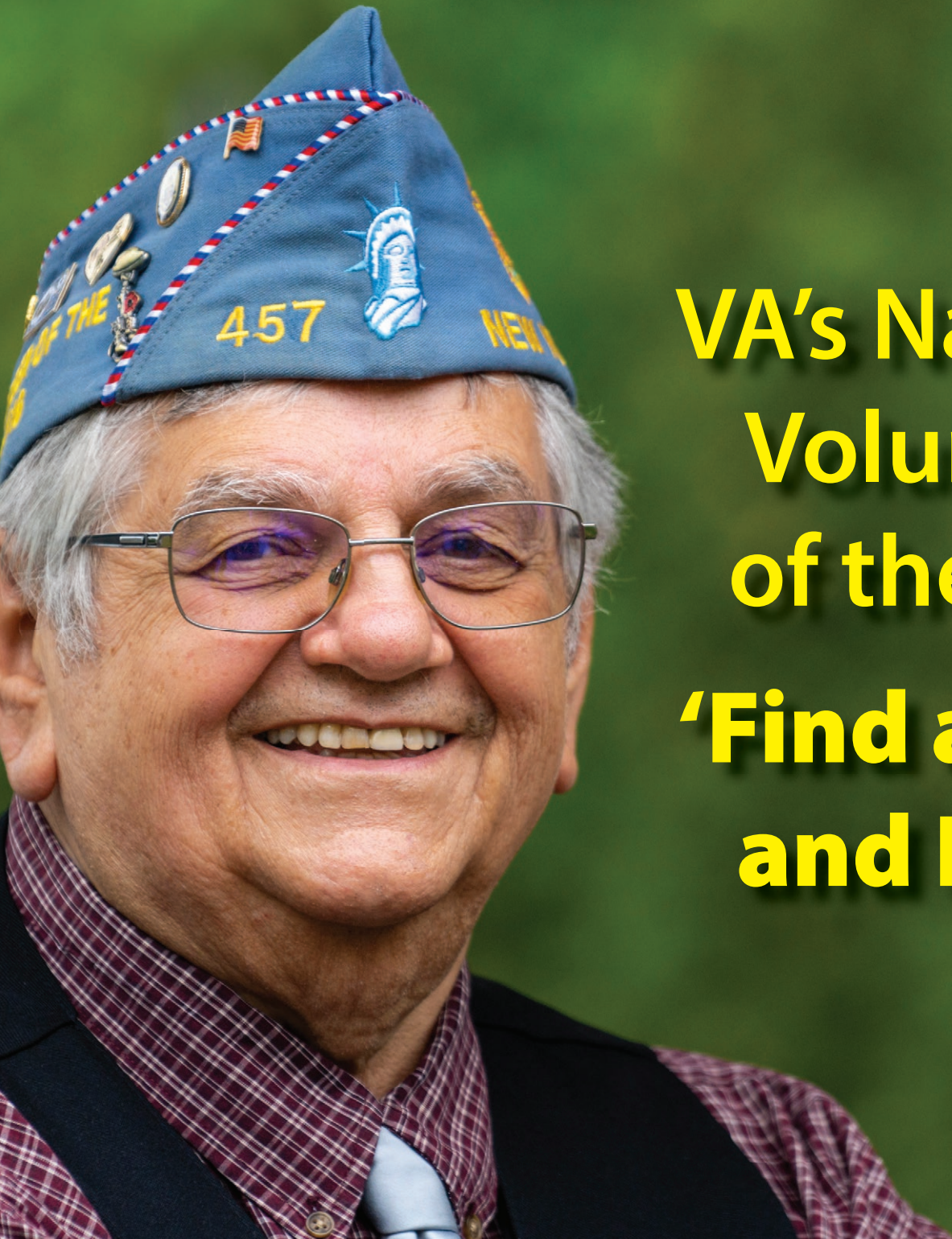




SUMMER  
2021  
Vol. 8 No. 2

# LEGION NEW YORK



**VA's National  
Volunteer  
of the Year  
'Find a Need  
and Fill It'**



## LEGION NEW YORK

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## UNUSUAL 2-YEAR TENURE COMING TO A CLOSE I'M PROUD OF OUR LEGION FAMILY

by MICHAEL McDERMOTT

Little did I realize when I began my tenure as Department Commander, I was signing up for a two-year hitch. But since COVID-19 extended the "enlistment" of American Legion leaders from the Post on up, I was in good company -- *especially with Auxiliary President Linda Tome and SAL Detachment Commander Dennis George! (See photo below).*

Despite the hardships Posts experienced due to the pandemic shutdowns and restrictions, The American Legion in New York State shined. I could not be prouder of how so many members of the Legion, the Sons and the Auxiliary stepped up to feed and supply first responders and provide food for veterans and their families.

That is a stunnig legacy for The American Legion Department of New



Department Commander Mike McDermott

York. I salute you.

And now, bit by bit, we're beginning to get back to business as usual.

Thank you for all you do for veterans, families, youth and community. God bless.



### COVER

**SAL Member Gabe Cinquegrana is the VA's National Volunteer of the Year. He was honored with an event at Post 457 in Phelps, NY, on May 28. See PAGE 3.**  
*Photo by Zachary Krahmer/The American Legion .*



### BACK COVER

**At the Oneida County Convention hosted by Utica Post 229 on June 12, County Vice Commander Ed Jackson announced that 100-year-old James A. Moses was the oldest living member in the county. Moses served in the Army Air Corps during WWII from 1942 to 1946. He is a member of Helmuth-Ingalls Post 232 in Clinton, NY.**  
*Photo by Jamie LaPorte.*



## VA'S MALE VOLUNTEER OF YEAR

# SAL Member Finds a Need & Fills It

by THE AMERICAN LEGION

In his nine years as a volunteer at Canandaigua, NY's VA Finger Lakes Healthcare System, Gabe Cinquegrana has logged over 9,000 hours, doing everything from administrative work to using his musical talents to entertain veterans.

