM

American military serving overseas have long been rewarded with “goodies” from home. The range of items that are shipped is nearly immeasurable but always welcomed with open arms from troops separated from their families and always in need of something to narrow that separation of thousands of miles.

In recent times, large numbers of our military personnel serve in the vast desert regions of the Middle East in some of the most remote and desolate regions. Some months ago when a member of Cobblestone Creek Country Club in Ontario, NY, had a family friend being deployed,

folks from upstate New York posed the question, “What can we send you that you would enjoy?”

His answer was totally unexpected.....“golf clubs!” Why in the world would they want golf clubs you might ask? Their answer is quite simple – fun! When you’re stationed in the middle of the desert there is

nothing to do for entertainment. Hitting golf balls out into the wastelands of Iraq or Afghanistan is likely one of the few things that could fall under the category of entertainment. There simply isn’t much else.

This “off-the-wall” idea became the topic of conversation one evening at a dinner at the country club.

Suddenly, within a few weeks, Cobblestone Creek had collected over 1,000 used golf clubs designated for shipment to troops anywhere and everywhere. Several designations around the globe were determined, shipping containers were obtained from several sources, and the completed packages made their way to local post offices. The shock set in when postage rates of \$85 to \$100 per box of clubs to get them to APO addresses far and wide were determined.

Word made its way back to **Monroe County American Legion** in Rochester, NY, which approved a donation to help offset the shipping costs.

You can only imagine the surprise of one of the locals finding a golf ball in the sands of the Iraqi desert.



*Monroe County Commander Charlie Clark presents a check to Eileen Horak and Alissa Ingerick to help offset shipping costs.*



# LEGION FAMILY AT THE WALL THAT HEALS

by NASSAU COUNTY AMERICAN  
LEGION AUXILIARY

On Tuesday, Aug. 27, a labor of love began as The Wall That Heals, a Vietnam Veterans Memorial Replica and Mobile Education Center, arrived at Nassau County's Eisenhower Park under motorcycle escort by Rolling Thunder, American Legion Riders, Fire Riders, Leathernecks, and Patriot Guard Riders, to name a few. It is noteworthy that all of the riders preceding the Mobile Education Center trailer were "boots-on-the-ground" in Vietnam. The riders that followed the trailer were Vietnam-era vets, other veterans and patriots.

Work to erect The Wall began on Wednesday, Aug. 28 during a torrential downpour. The framework was assembled followed by the addition of simulated granite slabs that spanned a total of 375 feet in length and 7.5 feet high at its tallest point. The opening ceremony followed on a sunny Thursday morning, Aug. 29, and several wreaths were placed by various organizations: The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 82, Vietnam War Veterans Association, Agent Orange Awareness, Nassau County Military Order of the Purple Heart, Nassau County Veterans Service Agency, and Jewish War Veterans, to name a few.



*Nassau County American Legion Auxiliary members at the Wall That Heals.*

The Wall was open 24/7 with security provided mainly by veterans, and non-veteran groups as well.

Friday evening, Aug. 30, a well-attended Candlelight Vigil was held at dusk as The Wall became illuminated, while the piper from Locust Valley Fire Department played "Amazing Grace." The Wall remained open until 2:30 p.m. on Sunday for the closing ceremony.

The 53-foot trailer that carries The Wall That Heals transforms to become a mobile Education Center. The exterior of the trailer features a timeline of "The War and The Wall" and provides additional information about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Additional exhibits gave visitors an idea of the collection of items left at The Wall. The exhibit included

"Hometown Heroes", photos of service members whose home of record was from the local area. Additional photos can be seen at [www.vvmf.org/thewall](http://www.vvmf.org/thewall).

There was also an "In Memory Honor Roll" -- photos to honor local Vietnam veterans who returned home and later died of Vietnam-related illnesses. Two printed directories were available containing the names on the wall alphabetically as well as the "panel" and "row" so that the visitor could easily find a beloved fallen member's name and do a "pencil etching" as a keepsake.

