

LEGION

NEW YORK

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LEGION NEW YORK

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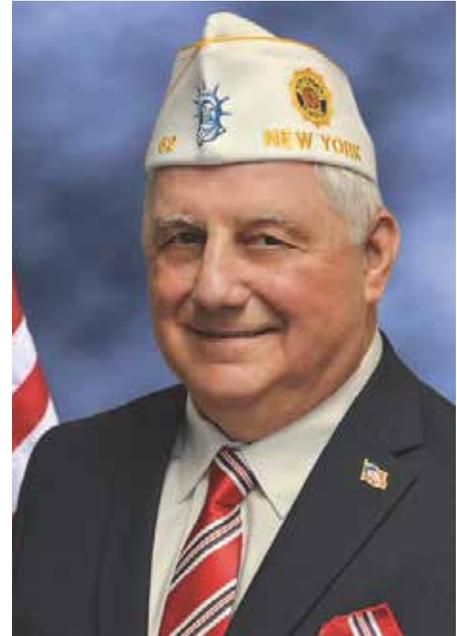
YOU ARE THE BEDROCK OF OUR FREEDOM

As Legionnaires, we pause with reverence to honor the men and women who have worn the uniform of our nation. Their courage, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to duty form the bedrock of our freedom.

From the windswept battlefields of distant lands to the quiet strength of those who served at home, veterans have carried the weight of liberty on their shoulders. They are not just defenders of our country—they are stewards of its ideals.

Here in New York, we are privileged to witness the enduring legacy of service. In our communities, our posts, and our homes, veterans continue to lead, inspire, and serve. Whether mentoring youth, responding to disasters, or standing watch at memorials, their devotion never wavers.

As Commander of the Department of New York, I am humbled by the honor of representing such extraordinary individuals. I pledge that the American Legion will remain steadfast in its mission: to advocate for veterans, preserve our



Department Commander John R. Miga

history, and uphold the values that make this nation great.

Let us remember that honoring veterans is not confined to a single day. It is a lifelong commitment—reflected in how we care for those who served, how we teach future generations, and how we live as citizens worthy of their sacrifice.

To every veteran: thank you. Your service is remembered, your legacy cherished, and your example followed.

COVER

National Commander Daniel Wiley received a huge patriotic welcome during his visit to the Department of New York last October. Here the 7th District provided the giant flag to greet the commander.

Photo by Department Historian Andrew Williams.



100 years of American Legion Baseball

Yankees host nearly 300 Legion Family members



Members of the American Legion Family and Legion Baseball players walk the warning track at Yankee Stadium in honor of The American Legion Baseball Centennial. Photo by Denise Henhoeffler.

by THE AMERICAN LEGION

Nearly 300 American Legion Family members, baseball players and guests were able to walk along the same field that at various times hosted the likes of Aaron Judge, Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera and other New York Yankees legends during a pre-game parade in the Bronx on Sept. 6.

“We’re getting the New York Yankees to acknowledge 100 years of American Legion Baseball, one of the great Children and Youth programs of The American Legion,” Past Department of New York Commander Gary Schacher said prior to the team’s Saturday afternoon game with the Toronto Blue Jays.

The current version of Yankee Stadium opened in 2009, just one block north of the original “House that Ruth Built.” American Legion Baseball alumni who went on to become Yankees greats include Yogi Berra, Reggie Jackson, Dave Winfield. Joe Torre and CC

Sabathia.

“It’s very exciting and once in a lifetime opportunity to come to Yankee Stadium for The American Legion and we’re truly grateful for it,” said Brian Martinez, who drove from Utica, N.Y. with his Legion Baseball teammate John Viola.

The two wore their Utica Blue Sox team jerseys but made clear that when it comes to the majors, their loyalties were to the Yankees. Viola said that his team is full of Yankees fans, adding, semi-jokingly, “if they’re Red Sox, we kick them out. They’re not allowed!”

Schacher, who now serves as executive assistant to the Department of New York adjutant, is a lifelong Yankees fan and rooted for Mickey Mantle, Bobby Murcer, Thurman Munson and Joe Pepitone while growing up in the suburbs of New York.