Those efforts earned Cinquegrana the VA's 2021 National Male Volunteer of the Year Award.

A member of Detachment of New York Squadron 457, Cinquegrana is the Sons of The American Legion representative on the National Advisory Committee of the VA's Center for Development and Civic Engagement.

He was honored with an event at Post 457 in Phelps, NY, on May 28.

"Gabe is deserving because he does everything with his heart. And when he's given a task, he puts his heart and his soul into it," said Detachment of New York Commander Dennis George.

Cinquegrana volunteers in memory of his father, Michael Gabriel Cinquegrana, who served as a cook in the Navy on the USS Brookings from 1943 to 1947.

Robin Johnson, voluntary service manager at Canandaigua, said Cinquegrana "always has an idea" to improve the volunteer program



Photo by Zachary Krahmer/The American

**Gabe Cinquegrana at Post 457 in Phelps, NY.**

and "always helps with our needs," including getting other volunteers involved, especially The American Legion Family. "He's great; honestly, he's like a staff member."

When the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily shut down Canandaigua's volunteer program last year, Cinquegrana continued to work in the voluntary service office, assisting staff, keeping other volunteers informed and coordinating the delivery of some 3,000 snacks and meals to front-line staff.

"He does everything from administrative tasks to spe-

cial projects; sometimes we have unique needs that are laid on the table, whether it's from recreation therapy or a wish from a hospice patient, and he says, 'Hey, I've got a guy for that' or 'I know how we can meet that need,'" said Regina Deck of Canandaigua's voluntary service office.

"The veterans are so fortunate to have him around, they really are," said Hank Riegel, recreation therapy supervisor at VA Finger Lakes Healthcare System.

For Cinquegrana, the award is "a validation" that his services and assistance "do indeed make a differ-

ence." "That's really what's important to me."

When Cinquegrana asked his first boss out of college what he wanted him to do, the answer was "find a need and fill it."

"I've always carried that forward," he said. "And it's the same in the community; there's so many things that take place in the community, so many organizations that are out there, so many needs that community members have, and I think it's important for everyone to find what those needs are and to fill those needs. And that's what I do."



## LEGIONNAIRES OUT IN FORCE FOR MEMORIAL DAY

# Vets Return to Traditions As COVID Restrictions Ease



*Utica Post 229 members render salutes as high school musician Julian Egelston plays taps during Memorial Day ceremonies at the World War I/World War II/Korean War Memorial -- one of eight monuments around the city where Legionnaires conducted a pilgrimage of wreath-laying.*

More and more American Legion Posts across the state were able to return to Memorial Day traditions as pandemic restrictions eased.

### UTICA 'PILGRIMAGE'

Utica Post 229 Commander **Bill Sequin** led a pilgrimage of wreath-laying at eight war memorials around the city. He was joined by members of the Post, the Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion, along with the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Along the way, Utica Mayor Robert M. Palmieri and Congresswoman Claudia Tenney joined the tribute.

### BRIARCLIFF MANOR SURPRISES CMDR.

In Briarcliff Manor, members of American Legion Post 1054 not only gave tribute to service men and women who gave their all, but also honored long-time Post Commander **Lawrence I. Reilly** with a surprise pre-



**Larry Reilly**

sentation of a Commander's Plaque and a "Paid-Up-For-Life" membership. Reilly is a 47-year member of the post and is in his 26th year as commander, Treasurer Mike Motta reported.

"In addition to his service to the American Legion, Larry has been a Chief, Deputy Chief, and top-responder for the Briarcliff Manor Fire Department."

### QUEENS EVENT HONORS VET

Not only did the annual American Legion Memorial Day Ceremony return to Boulevard Gardens, Woodside, Queens after a

one-year hiatus due to COVID-19, but it also included honors for Vietnam vet **Robert C. Piazza**.

American Legion Post 1836 Commander **Alan Armand Feuer** reminded the audience that the zip code within Boulevard Gardens lost more soldiers than any other zip code across the country during the Vietnam War. "As we observe Memorial Day every year, families remember their fallen loved ones every day," Feuer noted. "Children without parents, gold star mothers and fathers, spouses and siblings - they can still hear

*Continued on next page.*



# MEMORIAL DAY

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*Post 1836 Legionnaire Robert Piazza was inducted into the NYS Senate Veterans Hall of Fame by Senator Michael Gianaris during Memorial Day ceremonies in Queens.*



the voices of those that they lost. And it is up to us, to hear these families, offer support and express our highest gratitude”.

During the ceremony wreaths were placed at the Boulevard Gardens’ main archway, and Legionnaire **Robert Piazza** was inducted into the NYS Senate Veterans Hall of Fame by Senator Michael Gianaris. Assemblyman Brian Barnwell presented a NYS Assembly Citation and Post Commander Feuer awarded Piazza with an American Legion Officer Award in recognition his devoted services to the Legion during his term as Post Adjutant and as Service Officer. Piazza also received an American Legion Citation for Meritorious Service.

**HERE ARE A** few other Memorial Day observances,

as reported by news media.

## LONG ISLANDERS MARCH

Long Islanders marched through a number of hamlets to honor the fallen. As in other communities, Freeport Legionnaires joined first responders for ceremonies. Legionnaire **Steven Latus**, 73, an Air Force veteran, told *Newsday* that Memorial Day was a chance for people to think about how vital military service is to our everyday lives.

**In Long Island’s Village of Island Park**, the Island Park American Legion hosted a parade on Memorial Day, attracting village officials, military personnel and other veterans.

**In Garden City**, American Legion William Bradford Turner Post 265 led

ceremonies at the village memorial. Post Commander **Frank Tauches**, former village mayor, introduced local officials and told the crowd that “between Memorial Day and the Fourth of July he will be coordinating outreach with the local schools and presenting American Legion awards to students of the Garden City Union Free School District,” *Garden City News* reported. He spoke highly of the efforts of students to welcome him, and the continued relationship between the local veterans and the school community.

Mayor **Cosmo Veneziale** thanked Commander Tauches and the American Legion.