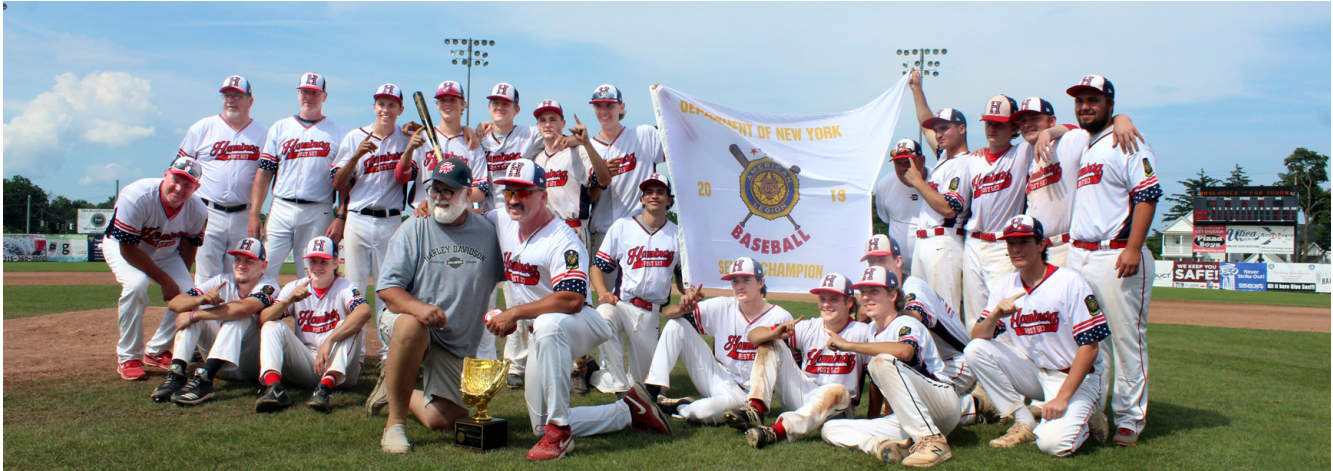
There is a "The Gold Star Bike" (donated by the American Gold Star Mothers in 2012), a Softail Custom Harley that pays tribute to the mothers who lost sons to the Vietnam War.

Visitors experienced The Wall rising above them as they walked towards the apex, a key feature of the design of The Wall in Washington, D.C. The Wall is comprised of 58,276 names, over 1,500 of which were service members who are Missing In Action to this day (MIA). There are eight women's names on The Wall, all of whom were nurses. The average age of the soldiers who perished was 22 yrs., 9 mos. The youngest service member listed was only 15 years of age. There are 40 sets of brothers on The Wall, and three sets of fathers and sons.

"The Wall That Heals" is appropriately named, as there is a lot to be said for the comfort derived by "collective compassion" for the immeasurable loss suffered by the families of the fallen.



# HAMBURG POST GRABS STATE BASEBALL TITLE



*The 2019 New York State American Legion Baseball Champs. Photo by Frank Carletta.*

UTICA – Hamburg Post 527 (Erie County) broke the Rockland Pirates’ streak, winning the New York State American Legion Baseball Championship on Wednesday, July 31. Rockland Pirates Post 130 of Stony Point (Rockland County) had held the title for three years in a row.

Unlike the first game of Wednesday’s championship round, where both teams kept each other at bay until

Hamburg scored a single winning run, the final game featured good hits and rallies by both teams.

In the bottom of the 7th inning, Rockland was ahead, 8-7, but Hamburg stole home on a throw and then scored another run on an error, winning the championship game, 9-8.

The tournament was played at Murnane Field’s Donovan Stadium.

## SENIOR TOURNAMENT MOVING FROM UTICA TO SAUGERTIES

The New York State American Legion Baseball Senior Tournament is moving to Saugerties for the next three seasons. The Department Baseball Committee said the move from Utica’s Murnane Field was due to a housing issue caused by a conflict with Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. Meanwhile, the 2020 Department Junior Tournament will remain in Utica.

Utica has served as the home of the Senior Tournament,

hosting 16 out of the last 18 years, with Utica Post 229 hosting seven times during the 2000s and Adrean Post 625 hosting the past nine years.

