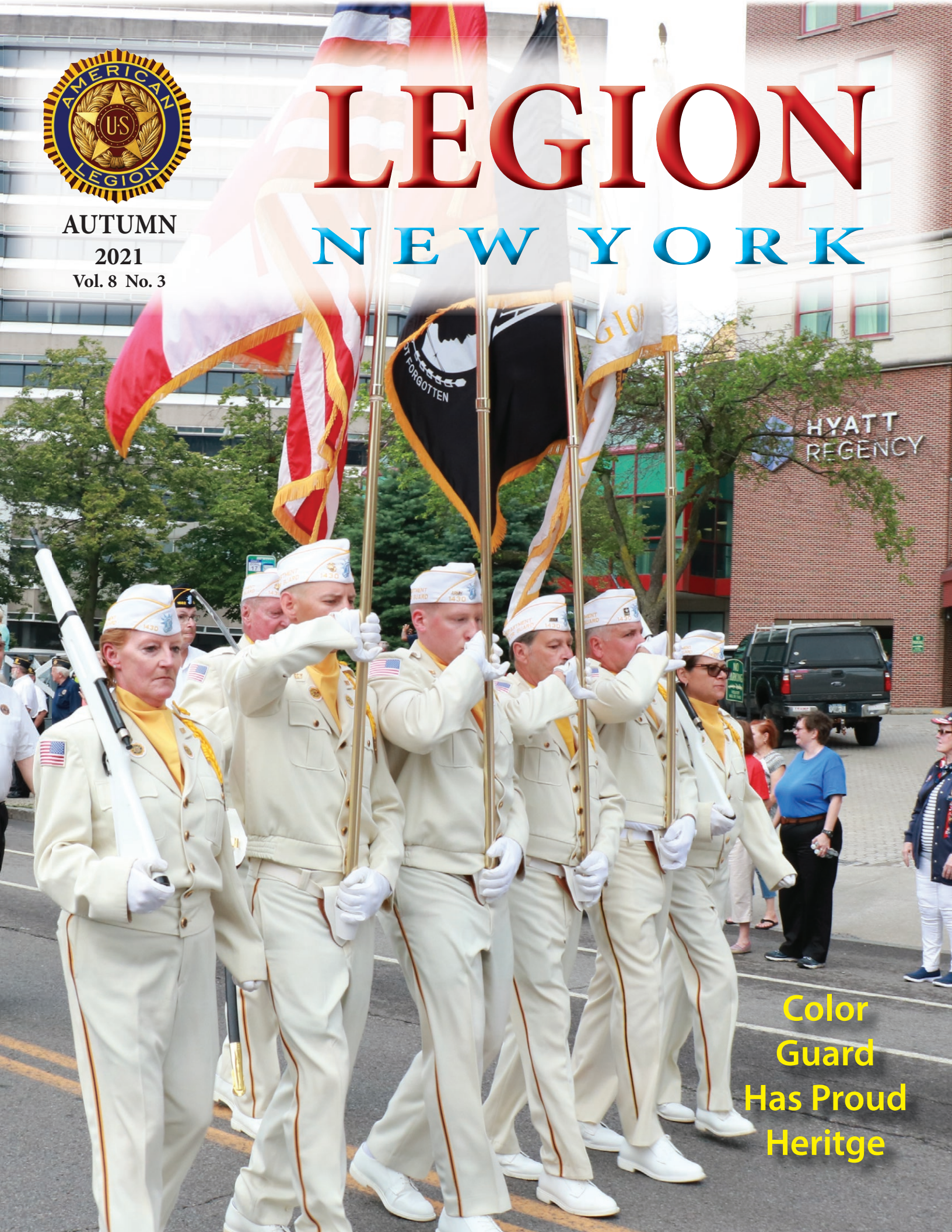




AUTUMN
2021
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LEGION

NEW YORK



Color
Guard
Has Proud
Heritage

LEGION NEW YORK

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SPECIAL 20TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR OUR SACRIFICES FOR FREEDOM

by FRANK LaMARSH

We had a solemn commemoration this year – the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on American soil.

Each of us has a searing memory of Sept. 11, 2001, when hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania countryside.

One of mine was the sudden realization that I now understood what my parents' generation felt when Pearl Harbor was attacked, propelling us into World War II.

It weighed on the whole country, bringing Americans together in spirit – just as it did 80 years later as the nation watched in shock the disaster unfolding at the World Trade Center towers. It propelled us into a war on terror.