“I thank every member of the William Bradford Turner American Legion Post #265 for their service to the country,” he said. “We

as Americans can freely worship, freely speak, freely assemble, freely publish and freely petition the government. This is only possible due to the courage, bravery and sacrifice of our service men and women.”

## NORTH COUNTRY POSTS LEAD PARADE

In Waddington, on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence River, members of Champion-Hobkirk American Legion Post 420, its Sons of the American Legion and Madrid American Legion helped lead a parade to the Four Corners monument, where a Monday morning ceremony and silent salute took place. The event, with a chicken barbecue that followed, was organized by Post 420 Commander **Michael McIntosh**, who facilitated

*Continued on next page.*



# MEMORIAL DAY

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**Madison-Morrisville American Legion Post 1556, along with the village and Madison Fire Department, dedicated a new Veteran and First Responder Memorial on Memorial Day . Photo / Village of Madson.**

the ceremony with New York American Legion Vice Commander **John McCullough**, *ny350.com* reported.

In his ceremony speech, McCullough reflected on the sentiment that Memorial Day isn't just a day off. "This weekend is why we, the many, gather to honor our fallen heroes, the few, who so willingly defended our brothers and sisters and our shore."

## NEW MEMORIAL IN MADISON

Madison-Morrisville American Legion Post 1556, along with the village and Madison Fire Department, dedicated a new Veteran and First Responder Memorial on Memorial Day, the *Mid-York Weekly* reported. Speakers included Town of

Madison Supervisor **Ron Bono**, Village of Madison Mayor **Barb Clark**, Post Commander **Mike Crawford** and Post Chaplain **Bill Batchelor**. Music was provided by the Madison High School Band.

The memorial is located in Firemen Legion Field.

## NEWBURGH THANKS LEGION POST

In Newburgh, Town Supervisor **Gil Piaquadio** expressed his gratitude to American Legion Post 1420, along with other organizations, for participating in the town's annual Memorial Day event on Sunday "to honor and remember those in the U.S. military who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation," the

*Mid-Hudson News* reported. Rain didn't stop the parade, but the ceremonies that followed moved indoors.

## RAIN DOESN'T DETER FOREST HILLS POST

Even though the traditional Forest Hills Memorial Day parade was canceled for the second year in a row, Forest Hills American Legion Continental Post 1424 held a Memorial Day Weekend ceremony on May 30 at the Remsen Family Cemetery on Trotting Course Lane in Forest Hills, *qns.com* reported.

"Post Commander **Michael Arcati**, a former Navy officer, opened the ceremony in front of about 100 veterans, community members, and elected officials who had

gathered despite the cold, rainy weather," the Queens news outlet reported.

## JOHNSON CITY POST HOSTS SEVERAL EVENTS

In Johnson City, the Frank A. Johnson American Legion organized several Memorial Day ceremonies, *BinghamtonHomepage.com* reported. The first event took place at 8 a.m. at the Calvary Cemetery. Following that, they relocated to Floral Park. To wrap up the day, they ended at the Veterans Memorial Park on Main Street.

## STUDENTS HELP PLACE FLAGS IN COPENHAGEN

In Copenhagen, American Legion Post 723 placed flags on the graves of deceased veterans at Riverside  
*Continued on next page.*

# Sampson Selected to Become First State Veterans Cemetery



Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery, located at the site of the former Sampson Naval Training Station and Sampson Air Force Base in Romulus, Seneca County, has been chosen by a State-appointed committee as the site of New York's first State Veterans Cemetery.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the deci-

sion on Memorial Day. The action brings New York one step closer to establishing a permanent, state-owned resting place to honor the service and sacrifice of New York's veterans and their family members.

Sampson is already a functioning veterans cemetery. An initial 15 acres of the site have been devel-

oped, providing for 6,000 planned grave sites and columbarium niches. The full 162-acre site provides the capacity to ultimately accommodate more than 80,000 grave sites.

The Division of Veterans' Services will now work to determine the 10-year costs of operating and maintaining the Sampson cemetery.

Following that step, the Division of the Budget and the Office of State Comptroller must determine whether such funds exist. When both of those steps have been completed, DVS will be able to apply to the National Cemetery Administration to receive federal funding for the establishment of the first state veterans cemetery.

## MEMORIAL DAY

continued from previous page

Cemetery on Thursday, May 27, with the help of second grade students at Copenhagen Central, *nny360.com* reported. The tradition of the students helping with placing flags is a long one, with COVID breaking the 20-year streak last year.

Post Commander **Lester Beyer** noted. "They'll remember how they honored veterans and set flags on their graves. It'll stick with you later in life and remind you that veterans are worth honoring."

### TONAWANDA POST VISITS SEVERAL SITES

In Tonawanda, members of Milton J. Brounshidle American Legion Post 205 held several wreath-laying

ceremonies at sites in the area on Memorial Day to honor the country's fallen service members, the *Ken-Ton Bee* reported.

Erie County American Legion Commander **Wayne Sorrentino** was caught on camera saluting a wreath laid at a veterans grave at Failing Cemetery on Delaware Road in the Town of Tonawanda.

### CASSADAGA POST AT 10 CEMETERIES

In Cassadaga, American Legion Post 1280's honor guard conducted ceremonies at 10 area cemeteries to honor the veterans buried there. At each stop, Past Post Commander **Bruce Kaus** spoke to those attending

about the importance of the service; each ceremony also included a 21-gun salute.

### 3 POSTS PARTICIPATE IN HUNTINGTON

In the Town of Huntington, three American Legion Posts participated in a Memorial Day observance held on Sunday, May 30, in the Town Hall. They included Greenlawn American Legion Post 1244 (Commander **Donna Boyle**); Huntington American Legion Post 360 (Commander **Andrew Brady**), and Northport American Legion Post 694 (Commander **William McKenna**).

The ceremony attracted a number of local and state officials as well as veterans.