“If you’re talking baseball, you are talking the New York Yankees.

I mean this is America’s team,” he said.

New York American Legion Baseball Chairman Mike Macchione has more than 55 years of experience combined as a player, coach and chairman of Legion baseball. He said “legacy,” is what distinguishes American Legion Baseball.

“In many ways, the Yankees have benefited from The American Legion because they’ve gotten players in the past and they’ll get players in the future that are American Legion players,” Macchione said. “And one day, they’ll wear pinstripes, and we’ll all be excited for that.”

Schacher voiced a pre-game request for the Yankees. “Go Yankees, we need to pull into first place. We need to win the next two games!” The team complied, with the Yankees winning 3-1 Saturday, and followed it with a 4-3 win over Toronto on Sunday.

LEGION BALL SALUTES VETS IN HOSPITAL

Greece, Kingston Win Sr. & Jr. Titles

By MIKE MACHIONE / Department Baseball Chair

My tradition for the State American Legion Baseball Championships is to take time out to get all of our teams to visit veterans at a local VA facility or a place like Monroe Community Hospital, either before or after their games. They spend anywhere from 1 to 1 1/2 hours with the vets. This hospital had over 100 vets so we couldn't touch them all, but those that the young men did meet with enjoyed their company immensely. The players learn about the vets' service time, what they did, how long did they serve, where they were stationed. They also discovered that a few have not had contact with their families or friends in quite a while.

We all had the honor to sit and talk with one vet who was 101 years old and was a POW in Germany for a year. He was as sharp as a tack! His job while imprisoned was to repair railroad rails and ties that the USAF bombed every day. We will be going back to that facility in 2026. One very important thing that happens when we visit the vets, is that every player has a new baseball and pen. In the reverse of the traditional baseball signing where the fan has keep-sake of his hero, we get each and every vet to sign the baseballs for the players as their newfound heroes. You should see the look on a vet's face when he is asked to sign the baseball...priceless. As if that wasn't enough, we had two WWII vets, one 99 years old and the other 101, throw out the first pitch this year!



Legion ball players ask hospitalized veterans for their autographs.

Greece Post 458 out of the Rochester area did a phenomenal job as the host post. It was the best production I have ever seen in all my years. Their volunteers weathered the high temperatures and the players never lacked for their support. We played these 15 games at RIT and in spite of not having lights, we finished every game long before dark. Of course it helped that there was no rain to deal with. Greece Post will host the 2026 State Championship as well. The day after the last pitch was thrown,

Greece Post, led by Kevin Woodbury, the tournament director, had their first 2026 meeting.