I am so grateful to our American Legion Family across the Department of New York that led or participated in remembrance ceremonies on the 20th anniversary of 9/11. The Legion Fam-



Department Commander Frank LaMarsh

ily continues to support and express gratitude to our post-9/11 veterans and the men and women wearing our country's uniforms.

To all our veterans and their families -- thank you for your sacrifice and service, which safeguards our freedoms.

America is not just the land of the free and the home of the brave; it is the land of the free because of the brave.



COVER

The official Color Guard for the Department of New York has a proud heritage going back a half century, not to mention three generations of Legionnaires serving on the squad. See PAGE 4. Photo by Robert Stronach.

Erie County Legion Distributes Food to 1,100



A contingent from the Erie County American Legion Family helped distribute food to approximately 1,100 veterans' families on Sunday, October 10, 2021, Erie County Adjutant Jim Bojanowski reports. The Legion Family worked with the WNY Heroes organization, which obtained a federal grant to purchase the food.

Millerton Post Helps Host Special 'Thankyou' to Vets

Hundreds of local veterans and their guests received a free pasta dinner and access to important community resources at drive-through appreciation events hosted in October by State Sen. Sue Serino and Mental Health America of Dutchess County's Vet-2Vet Program. This year's dinners were served at **American Legion Post 178** in Millerton and VFW Post 170 in Poughkeepsie. In total, over 375 meals were served.

"Our veterans have made tremendous sacrifices for our country, and our com-



Millerton Post 178

munity, and these dinners have always been a small way for us to say 'thank you,' and remind them that they are a part of an incredibly grateful community," said Senator Serino. "...I thank both the American

Legion in Millerton and the VFW in Poughkeepsie for generously hosting these events, and I extend the same to our team of dedicated volunteers for all that they do to make these events a success."

Adam Roche, Director of the Dutchess County Division of Veterans Services said, "This great event allows our office to interact with local veterans and inform them on all the resources and services Dutchess County has to offer them..."

Anthony Kavouras, Program Manager of Mental Health America of Dutchess County Vet2Vet said, "This is just a little *thank you* for their service and a chance for the senator, myself and the County's VSO to meet and greet our wonderful Dutchess County Veterans."

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

Color Guard Has a Proud Heritage



Photos by R. Stronach.

The Department of New York Color Guard has been performing at Department and National events for 16 years, with a history going back 50 years. BELOW: Three generations: Dennis Weeks with daughter Tammy Bove and grandson Claude Hall IV.

by ROBERT STRONACH

The Department Color Guard that helped open the 2021 Department Convention July 29 has a proud heritage dating back a half century.

Color Guard Commander **Dennis Weeks** has been leading the team for 50 years – starting when it was the Marion Memorial Post 1930 Color Guard and later as the 7th District Color Guard. It wasn't until 15 years ago, in 2006, that the squad's performance caught the attention of former Department Adjutant Richard Pedro. The team had been winning awards at parade competitions and presenting the colors during the national commander's visits to the district. After the visitation that year, Pedro gathered



the team for a meeting and asked if they would like to be the Color Guard for the Department of New York. "Yeah!" shouted **Dean Weeks** (Dennis' brother), voicing the reaction of the entire team. They have been performing at National Conventions and Department events ever since.

One might say that the Color Guard also has a strong family heritage, start-

ing with Dennis and Dean, both Marine Corps Vietnam veterans.

When Dean became ill, the result of complications from exposure to Agent Orange, his niece (and Dennis' daughter), **Tammy Bove**, stepped up in 2013. In fact, Tammy noted, she proudly wears her uncle's uniform in tribute to Dean, who died in 2016.

Tammy is a former Marine herself, one of the first women corrections officers to serve at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

And now the team boasts three generations of the family. **Claude Hall IV** (Tammy's nephew and Dennis' grandson) is the most recent family member to don the color guard uniform. He is an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan.

Their formula for success? Attention to detail and looking good, Dennis said.

"We like to maintain a certain physique," the 79-year-old quipped.

Other Color Guard members are **Kevin Southcott**, **Dave Madison** and **Cliff Walters**.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION



Frank LaMarsh is sworn in as 2021-2022 Department Commander, relieving Michael McDermott, who spent a second year as Department Commander due to cancellations and restrictions caused by the pandemic.

Election of Commander Caps 3-Day Convention

Vietnam veteran Frank A. LaMarsh of Staten Island is the 2021-2022 Department Commander. His election and installation on July 31 took place at the end of the three-day Department Convention, held at Albany's Crowne Plaza Desmond Hotel.