### LONG LAKE POST LEADS PARADE, CEREMONY

*The Adirondack Daily Enterprise* reported that Memorial Day parades were canceled in Lake Placid and Saranac Lake this year, but not in Long Lake – where Long Lake American Legion Post 650 led the traditional parade and commemoration, with the support of the Town Parks and Recreation Department.

"Local Commander **John Hosley** led the ceremony by leading a wreath drop at the Long Lake bridge, followed by color guard visits to the Doughboys Statue and the Long Lake Cemetery for the decoration of the graves with a tribute at the Vietnam memorial," the newspaper reported.



# ONEIDA COUNTY ELECTS FIRST WOMAN COMMANDER



**Oneida County Commander Lucy Burgard, with Vice Commander Ed Jackson.** Photos by Robert Stronach.

Lucy Burgard of Lee Center made history on June 12, becoming the first woman to lead the Oneida County American Legion in the organization's 102-year history.

Commander Burgard was elected and installed during the Legion's County Convention, held at Utica Post 229 in North Utica, home post to outgoing County Commander Jim George. The convention drew delegates from American

Legion Posts across Oneida County.

A 24-year member of The American Legion, Burgard is past commander of Lee Legion Post 1794. She has served in a variety of positions on the post and county levels. Her charitable project for her year as county commander is to support the military rehab program at Sitrin Health Care in Utica.

She herself has an extensive military career. After

growing up on a farm near York, Pennsylvania, Lucy joined the Air Force at age 18. She served 33 years in 14 countries in transportation and supply before retiring as a senior master sergeant (E-8). Then she continued working for the Air Force as a civilian employee at the former Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome. Among other things, she helped install security sensors and cameras at military installations in

the U.S. and in Sicily.

Lucy likes to challenge herself — she ran the 15K Boilermaker Road Race 16 times.

Lucy is a graduate of Community College of the Air Force, Mohawk Valley Community College in Utica, SUNYIT in Marcy (now SUNY Poly) with a bachelor's in engineering, and Regis University in Colorado with a master's in business management.



## DESPITE RACISM, WWII VET GLAD TO BE HERE

The *Buffalo News* profiled World War II army veteran Paul Woods on April 26.

The 98-year-old Woods is the WWII coordinator for Jesse Clipper American Legion Post 430.

Woods barely escaped injury when his truck was blown up while he was delivering ammunition to the front lines in Australia dur-

ing World War II, reporter Deidre Williams wrote.

"He also was one of the troops deployed from a landing craft in an amphibious invasion of the Philippines... Woods earned three Bronze Stars and a Philippine Liberation Medal... But those accomplishments still were not enough for the Black veteran to secure a seat on a

bus headed to his home state of Alabama after the war."

In a February 2021 ceremony, Mayor Byron W. Brown and Rep. Brian Higgins honored Woods with a flag and proclamations.

"It was worth it," Woods said. "After all this segregation stuff I went through, I'd rather be here in America than anywhere else."



# BLACK D-DAY VET RECEIVES PURPLE HEART

## ARMY GENERAL PRESENTS MEDAL AFTER 77-YEAR WAIT

by JEFF STOFFER | *The American Legion*

Osceola “Ozzie” Fletcher spent much of his childhood in foster care after his father died in 1925 from the effects of mustard-gas exposure in World War I. A portion of that childhood was spent in a home near Brooklyn’s historic Fort Hamilton, established in 1825 at a location of strategic New York City protection since the American Revolution.

Friday, on the eve of Juneteenth, history continued to unfold on the post when Fletcher, now a 99-year-old Black former World War II private, longtime police officer and high school teacher, was in uniform, among a throng of dignitaries, to receive a long-overlooked Purple Heart for wounds he received in a German missile attack on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. James C. McConville presented the medal in the Fort Hamilton Community Club where Fletcher’s family, friends, police officers, veterans, media, documentary filmmakers and elected officials gathered to salute a man who waited more than 77 years for this moment.

“Soldiers tragically died that day, but Ozzie was thrown to safety and survived,” General McConville told the crowd. “He suffered multiple wounds that day, including a head gash that



**Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville (left) presents a long-overdue Purple Heart to “Ozzie” Fletcher. Photo by Todd Maisel.**

still serves as a reminder.”

The journey to obtain Fletcher’s Purple Heart “has been long and twisted,” his daughter Jacqueline Streets told the media following the June 18 presentation.

For years, Streets and other family members had been searching for ways to verify that Fletcher, who served in

the 254th Port Battalion, was wounded while transporting supplies into Normandy during the largest amphibious invasion in military history. His five children all knew the story, as told in the scar on their father’s head. Medical records from his wounds were, frustratingly to the family, lost in the 1973

fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Streets explained.

A petition effort was launched. Veterans advocates in New York City tried to help. Then, in 2019, *New York Daily News* reporter Carla Roman did her first big story for the newspaper, on Fletcher and his experiences as a Black soldier in the segregated Army during World War II.

The newspaper story caught the interest of Rylan Soref and Henry Roosevelt, who were wrapping up a documentary short film on the Normandy invasion, titled “Sixth of June,” which was released in June. They discovered that Fletcher is a longtime member of Wil-  
*Continued on next page.*



**“Ozzie” Fletcher**

# First Black Woman Leads Carthage American Legion



Janice Gravely is the new commander of Carthage American Legion Post 789 -- "the first black person and woman to receive that honor in the post's 101-year history," *WWNY News 7* reported May 7.

"It epitomizes Martin Luther King's dream, that people judge you based on the content on your character not on the color of your skin," she told the media outlet.

The TV quoted her: "It's

not about being black, white, woman, it's about what you contribute to the organization, what you're willing to do, and people recognize that and they will reward you accordingly."

The news report noted

that Gravely served in the Army for 28 years working in cyber defense. After retiring in 2018, she joined the Legion. Gravely has worked as an historian and is in the process of writing a book about past members.

## D-DAY VETERAN

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liam E. Sheridan American Legion Police Post 1059 in Brooklyn. They reached out, interviewed him on camera and were specifically struck by "the reverence he has for the French people and how they simply treated him differently," Roosevelt explained. "They didn't treat him as a Black soldier. They treated him as an American soldier. In the current times, I can't think of a stronger message."