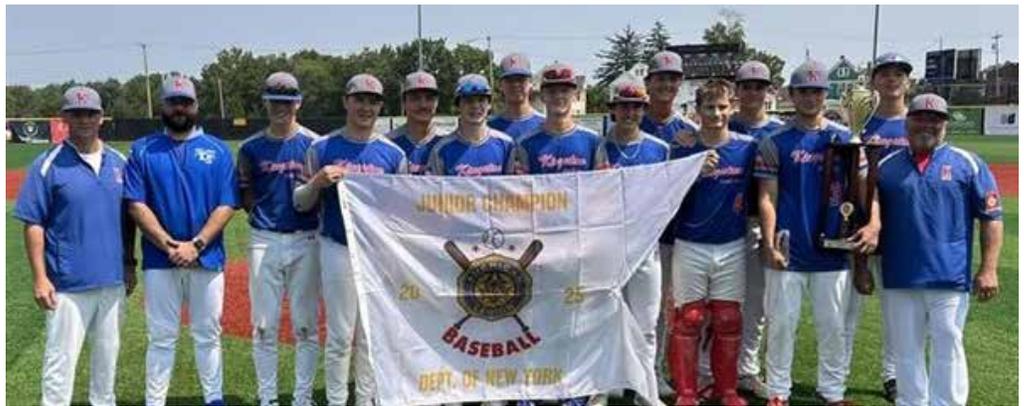
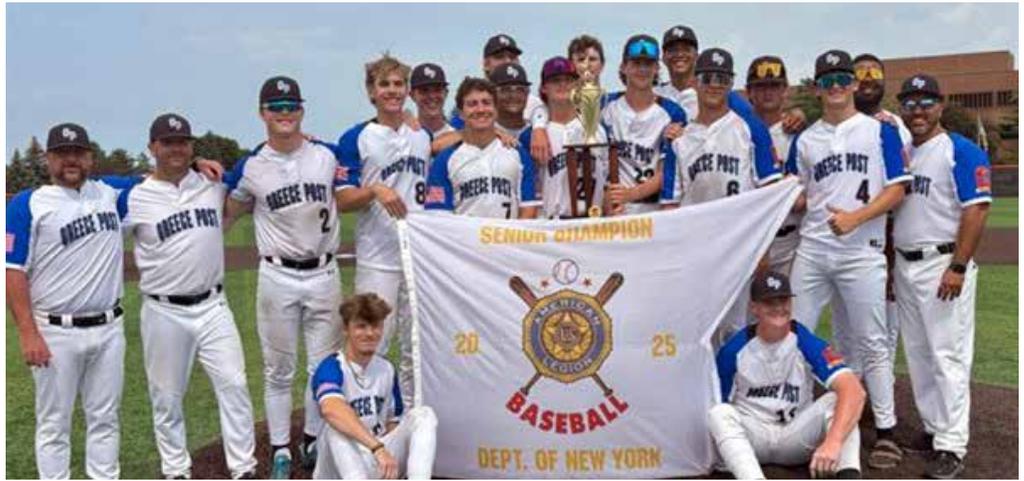
State & Regional Crowns for Greece

The icing on the cake for Greece Post is that their boys were crowned the 2025 NY State American Legion Baseball Champions, and then went on to win the Northeast Regional Championship in Shrewsbury, Mass.

Kingston Post 150 won the Junior Division championship.

BASEBALL CHAMPIONS

Greece Post 468 players (right) are the NY State American Legion Baseball champions in the Senior Division, and Kingston Post 150 (below right) took the Junior Division crown in the 2025 season. Greece Post went on to win the regional championship and got to play in the American Legion World Series.



GREECE POST AT AMERICAN LEGION WORLD SERIES



Photos / The American Legion

NY LEGIONNAIRE TAPPED FOR NATIONAL OFFICE

Dave Lockhart Serving as National Historian

David W. Lockhart was appointed national historian of The American Legion on Aug. 28, 2025, at the organization's 106th national convention in Tampa, Fla.

Lockhart was born and raised in Corinth, N.Y. After graduating Corinth High School in 1981, he joined the U.S. Army as a food service specialist. His first duty station was Ft Jackson, S.C., and he later served in Germersheim, Germany. While in Germany, Lockhart met his future wife, Celia. They have been married since 1984. They have three adult children and a granddaughter. While in the Army, Lockhart earned the Good Conduct Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army service ribbon and Overseas service ribbon. He was honorably discharged in 1984 as a specialist 4th class.

Lockhart worked for the International Paper Company in Corinth from 1984 until its closure in 2003. He also worked as a wastewater



treatment plant operator in Glen Falls, N.Y.

After retiring in 2013, Lockhart was active in his community coaching little league teams for 16 yrs and Babe Ruth teams for three years. He is a trustee of the friends of the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga and has participated in Saratoga County's

Deceased Veterans Program since 2008.

Lockhart joined Horace D. Washburn American Legion Post 533 in Corinth in 2002.

He served as sergeant-at-arms, adjutant, vice commander and commander at the county level. At the department level, he served on the membership team and as department National Cemetery Chairman. He was also president of Department Press Association in 2021.

Since 2022, he has been chairman of the Department Media Alliance Committee. He has also been a member of the National Media & Communication Council since 2021

A 2008 American Legion College graduate, he enjoys fly fishing, strumming his guitar and traveling with his wife and his border collie, Fenway. He resides along the Hudson River in Hadley, N.Y.

SEN. TEDESCO HONORS LOCKHART

State Sen. Jim Tedesco honored U.S. Army veteran David W. Lockhart of Hadley, N.Y., for his appointment as the National Historian for the American Legion. He presented Lockhart with the New York State Senate Commendation Award and a Proclamation for his advocacy on behalf of veterans.