Because of COVID restrictions when plans were finalized, the hybrid convention was limited to 100 attendees with proceedings streamed live online.

Enlisting in the U.S. Navy after high school, LaMarsh trained in construction and helped rebuild the Seabee base at Gulfport, Mississippi after it was destroyed by Hurricane Camille. He then

deployed to DaNang and later Bien Hoa, Vietnam. He was discharged from active duty in February 1972 and received his honorable discharge in 1975 after serving three years in the reserves.

A member of Richmond County's Gold Star Post 1365, LaMarsh has been in leadership roles at every level of The American Legion. He has served as post, county and district commander, as department vice commander, as delegate to the national convention, and as a member of the National Legislative Commission.

He also is a member of the Sons of the American Legion, along with four sons and four

grandsons. A member of the New York American Legion Press Association, LaMarsh has served as editor of his post newsletter as well as Richmond County's *Staten Island Legionnaire*.

LaMarsh married his high school sweetheart, Nancy, after returning from Vietnam. They raised five children and now have ten grandchildren.

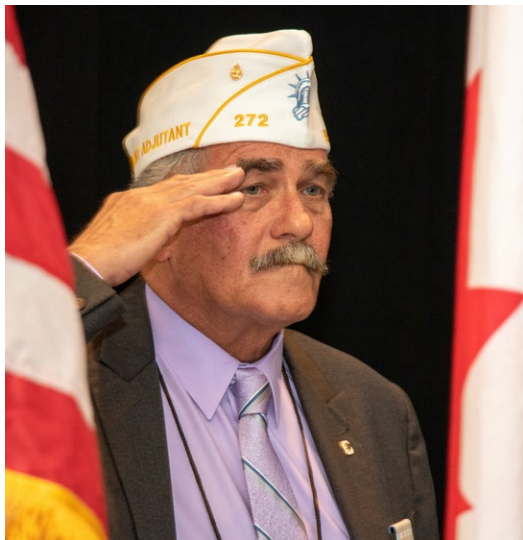
After studying computer engineering at Albert Merrell School, LaMarsh joined IBM as a customer engineer and then account representative, overseeing computer systems at Morgan Guaranty Trust Co. After 13 years with IBM, he joined Morgan Guaranty, serving in

various management positions, including managing the Customer Assistance Center Operations. When technology was outsourced to Computer Science Corporation (CSC), he joined CSC. After the merger with Chase Bank, he returned to J.P. Morgan Chase as a vice president.

His other affiliations include Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Salvation Army Advisory Board.

His military honors include National Defense Service Medal; Vietnam Civic Action Award, First Class; Vietnam Service Medal; Vietnam Campaign Medal; and the New York State Medal of Merit.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION



Photos by R. Stronach.

Department Adjutant James Casey (left) and Legionnaires render salutes at the 2021 hybrid Department Convention.

Recognition Remains Highlight of Convention

ALBANY -- Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy and Rensselaer County Executive Steven McLaughlin helped kick off the 2021 Department Convention by welcoming Legionnaires to the Capital District and offering accolades.

"As a combat vet, I salute you" for everything The American Legion does for veterans, McCoy said.

Pointing to the community's debt of gratitude for their sacrifices, McLaughlin said he was "proud and humbled to be in the presence of veterans."

Awards and recognition, usually a staple of the annual convention, were mostly limited to announcements rather than in-person presentations due to the restraints of a hybrid gathering.

However, a few honorees were present, including the *Legionnaire of the Year*.



David Cariddo receives the Legionnaire of the Year award from 2020-2021 Department Commander Michael McDermott..

"Wow!" **David Cariddo** said after he strode up to the podium to accept the award.

He summed up his over two decades of active mem-

bership this way: "I went into my Post twenty-one years ago to have a beer and this is what happens!"

His nomination by Ma-

hopac Post 1080 in Putnam County (9th District) pointed to his inspiring involvement in almost every aspect of The American Legion at the Post and County levels, including serving as county commander and three times as Post commander.

Other District Legionnaires of the Year, who were runners-up for the Department title, are:

- 1st District: **Michael McNerney.**
- 3rd District: **David Miller.**
- 4th District: **Allen Reece.**
- 5th District: **Rand Kennedy.**
- 7th District: **Dale Mosher.**
- 8th District: **James Koester.**
- 10th District: **Stephen Grogan.**

Continued on next page.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

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2021 Service Officer of the Year Dan Griffin is congratulated by then-Department Commander Mike McDermott.