During D-Day 75th anniversary commemorations in 2019, the filmmakers showed an early cut of *Sixth of June* to Gen. Mark Mil-

ley – now chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – and later brought up the issue of Fletcher's Purple Heart.

"That's when our luck changed," Streets explained. "It took the film crew to help us out, to step over that wall, and go to the top. Gen. Mark Milley looked at it and said, 'You're right. This isn't right.' He set his staff on it."

A two-month investigation into Battle of Normandy wounds received by Fletcher and 101-year-old former 494th Port Battalion Chief Warrant Officer Johnnie Jones of Louisiana concluded that both Black

veterans had been wounded by enemy attack; Jones had been hit in the neck with shrapnel coming ashore on D-Day. In April, the Pentagon announced that each would be presented with a Purple Heart.

"Ozzie's story isn't that it's just unique," Roosevelt said. "It's under-told. He served his country at a time when his country didn't necessarily serve him well. Ozzie's story is an integral part of our collective history."

General McConville told the crowd at Fort Hamilton that he had just returned from Europe where U.S.-

allied military leaders and others there still express gratitude for sacrifices made by Americans during World War II. "Where the American soldier went – where Ozzie and his fellow soldiers went – freedom followed, and freedom remains today. Many, many over there appreciate the heroism and the efforts of great soldiers like Ozzie. This is the greatest generation. This is the generation that grew up during the Depression. And when our country was attacked, they raised their right hand and said, 'Send me.'"



# VAHALLA POST ANSWERS CALL TO HELP DONATIONS SERVE NEARLY 150 VETS AT KRISTYN'S CLOSET



*Valhalla Post members pose with staff at Kristyn's Closet in Mount Vernon after delivering needed supplies.*

On a bright sunny morning, Valhalla American Legion Post 1038 answered a call from the Mount Vernon Veterans Service Agency to start a veterans' resource known as Kristyn's Closet, reported Service Agency

Commissioner Viviana M. DeCohen.

"This is a free resource to all those who have served."

Commander John Creskey, his wife Emmy, who is Auxiliary president, and a couple of members "came

with a truck load of items like toasters, crock pots, clothing, blankets, knitted hats and scarves, and non-perishable food to the Veterans Service Agency located at City Hall, Mount Vernon," she noted.

"They unloaded the very large bags; they kept on coming! The items that Post 1038 provided, practically filled our space! Their contribution assisted in the serving of close to 150 veterans."

## EAST AMHERST POST HOSTS DISASTER TRAINING

EAST AMHERST -- After a year and a half of no large-scale training due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 200 National Guard soldiers and airmen from New York and New Jersey trained together to respond

to Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear incidents April 16-17. And A. J. Jureck American Legion Post 1672 played host to a large part of the training.

The National Guard team -- part of the FEMA Region

II Homeland Response Force -- is trained to find and rescue victims and provide security, decontamination, medical treatment and command and control in support of local first responders during the first

hours and days of a natural or manmade disaster.

The team spent the week-end honing their skills on the grounds of American Legion Post 1672 and the neighboring Erie County Fire Center.



### MATTYDALE RIDERS PRESENT \$500 TO NY DIRECTOR

*State Riders Director Ed "Cowboy" Morris receives \$500 check from Chapter 1832 members in Mattydale on Feb. 7. From left: Lisa Yurtserver, Tina Martin, Director Morris, Chapter Director Michael LeMay, Marty Martin, Sandra Dar-mody. The check represents proceeds from a meat raffle benefitting the NY Director's Fund. Photo by Debbie Moris.*



# LEGION HELPS VETERAN MOM WITHOUT HEAT

"It's What We Do."

That's the motto for the Rockland County American Legion Family, County Commander Patrick Casper noted after The American Legion successfully advocated on behalf of a veteran with two children who had no heat in her Valley College home.

The result was that the veteran's furnace was serviced, and heat restored.

After learning of the veteran's plight, Department Adjutant Jim Casey reached out to Master-at-Arms Richard Calbo, who in turn contacted County Commander Casper late Friday, Jan. 22.

"On Saturday morning... I then reached out to Izzy Quintana, Post 310



**Rockland County Commander Patrick Casper with veteran at her home.**

Adjutant and Rockland County Judge Advocate who reached out to his Post Commander," Casper reported.

"Post 310 Commander John Gray responded to her

home and was able to assess the boiler was 15 years old and had never been serviced. He did leave her a portable heater and reached out to a couple of HVAC repair people who were

not able to respond. I then reached out to Sam Varano, the owner of Ace Mechanical here in Suffern, and he responded and was able to get her heat back on."

## Smith Post Donates to Rome Rescue Mission



**ROME -- Henry P. Smith Post 24 donated \$1,000 to the Rome Rescue Mission on Feb. 15, 2021. Post Commander Lenny Dutton presented the check to Rescue Mission Executive Director Matt Miller. FROM LEFT ARE: John Conners, Post 1st Vice; Anthony Smith, Post Treasurer; David Riley, Post Adjutant; Matt Miller, Rome Rescue Mission; Lenny Dutton, Post Commander; Michael Grogan, Post Chaplain, and Paul Jensen, Post 2nd Vice.**



# BILL WOULD HONOR WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS VET

## Buffalo Post Office Would Bear Legionnaire's Name

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) announced May 16 the introduction of H.R. 2142, which designates the Central Park Post Office at 170 Manhattan Avenue Buffalo as the "Indiana Hunt-Martin Post Office Building" in honor of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) veteran.

Indiana Hunt-Martin was part of the first African American WAC unit and the only to serve in Europe during WWII. She was a longtime member of Buffalo American Legion Post 1586, an all-women's post.