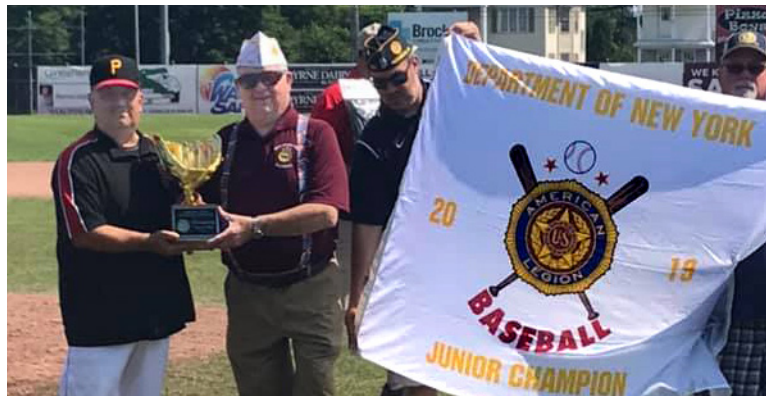
Saugerties has been awarded the Tournament for the 2020, 2021, and 2022 seasons. It will be held at Cantine Veterans Memorial Complex (also known as Cantine Field). The Host Committee will be led by Jerry Malgieri and Rich Koegel. Teams will report to Saugerties on July 24 and begin play on July 25.

## ROCKLAND POST WINS JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

UTICA — Rockland Pirates Post 130 is the state Junior American Legion Baseball Champion. The Pirates grabbed the tournament title in a 7-2 win Saturday morning, July 27, over runner-up Whitestown Post 1113. The junior teams squared off at Murnane Field’s Donovan Stadium in Utica

The senior tournament kicked off in the afternoon, with Department Commander Mike McDermott throwing the first pitch.

*Department Commander Mike McDermott presents the Junior Championship trophy to Rockland Pirates Post.*





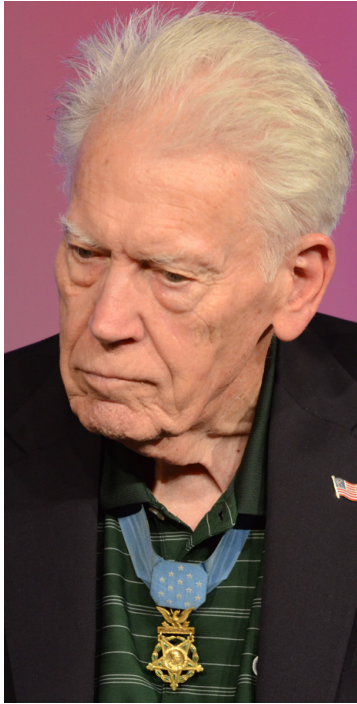
# MEDAL OF HONOR LEGIONNAIRE PASSES AT 94

SELKIRK — Medal of Honor recipient Francis Sherman Currey, a 75-year member of Nathaniel Adams Blanchard Post 1040 in Delmar, died Oct. 8 at the age of 94 at his Selkirk home. His passing was announced on Facebook by the Post, which referred to Currey as the its “highest decorated member” and “a truly great man.”

He was awarded the Medal of Honor for saving American lives while risking his own life during the World War II Battle of the Bulge. With a bazooka, anti-tank grenades and his rifle, Currey disabled several German tanks and squared off against enemy infantrymen in the Belgian town of Malmedy. His actions led the Germans to pull back.

He also received the Belgian Order of Leopold, a Silver Star, a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts. In 1998, the first Medal of Honor G.I. Joe action figure was modeled after Currey.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo directed flags to be flown at half-staff on state government buildings on Friday, Oct. 11 in honor of Currey.



**Francis S. Currey received the Medal of Honor for halting German tanks that were advancing on his company. RIGHT: Tech Sgt. Currey receives the Medal of Honor in France in 1945.**

## NATIONAL COMMANDER VISITS



**LEFT: Department Commander Mike McDermott welcomes National Commander Bill Oxford during his visit to the 6th, 7th and 8th Districts in October. Photos by Doug Malin.**

**ABOVE: The national commander poses with members of the Department Color Guard from Post 1430.**