Carrie Ahearn
2020 Service Officer of the Year

SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Also present were the Service Officers of the Year. Since last year's convention was cancelled, the Department took the opportunity to recognize both the 2020 and 2021 honorees, **Carrie Ahearn** of Yates County Veterans Service Agency, and **Dan Griffin** of Westchester County Veterans Service Agency, respectively.

Carrie's advice to vets seeking benefits: "I think every veteran should be in communication with a service officer" so that changes in life (marriage, divorce, children, health status) can be recorded in a timely manner. Hired in December 2017, Carrie is a member of Johnson Costello Post 355 in Penn Yan. She and her husband, Sean, have been operating the Penn Yan Diner since 2012. An Air

Force veteran, Carrie was an aircraft structural maintenance journeyman, serving both stateside and abroad (Korea and Saudi Arabia).

The 2021 recipient, Dan Griffin, is commander of White Plains Post 135. "This is an honor I am proud to receive, but I am even prouder of the work done by our office to assist Westchester County's Veteran population," Dan later commented.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer also bestowed his praise, noting: "During this past year and a half, Dan – like so many county employees – stepped up to show what true public service is. The job of the Veteran Service Agency is no easy task, and during a pandemic matters were complicated greatly. But Dan's work earned that award and the County is proud of him for it. Dan served his coun-

try admirably and now as a Veteran does the same for our county."

PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARD

The Department Public Relations Award went to Erie County Adjutant **Jim Bojanowski**, who was able to accept in person.

PR Chair Robert Stronach noted: "As long-time editor of the *Erie County Legion-Air*, Jim has consistently won first and second place awards from the NY American Legion Press Association. As Erie County adjutant, Jim has consistently promoted newsworthy activities and happenings coming out of Erie County posts and/or involving Erie County Legionnaires. A number of stories appearing on the Department website and in *Legion New York* magazine are the result of his unceasing efforts to publicize the Legion."

LAW AND ORDER AWARDS

Chair David Riley Sr. announced the First Responder and Law-and-Order awards, noting that they would be presented locally since the COVID restrictions prevented honorees from attending the hybrid convention.

- *Emergency Technician of the Year: Paul Herberger* of the Clarence Fire Department, Erie County, 8th District.

- *Police Department of the Year: Livingston County Sheriff's Department*, 7th District.

- *Emergency Squad of the Year: Dansville Ambulance Squad*, Livingston County, 7th District.

- *911 Dispatcher of the Year: Robyn P. Sweet* from the Columbia County 911 Call Center, 3rd District.

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DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

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A number of women Legionnaires attended the hybrid convention, which was streamed live via the Department website.

• *Firefighter of the Year:*
Kevin Niedermaier of Groveland Fire Service and Livingston County Emergency Management, 7th District.

• *Law Enforcement Officer of the Year:* **Sheriff Barry Virts** of Wayne County Sheriff's Department, 7th District.

SCOUTING OPPORTUNITY

Scouting has been going through change, and faced with slowdowns and shutdowns due to COVID, it is "at a critical juncture right now," Scouting Chair Steve Mataraza noted. He pointed to financial strains, and the adverse impact on recruiting with local units meeting virtually or not at all in some communities.

"Scouting needs The American Legion's support now as much as they ever have. They need your support

as a Post and your support as an individual."

He noted that since February 2019, Scouts BSA became available to girls aged 11-18 with a path for them to become Eagle Scouts. Additionally, as of January 2020, the Church of Latter Day Saints no longer charters Scouting. "These changes provide great opportunities for The American Legion to continue to grow our relationship" with Scouting, he said, "and continue to grow our support for our Americanism programs. In addition, Scouting is a great avenue to attract those younger American Legion members you are all looking for. Many family and friends of these scouts are eligible for the American Legion Family."

He noted that Posts in New York State sponsor "over 220 units," and that this year scouts across the

nation "contributed more than 15.6 million volunteer hours, and earned 1.8 million merit badges."

Steve announced the *Eagle Scout of the Year: Caleb Michael Edhauer* from Troop 524, sponsored by Post 431 in Springville, NY (8th District). "Caleb is also a member of the SAL (Sons of the American Legion). He will receive a \$2,000 scholarship."

ORATORICAL AWARDS

Oratorical Chair Anthony Paternostro announced the state-level oratorical winners. The competition took place in March at the Crown Plaza Desmond Hotel, Albany.