Hunt-Martin, who passed away September 21, 2020 at the age of 98, was a member of the Six Triple Eight Central Postal Directory Battalion, which was responsible for processing and routing undelivered mail in World War II to restore vital communications between families in the United States and Americans stationed in Europe. From 1978 until her passing, Hunt-Martin frequented the United States Postal Service office at 170 Manhattan Avenue at least once a week to purchase stamps, pick up mail, and send



*Indiana Hunt-Martin*

letters. At the end of her life, when told she would have a post office named after her, she was excited and honored.

Back then she saw racism firsthand as she witnessed separate drinking fountains and segregated railroad cars, the congressman's press release pointed out. "They endured sexism and racism while serving in the Six Triple Eight. Throughout her life she made it clear that no amount of discrimination she faced would stop her from serving her country. Her bravery helped to pave the way for future generations of African American female soldiers."

Indiana Hunt-Martin graduated from Niagara Falls High School in 1940 and worked at the Carborundum Company before joining the Women's Army Corps on Sept. 15, 1944.

She was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army on Nov. 10, 1945. After the war, Hunt-Martin worked in New York City for the State Department of Labor before being transferred to the Labor Department's Niagara Falls office in 1949 and later the Buffalo office in 1964. She worked for the Labor Department for a total of 41 years, before her retirement in 1987.

Higgins is also an original cosponsor on H.R. 1012, the Six Triple Eight Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2021. The bill would honor the work of the 6888th by awarding those in the unit the Congressional Gold Medal.

Hunt-Martin was a Grand Marshal in the National Memorial Day parade in Washington, DC in 2019, 77 years after she first visited DC on her way to basic training at Fort Oglethorpe in Georgia. She is laid to rest at the historic Oakwood Cemetery in Niagara Falls, New York.

The idea to rename the Post Office for Hunt-Martin was brought to Congressman Higgins by Korea Defense Veteran Sandi Williams who serves as President and Founder of United Veterans of Buffalo. The bill is supported by several other individuals and organizations including the Bennett-Wells American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1780, the Johnetta R. Cole AMVETS Post No. 24, the Jesse Clipper American Legion Post 430, New York State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes and others.

# MEMORIAL HONORS CHINESE AMERICAN VETERANS

## NY CITY DESIGNATES IT FOR LANDMARK STATUS



*Department Vice Commander Gabe Mui and National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford place a wreath at the Kimlau War Memorial in New York City on May 22. Mui is a member of Kimlau Post.*

by *THE AMERICAN LEGION*

In the early 1960s, American Legion Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 wanted New York City to honor the Chinese Americans who'd served in the U.S. military. The post put its money where its mouth was, putting up the money to hire architect Poy G. Lee to design such a memorial and cover the cost of construction.

In 1962, the Kimlau War Memorial was dedicated in Chinatown's Kimlau Square, one-third of a mile from Post 1291. The memorial, square and post all are named for Lt. Benjamin Ralph Kimlau, a New York City Chinese American who served as a U.S. Army Air Force bomber pilot in World War II. On March 5, 1944, Kimlau's bomber was attacked by Japanese forces and crashed near Los Negros

Island, killing the entire crew.

The post gave the memorial to New York City, which eventually turned it over to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. The memorial is in need of repair, which may be on the way.

In May New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to conduct a hearing to consider designating the memorial as a city landmark, and then on June 22, city officials voted in favor of the landmark designation. That means Kimlau War Memorial is New York City's first individual landmark that relates specifically to Chinese American history and culture.

The nearly 19-foot-tall memorial honors Chinese Americans who died in U.S. military service during World War II. A granite

arch, it features both traditional Chinese and modernist elements. It is inscribed in both Chinese and English with the words, "In memory of Americans of Chinese Ancestry who lost their lives in the defense of freedom and democracy." Benches sit on each side of the arch.

Past National Commander Fang Wong, a member of Kimlau Post, said the consideration of the memorial for landmark status was "great news that just came out of the sky." He also said it coincided perfectly with a visit from National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford, who made a stop at the memorial for a wreath laying during visits to New York and New Jersey.

During a ceremony at the wreath laying, Oxford said he was "delighted" New York City was considering

designating the Kimlau War Memorial as a landmark.

He also addressed an issue Wong felt was important: recent violence against Asian Americans. "The anti-Asian attacks that we have been seeing across the country have been absolutely deplorable. There is simply no acceptable explanation for it," Oxford said. "When we discuss Asian Americans, it's important to realize that the Asian description is an adjective, because they are 100-percent American. They are leaders in business, culture, academia, medicine, sports, public service and just about every profession that you can imagine.

"I share the dream of Martin Luther King Jr. that we start judging people by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin."



## IAN CHUNG IS STATE ORATORIAL CHAMPION



*Ian Chung (left), a freshman at Vestal Senior High School in Vestal, is The American Legion New York State Oratorical Champion for 2021, Oratorical Chairman Anthony Paternostro announced. FROM LEFT: Ian Chung and finalists Riley Meckley, Abigail Christopher, Rachel Yorke, Maya Segal. Ian was sponsored by North-East Post 1645, Broome County, 6th District, Zone 4.*

## ERIE COUNTY LEGION HELPS DISTRIBUTE FOOD



*The Erie County American Legion supported the food distribution efforts of Western New York Heroes Organization on Sunday May 23, reports Erie County Adjutant Jim Bojanowski. Food was distributed to 500 veteran families. Most of the American Legion Family volunteers are pictured with Christopher Kreiger, Sr., dressed in black, the president & CEO of WNY Heroes.*

## NEWLY ORDAINED PRIEST IS ERIE COUNTY CHAPLAIN



*Front Row from left: Joseph Porempski, James Bojanowski, Father Michael Johnson, Gary Wald, Thomas O'Connell, and Bill Miskell. Second Row from left: Nelson Oldfield, Tom Deinzer, Fred Pask, Anthony Solina, John Siefert, and Jake Schu. Photo by Marlene Oldfield.*

Members of the Erie County American Legion attended the first mass of newly ordained Catholic priest Michael Johnson on

Sunday June 6, 2021, Erie County Adjutant Jim Bojanowski reports.