“David Lockhart is an outstanding and dedicated veteran who has served his country with honor and continues to serve as a strong voice for his fellow veterans,” Tedesco said.



DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

'Be the One' on the Mind of Many

Members of the American Legion Family began converging on Syracuse Wednesday, July 16, for the 107th Department Convention – and many came with “Be the One” suicide prevention campaign on the mind.

For example, Past Department Commander Frank Peters spotted a piano in the lobby of the Marriott Syracuse Downtown and began playing some chords, but couldn't

resist holding up a finger symbolizing “Be the One.” Frank is more comfortable on the guitar – he has one in every room of his house – but has been teaching himself how to play the piano.

A trio of Auxiliary members were in the lobby too and were quick to display their support for “Be the One.” The trio included Gwen Benners, past Tioga County president; Angela Collins, Tioga

County president, and Angela's daughter, Adelle, attending her first convention as a fourth generation member.

The effort to curb veteran suicide will continue to be a main push for The American Legion in the coming year, as Dan Wiley, the incoming 2025-2026 national commander, reported during the opening session of the convention on Thursday.



Auxiliary members Gwen Benners, past Tioga County president; Angela Collins, Tioga County president, and Angela's daughter, Adelle, were quick to show support for the “Be the One” suicide prevention campaign along with Past Department Commander Frank Peters. Photos by Robert Stronach.



Then-national commander candidate (and now national commander) Dan Wiley addressed the convention attendees.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

WWII Vets Help Kick Off Proceedings



World War II veterans Tony Pircio (above) and Addison Sheckler (right) received a standing ovation when introduced by 2024-2025 Department Commander Keith Koster.



A four-hour marathon session kicked off the 107th Annual Convention of the NYS American Legion on Thursday, July 17 at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, formerly the Hotel Syracuse.

Highlighting the initial moments was a standing ovation for two centenarians from the Greatest Generation of military men, as outgoing Department Commander Keith Koster introduced 102 year-old Addison Sheckler of Cato and 104 year-old Tony Pircio of Manlius.

Sheckler was a master sergeant and technical expert on a U.S. Army Signal Corps team in Normandy following the D-Day Invasion of France in June of 1944.

Pircio was a captain who served in the 8th Air Force with the 7th Photo Reconnaissance Group in the Army Air Corps. He served in both England and Northern France from 1941 to 1946.

In welcoming the Legion to the City of Syracuse, Mayor Ben Walsh

acknowledged that both his grandfathers had served in U.S. Army and had been public servants, as was his father. They “always reinforced that there is no more noble and honorable calling than serving in the US military.” In jointly proclaiming, with the county executive, July 14-19 as “American Legion Recognition Week” in Syracuse and Onondaga County, he also reflected on the fact that the city is experiencing a comeback, as is the hotel where the convention was being held, which had been vacant for many years and fallen into disrepair. (The Marriott Syracuse Downtown was restored to its original 1924 glory in 2016 and was recently awarded the AAA Four Diamond Award.)

State Assemblyman William B. Magnarelli, from District 129, is a Syracuse native and chair of veterans committee and long-time advocate for military causes. He said that the Legionnaires have come to a city with a “deep and proud military history,” contributing to every

major conflict in modern American history. Syracuse has been a hub as a home to defense manufacturing during the two world wars, of production of radar technology and the home to the NY Air National Guard’s 174th Attack Wing.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A brief memorial service followed as Fr. Robert Sweeney, chaplain emeritus, remembered in prayer Legionnaires who had died during the past year. His closing prayer reminded the Legionnaires, “For those whom we remember, may



we pledge ourselves to continue what the American Legion was formed for and what the American Legion does.”

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

Legionnaire, Service Officer, Scouting, PR Awards

Francis Riter of Burns-Mc-Cauliffe Post 465 in Homer (Cortland County, 6th District) was honored as the Department's Legionnaire of the Year. He was cited for his never-ending com-



Francis Riter
Legionnaire of the Year

mitment to Veterans, their families, and the community.

...