Ian Chung is the Department of New York Champion for 2021 and the recipient of a \$6,000 scholarship. He was a freshman at Vestal Senior High. He represented Zone 4, 6th District, and

Broome County. He was sponsored by American Legion North-East Post 1645. The title of his oration was "*The Importance of Unity*".

Abigail Christopher placed 2nd and received a \$4,000 Scholarship. She was a senior homeschooler, representing Zone 5, 7th District, and Monroe County. She was sponsored by Hiscock-Fishbough Post 788. Title of her oration was "*Freedom of Speech, Free for Each: The Importance of Free Speech and Where It Ends*"

Riley Meckley took 3rd place and won a \$2,500 Scholarship. She was a junior at Ward Melville High School, representing Zone 2, 10th District, and Suffolk County. She was sponsored by Wilson Rich Post 432. Title of her oration was "*The Most Fortunate People*"

Continued on next page.

Student Creates Oral History of Staten Island Veterans

Daniel Donnelly, a senior at Binghamton University who grew up around veterans in a Staten Island American Legion hall, was interested in preserving their war stories and received a \$500 Harpur Fellowship to create an oral history of Vietnam War veterans from Staten Island, BingUNews reported in October.

With his uncle an American Legion commander and his father a member of Sons of the American Legion, Daniel himself would pitch in whenever there was a

need at the Post.

In the BngUNews article, Jennifer Micale wrote that Daniel asked more than two dozen veterans to participate in his project; nine agreed. Part of the reticence was due to the coronavirus pandemic; interviews were conducted masked and outdoors. But there was a deeper reason, too.

“People can’t really understand the things that they saw and went through. Most of the guys said, ‘I won’t even talk about this with my wife.’ So they can’t say these things

to the person that they’re closest to in the world,” he said. “To really hear someone who lived through (the war) was pretty powerful.”

Now that it’s complete, Donnelly hopes to publish the oral history through a library, preferably on Staten Island, where his interview subjects were born and raised. Giving them to local high schools for instructional purposes is another possibility that interests him, particularly since he plans to become a social studies teacher.



Daniel Donnelly

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

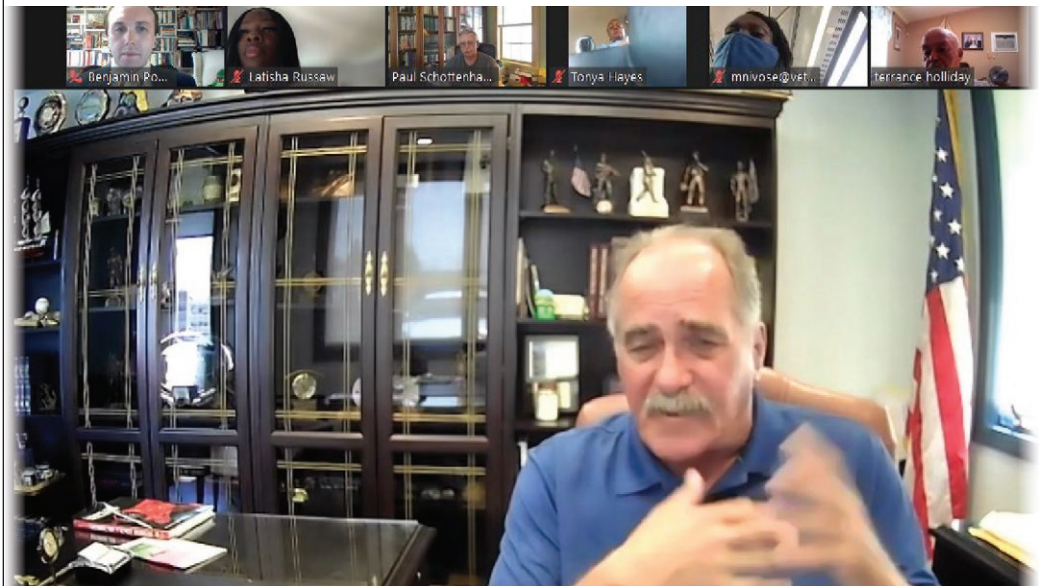
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Rounding out the last two places and winning \$2,000 Scholarships are:

- **Rachel Yorke**, who was a senior at Co-bleskill-Richmondville High School, representing Zone 3, 3rd District, and Schoharie County. She was sponsored by the Sharon Springs Post 1269. Title of her oration was “*We The People*”.

- **Maya Segal**, who was a junior at Roy C. Ketcham High School. She represented Zone 1, 9th District, and Dutchess County, and was sponsored by Lafayette Post 37. The title of her oration was “*the Importance of Voting*”.