Father Johnson is 1st vce commander of Depew

Post 1528 and now the Erie County Chaplain for the 2021-2022 American Legion year.

The Erie County Ameri-

can Legion purchased four liturgical vestments to mark the occasion and presented them after the mass.



# 'WELCOME HOME' TRIBUTE HONORS WWI VETS

## 5100 DECEASED BROUGHT BY SHIP TO NY HARBOR & NJ



*National Commander Bill Oxford at the Homecoming 2021 ceremony at Cypress Hills National Cemetery in Brooklyn.*

by HENRY HOWARD, *The American Legion*

Solemn ceremonies in New Jersey and New York on May 23 paid tribute to tens of thousands of American servicemembers who made the ultimate sacrifice more than a century ago.

Homecoming '21 commemorated the return of 44,000 American troops whose remains were transported back home from the battlefields of Europe. Specifically, the event honored the USAT Wheaton, which arrived in New York Harbor on May 23, 1921.

On that day, President Warren Harding led a national commemoration in Hoboken, N.J., to welcome home the 5,100 fallen Americans returning aboard

the USAT Wheaton and to pay tribute to all the nation's returning war dead.

This year, American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford was among those attending the ceremony on the same pier, marking the Wheaton's return.

**Among those representing the Department of New York were Department Adjutant James Casey; Past National Commander Fang Wong, with wife Barbara; and Past National Vice Commander V. James Troiola (who also is candidate for national commander for 2022-2023).**

"Just like those who arrived here 100 years ago on

the USAT Wheaton – we don't celebrate their demise. But we do celebrate their lives," Oxford said. "These heroes, which included men and women of every race and faith, lived lives worth celebrating and remembering. They all loved America enough to die for it. The Wheaton was the ultimate melting pot for people who made the ultimate sacrifice."

Oxford noted that the end of World War I ushered in The American Legion, now the nation's largest veterans service organization. Many World War I veterans were poisoned and blinded by chemical gas, or lost their lives due to illnesses caused

by unsanitary conditions or diseases like influenza.

"Though the veterans of our first world war are no longer among us, we must never forget their sacrifice," he said. "How they died wasn't nearly as important as to why they died. They died for a cause greater than themselves. They died so others could be free."

American Gold Star Mothers also was formed in the immediate aftermath of World War I.

"Our organization was founded by mothers whose children died serving in World War I," said Cindy Tatum, the group's president.

*Continued on next page.*



**National Commander-Candidate Vincent James Troiola (right) poses with National Commander Bill Oxford (center) and New Jersey National Executive Committeeman Chuck Robbins, following the tribute to deceased service members brought by ship to New York Harbor and the pier in Hoboken, N.J.**

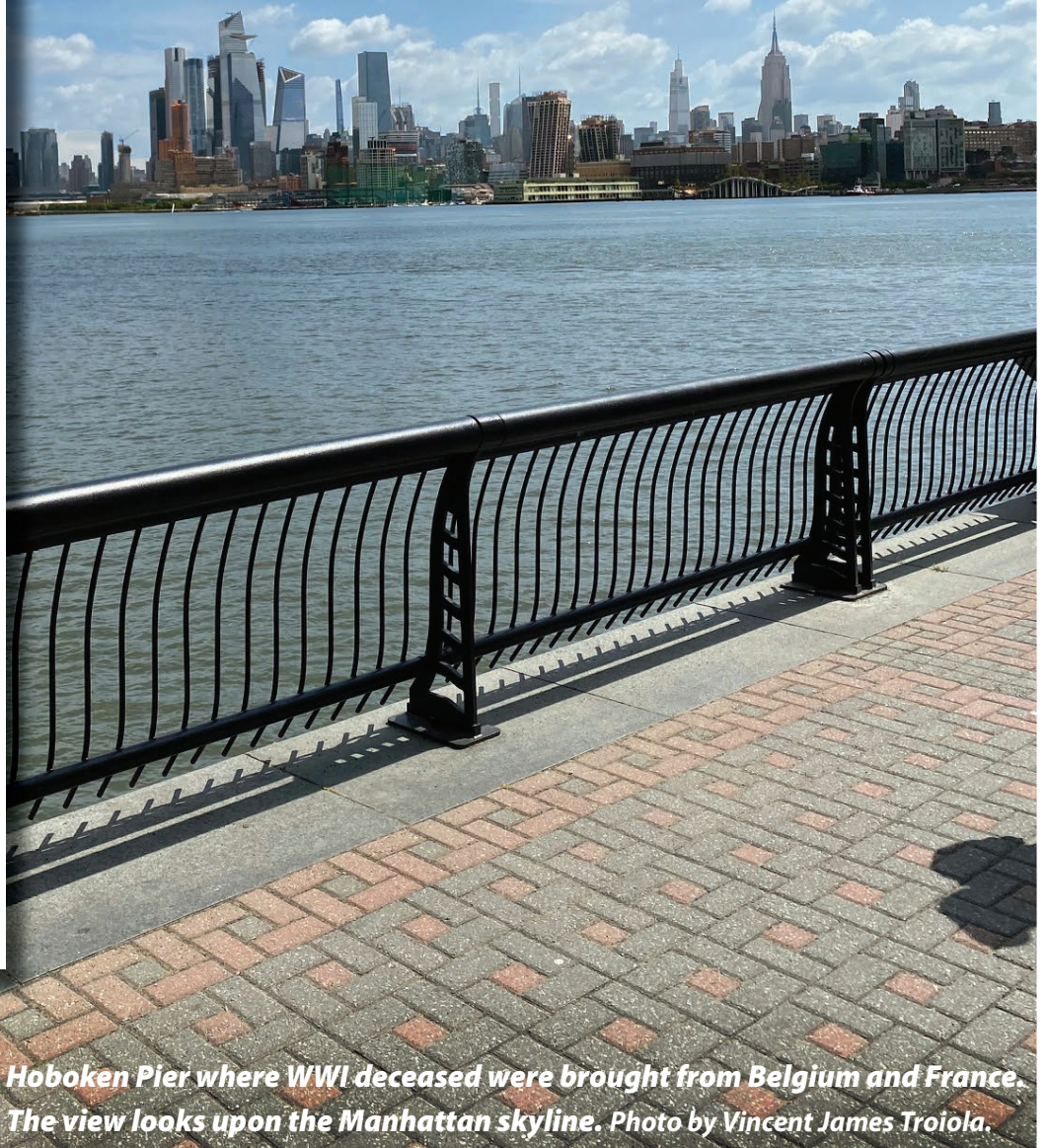
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“Our current members share a deep and unbreakable bond with those mothers of a hundred years ago. We hope Americans everywhere will join us in remembering.”