Funerals for Indigent Veterans



Adjutant James Casey (*above*) participated in a video conferencing session about funerals for indigent veterans in July.

The State Division of Veterans’ Services posted Adjutant Casey’s photo on its Facebook page on July 16 with a message about the discussion. “One of our sacred honors is helping fund funeral & interment expenses for #Veterans in New

York who passed away indigent. Already in 2021, we’ve provided \$200,000 to help support those services throughout the state. Today, we spoke with our great partners, American Legion of New York State and NYC Department of Veterans’ Services, and with funeral directors from New York City, about our shared mission to ensure that every Veteran receives the dignified funeral and interment that they rightfully deserve.”

NORFOLK LEGION RIDERS AID PROJECT LIFESAVER

OVER \$8,000 RAISED FOR SHERIFF'S PROGRAM

by BOB BECKSTEAD, www.nny360.com | Watertown Daily Times



Harry Carangi from Norfolk's American Legion Riders Chapter at Post 925 presents an \$8,217 donation to St. Lawrence County Sheriff Brooks J. Bigwarfe for the department's Project Lifesaver program. The money was raised through the annual charity ride held by the American Legion Riders. Photo by Bob Beckstead/Watertown Daily Times.

A tracking program used by the St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Department to locate individuals reported missing got a financial boost from the American Legion Riders of Post 925 in Norfolk.

An annual charity ride raised \$8,217 for **Project Lifesaver**. The check was presented to Sheriff Brooks J. Bigwarfe on Sunday (Sept. 5).

"Project Lifesaver is run by the Sheriff's Association of New York State. The St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Office is a member of that project," Sheriff Bigwarfe said.

The program assists in finding individuals who might be suffering

from medical conditions such as disabilities, dementia or Alzheimer's or other cognitive disorders and who have wandered away.

"We have approximately 25 individuals in the county that are members of this project so far. It has a transmitter wristband that they wear. The tracking device finds that wristband. So if they go 10 miles into the woods, we can track them with our tracking system," he said.

Sheriff Bigwarfe said it's part of a three-pronged ability to find individuals, along with the department's K-9 unit and its new drone.

"Obviously, for me and my depart-

ment, the safety of citizens is probably the number one goal of any police officer," he said. "This just gives us another tool to handle that. It's three ways to find people that are lost out there. So it's a great project. It's been a very successful program throughout the whole state."

He said the money raised by the American Legion Riders will go a long way.

"What you guys have done with this amount of money is just shocking. I've never seen the amount of this donation before. So kudos to your organization. That's so impressive," Sheriff Bigwarfe told members of

Continued on next page.



BROCTON CENTRAL GRAD WINS PEDRO SCHOLARSHIP

Heather Johnston, a 2021 graduate of Brocton Central School, was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship named in honor of former Department Adjutant and Past National Commander Richard M. Pedro.

"Young people like Heather Johnston are the future of the United States of America," 8th District Vice Commander Henry Link noted in presenting the Richard M. Pedro Memorial Scholarship. "We need all of our youth to stand up and promote the principles of freedom, justice and American ideals."

Her winning patriotic essay was chosen from among submissions across the state, said Link, who also is past commander of Brocton's John W. Dill Post 434.

Heather received a commemorative plaque along with the scholarship money.

Heather Johnson receives the Richard M. Pedro Memorial Scholarship Award from 8th District Vice Commander Henry Link.

NORFOLK LEGION RIDERS

Continued from previous page.

the group who had assembled for the check presentation.

He said they want to expand the program.

"If you have relatives or friends that kind of qualify for this, by all means let's get them signed up. This is what this is about," he said.

The Riders' donation will assist in buying bracelets, transmitters and batteries, which have to be changed out every couple of months.

"This is not a budget line item for the county. It's all donations. So other organizations thankfully have donated before for this. We're down to about \$2,000 in the kitty. With this product added, we're going to be very healthy for a couple of years, so I just can't thank you enough. The Sheriff's Office appreciates it, but the citizens of the county, they'll know about it and



they'll appreciate it," Sheriff Bigwarfe said.

American Legion Riders President Thomas Morrison said they were able to raise the money through generous donations from other American Legions, Amvets posts, auxiliaries and VFW posts, as well as others.

"With everything going on in the world, we feel very, very pleased," he said.

This was the chapter's 16th annual charity ride. It began in 2005 when they were founded.

"We do one big ride every year. We had about 80 bikes this year, so that's about our average," Morrison said.

He said they contribute to different organizations, focusing on veterans and agencies that assist veterans. They chose Project Lifesaver this year and took to the road.

"We usually do about 100 miles," he said.

This year, their ride took them to Amvets posts in Parishville, Potsdam and Heuvelton, Lisbon American Legion and back to the Norfolk American Legion, where they enjoyed a dinner and also raffles with items donated by local businesses.

Canada Legionnaires Honor War of 1812 Sailors

by BOB WINDER, Canada County Commander

CANADA -- In Hamilton's Centennial Park there are two series of U.S. Graves of U.S. Navy veterans who went down with their ships during a great storm while waiting to ambush the British Navy during the War of 1812. Their bodies were never repatriated state-side and they were laid to rest in what was known then as Upper Canada.

During the Month of August every year, members of Canada County place U.S. Gravemarker Flags at each grave in remembrance. During the ceremony American, Canadian & Ontario

Flags are placed while the Last Post is heard. County Chaplain Bruce Lacillade offered a prayer for the fallen.

U.S. Navy Veteran Robert H. Williams organized this year's Remembrance of those American sailors who perished in the War of 1812.

Earlier in the year, on Memorial Day, Canada Legionnaires placed U.S. Gravemarker Flags on known veterans' graves who served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Then, on August 13, Canada County held its first Legion Breakfast, with many attending.



SING SING POST HOSTS 'LACROSSE FOR DEPLOYED SOLDIERS'

After a one-year break due to COVID, American Legion Post 1123 held its annual "Lacrosse for Deployed Soldiers" on the Tappan ballfield inside Sing Sing Prison. This event collects non-perishable supplies to be sent to American soldiers serving overseas.

"The United States' war on terrorism has been long and sometimes it is easy to forget that our country continues to have servicemen and women in harm's way," Adjutant John McMorro said. "Lacrosse for Deployed Soldiers" reminds our communities of the sacrifices our military makes for our



freedom and asks the community to help support them during their deployments."

"Lacrosse for Deployed Soldiers" was started to collect and send supplies to the son of one the Post 1123 members who was deployed

to Afghanistan. This soldier had also played youth lacrosse. "The American Legion enlisted the assistance of youth lacrosse teams to raise supplies and an event was planned where the players could drop off those

supplies," McMorro said. "In 2017, Post 1123 hosted two lacrosse games. This year Post 1123 hosted an event in July and sent all the donated supplies to a unit that was deployed."

The players from lacrosse teams from Orangetown in Rockland County and Irvington in Westchester County made generous donations. The donated supplies were boxed up at the end of the day and totaled nine boxes.

"All of the players are a positive example to their communities and Post 1123 is very proud to have had their assistance," McMorro noted.

2 RECEIVE KOGUTEK SCHOLARSHIPS



Nicole Hoeckh is pictured with the scholarship judges (L to R): Jim Bojanowski, Martin Moot, and Timothy Winterhalter.

Two scholarships named after Past National Commander Michael J. Kogutek were awarded at the 8th District Convention held on Saturday, June 19, 2021.

The two recipients, each receiving \$1,500, were;

- **Hannah Weise**, class valedictorian at Chautauqua Lake Secondary School in Mayville, NY, Chautauqua County. Hannah served as vice president of the Senior Class and was involved in the National Honor Society, many clubs and other school activities. She played JV and Varsity basketball and softball. In the community, she volunteered at youth basketball programs, coordinated a blood drive, penny drive, clothing drive, and toy and food drives. Hannah was planning to attend Geneva College and become a bilingual speech pathologist. Her mom, Tamara, is a US Navy Veteran.

- **Nicole Hoeckh**, who is



Hannah Weise is pictured with Jim Bojanowski, one of the scholarship judges.

ranked 13 in her class with a 91.2 average at Franklinville High School, Cattaraugus County and a 3.7 GPA in Medical Professions through Olean BOCES and Trigonometry through Syracuse University. Nicole's activities include JV and Varsity Basketball, JV and

Varsity Soccer as Captain, Travel Soccer Team, Cheerleading, and clubs. In addition to working school banquets, she volunteered for the local Maple Festival, Youth Court, and Live Nations Concessions, with plans for the SPCA. During these recent financial tough

times she has contributed to the family by working as a cook at a pizzeria. Nicole was planning to attend Jamestown Community College to study nursing to reduce costs, then SUNY Brockport to become a nurse practitioner. Her dad is a US Marine veteran.