Just like 100 years ago, the ceremony included a second session in New York. Oxford also addressed the crowd there, noting that those aboard the Wheaton were just part of the story.

“We remember not just our fallen who arrived home on the Wheaton,” he said. “We remember those who arrived home in other vessels. We remember those who were never recovered and those who were buried in our beautiful cemeteries here and abroad.

“As those of us who served in Vietnam often say to one another, ‘Welcome Home.’”



**Hoboken Pier where WWI deceased were brought from Belgium and France. The view looks upon the Manhattan skyline. Photo by Vincent James Troiola.**



## DEPARTMENT OF NY HONORS POLICE OFFICER OF YEAR



*Town of Tonawanda Police Officer Julia Taylor is shown receiving the New York State American Legion's Law and Order Officer of the Year Award in February from Department Commander Michael McDermott, left, and Department Law-and-Order Chairman David Riley. She was honored for saving the life of a stabbing victim. Taylor was nominated by Milton J. Brounshidle American Legion Post 205.*

## BAUMGARTNER NAMED LEGIONNAIRE OF THE YEAR



**Wayne Baumgartner**

TONAWANDA – Department Commander Michael McDermott honored Air Force veteran Wayne Baumgartner, a member of Milton J. Brounshidle American Legion Post 205, as the 2020 Department Legionnaire of the Year during ceremonies in February.

The *Ken-Ton Bee* reported

that Brounshidle Post Commander Ted Balbierz said Baumgartner volunteered countless hours to coordinate and plan events for the post, supporting the pillars of the American Legion: veterans affairs and rehabilitation, national security, Americanism, and children and youth. Baumgartner

served in Vietnam and Germany. He was honorably discharged in 1969.

Baumgartner has served as post commander, vice commander and adjutant. In addition to American Legion functions, Baumgartner chairs the Town of Tonawanda Community Emergency Response Team.

## DEPEW POST SALUTES FLAG DAY COMMITMENT BY ELKS



*On the evening of June 14, 2021, Depew Post 1528 attended the Lancaster Elks Lodge No. 1478 Flag Day Service and presented the Elks with a Department of New York Red, White, and Blue Award for their many years of commitment to hosting a Flag Day Service, their sense of patriotism, and their support to veterans and the community. Pictured is Depew Post 1528 Past Commander Richard Bulman and the other Members of Depew Post presenting the Red, White, and Blue Award to Elks officers.*



## 2 FROM NY AMONG JR. SHOOTING FINALISTS

### 30 Youth Invited to National Air Rifle Championship

The American Legion 3-Position Junior Air Rifle Championship takes place in Colorado Springs, Colo., July 20-24 – and two youth from the Department of New York are among the top 30 finalists invited to compete.

The finalists include 15 shooters in the precision category and 15 in the

sporter category.

**Claudia Allen of Binghamton**, N.Y. (Binghamton Rifle Club) and **Ashley Mendez of Middletown**, N.Y. (American Legion Post 151) both shoot in the sporter category.

The air rifle marksmen ] shoot a .177 caliber air rifle in three positions: prone, standing and kneeling. The

top eight shooters in both categories advance to the championship round the morning of July 24.

One competitor wins the championship title in each category, along with a \$5,000 college scholarship provided by The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion.

A \$1,000 scholarship,

provided by the American Legion Auxiliary, is awarded to the second-place finisher in each category.

The precision and sporter champions will attend the American Legion National Convention in Phoenix in August to be honored alongside other American Legion youth program champions.

## MALTA PARK NAMED AFTER ZALOGA POST MEMBER

MALTA — Legionnaire David Wallingford received double honors in June, the *Schenectady Gazette* reported.

The Malta Memorial Park was renamed in his honor while State Senators Jim Tedisco and Daphne Jordan presented the Vietnam vet with the State Senate Liberty Medal for valor and service.

A retired Marine Corps captain, Wallingford is a two-time Purple Heart recipient (shot in the arm

and wounded in the leg with grenade scrapnel). He is a member of Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520 in Albany.

“Wallingford got up from his wheelchair and took to the microphone briefly to thank the dignitaries, his family, friends and civilians for coming out,” the newspaper reported. “His wife Helene, a naval lieutenant who Wallingford met at a hospital in Japan while he was rehabbing,

sat next to him.”

After Wallingford was honorably discharged in 1970, he went on to serve fellow veterans at the State Division of Veterans Affairs as a special assistant.

He also served on Friends of the New York State Military Museum, the town of Malta’s Veterans Committee, and as commander of Chapter 446 of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

The American Red

Cross named Wallingford its military hero of the year in 2017 for his work with veterans as a volunteer with the Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and Stratton VA Medical Center, and as executive director of the Marine Corps Coordinating Council, helping Marines with financial needs and scholarships at local colleges.

## LONG ISLAND PAPER SPOTLIGHTS POST 833’S DONNA KEARNEY

The *Long Island Advance* in March spotlighted several local women for their military service. Among them was Donna Kearney, 2018-2021

commander of James Ely Miller Post 833 in Smithtown. She served in the Army Reserves from 1986 to 1994.

During the Persian

Gulf War, she was called up to provide medical support at a hospital in Philadelphia and later at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

After returning from active duty, Kearney resumed her position as a NY City police officer, eventually retiring as a detective.



# ONEIDA COUNTY HONORS 100-YEAR-OLD MEMBER



*James Moses*