LEGION HELPS HOST 'SOLDIER RIDE'



"Soldier Ride" bicyclists strike poses for selfies at East Hampton American Legion Post 419. BELOW: Post Commander Gennaro Cavalieri speaks on video about how great the ride was for veterans. The pictures above and below are from the video on the website, usawarriorstories.org.

EAST HAMPTON, L.I.
-- After taking a year off because of COVID, Wounded Warrior Project returned to The Hamptons with the annual Soldier Ride. It was hosted by East Hampton American Legion Post 419 in the hamlet of Amagansett in the Town of East Hampton.

Forty-some cyclists riding regular bikes, hand cycles, and recumbent bikes cruised the nearly 22 miles from Amagansett to Sag Harbor and back in an event marked by a sense of strength, support, and connections, the *East Hampton Star* reported.

"The camaraderie is the best part of this whole thing," veteran Miriam



Soto-Quinones told the newspaper. "Connecting with the other vets, there's nothing like it."

"Soldier Ride connects

warriors to each other and their local communities, creating a strong support system to help them manage visible and invisible wounds of war,"

usawarriorstories.org reported. "The program continues to have a lasting, restorative impact on countless veterans and service members."

6 NEW YORKERS FEATURED IN 9/11 PODCAST



Six members of The American Legion Family with a New York connection are featured in podcast episodes related to the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast launched the first of 20 captivating stories the week of Aug. 16. New episodes were posted each week-day through Sept. 10. Visit legion.org/tangoalphalima to download each episode in audio format or watch on The American Legion YouTube channel, [youtube.com/c/americanlegionHQ](https://www.youtube.com/c/americanlegionHQ).

Here's a snapshot of episodes involving New Yorkers:

- Aug. 17: **Jimmy Brown** was a New York City firefighter who escaped before one of the towers collapsed. Brown, a Marine Corps

veteran, heard the first plane and the explosion, then saw "debris raining down."

- Aug. 20: **Linda Beecher** was a single mother and EMT with the New York Fire Department on 9/11. Beecher, a member of The American Legion Auxiliary, served as a liaison that morning and worked in the field through the following May.

She describes the first World Trade Center collapsing and the 16-hour days working at the morgue, cataloging all the body parts, personal effects, and more.

- Aug. 26: That's how **Wilem Wong**, an Army veteran who recently retired from the New York City Police Department, refers to the day when Osama bin Laden was killed. Wong, a member of American Legion Post 1291 in New York City,

was in Afghanistan on the day that justice prevailed. But, as he points out, "I knew that was not going to be the end."

- Aug. 27: Legion member **Mark Otto**, a Marine veteran who served during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, was walking to his job at the Stock Exchange on the morning of 9/11.

He recalls watching one of the towers burn on a TV at the exchange when all of a sudden the entire building shook "like an earthquake." It was the second plane hitting the other tower. His military training kicked in and he proceeded to evacuate his newlywed wife safely. "It was like a zombie apocalypse movie."

- Aug. 30: Past Department Commander **Frank Peters** was a ferry boat cap-

tain during the 9/11 attacks.

His ferry had just docked in Manhattan when the second plane hit the tower. He loaded the ferry with people fleeing the island, then returned with first responders and picked up more people trying to escape the destruction.

- Sept. 9: Sept. 11 was the sixth day **John Paluska**, 18, was in New York, after leaving Iowa to attend Fordham University. After watching the second tower fall from his apartment rooftop, he took a subway to ground zero to help the rescue and recovery.

He subsequently joined the Army, became a Green Beret and deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations. Now he is a volunteer with the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

Legion Celebrates Member's 95th Birthday

DEPARTMENT OF NY AND POST 963 HONOR WWII VET



World War II vet Dick Henry with , from left, Francis Riter, Post Commander Dave Daily and 2020-2021 Department Commander Mike McDermott.

World War II veteran George R “Dick” Henry of Cortland was honored June 26 by fellow Legionnaires at a party with family and friends celebrating his 95th birthday, reports Past Department Vice Commander Francis Riter.

He was presented with a certificate signed by National Commander Bill Oxford, National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler, and Post Commander David Daily of Kingsley Turner Post

963, Truxton, N.Y. In addition he received a certificate from Department Commander Michael McDermott, also signed by Department Adjutant James Casey, congratulating him on 75 years of continuous membership in the American Legion.

Included in the presentation was an American Legion medal with a 75 attachment and a 75-year service pin.