Veterans Services Committee Chair Eileen Fisher announced the 2025 John B. Sampson Service Officer of the Year. He is John Antes, a VSO with Yates County Veterans Service Officer. He is a member of Bradley-Jessop Post 660.

Fisher also reported at the July convention that there were now 152 accredited service officers across New York, including 12 new ones trained by the American Legion since the Mid-Winter Conference in January.

She relayed updates from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as well as NYS legislation allowing tuition reimbursement for both combat and non-combat veterans.

...

Scouting Chair Jean Williams noted that with the inclusion of girls in the program, Boy Scouts of America changed its name to Scouting America.

She then announced the Eagle Scout of the Year — Christopher Mozillo from Troop 43 in Cairo. The troop is sponsored by Post 983, Greene County, 3rd District. She also announced that the adult Scouter of the Year was Tom Rothfus from Monroe County, 7th District.

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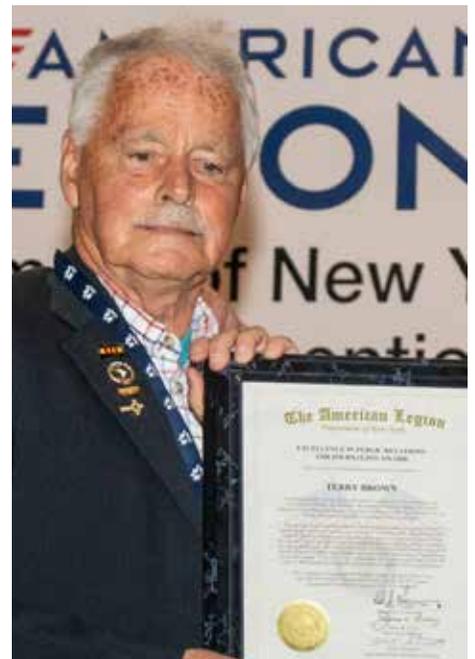
PR Chair Robert Stronach presented the Department's Excellence in PR & Journalism Award to Albany Times-Union Military Columnist Terry Brown, a decorated army veteran.



Then-Commander Keith Koster congratulates Service Officer of the Year John Antes.



Christopher Mozillo
Eagle Scout of the Year



Terry Brown
PR & Journalism Award Recipient

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

Law and Order Awards

Chair Cynthia Nelson announced the Law and Order, and First Responder Awards in eight categories.

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is Deputy Jason Beichner of Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office, He was cited for saving the life of a motorcyclist who had a partially severed leg in a crash as well as for working with his K9 partner to find missing persons, capture fleeing suspects and finding firearms.

Firefighter of the Year is Kenneth W. Pagels of Akron Fire Company, Akron, Erie County, 8th District. /with the company for 53 years, Pagels has been a leader and mentor, especially in the service's fire prevention program. He was cited for creating a fire safety trailer and winning a grant to teach 5th graders how to use a fire extinguisher.

Emergency Medical Technician of the Year is Spenser Rajuan Rhyans, a member of the Lake Shore Fire Company, Erie County, 8th District . He was praised for his actions when returning home from a shift and coming upon a two-car accident. He moved an injured woman away from a burning car, and since she was alert, he went to check on a child in the other car who appeared to be in good condition so he then checked on the trapper driver, stabilized him, and then when firefighters arrived, he returned to the woman and strablized her.Both adults sustained serious injuries but survived.

911 Dispatcher of the Year is Corey Gavette with the Emergency Communications Department of Monroe County (7th District) . He was cited for his handling of a mass casualty event, coordinating with multiple resources. He also

was praised for coming up with a way to communicated with fist responders when the department lost normal communications for two hours during a system upgrade.

Corrections Officer of the Year is Mike Darling of Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office . He was praised for his work ethic and taking on multiple roles, such as academy instructor, field training officer, and a member of the Community Emergency Response Team . Officer Darling consistently donated his time and resources to help others at work and in the community .

The EMT Squad of the Year Award went to American Medical Response (AMR) of Syracuse. The unit was cited for providing medical converage at numerous community events and in particular for its response to a house explosion , *Continued on next page.*



EMT OF THE YEAR
Spenser Rajuan Rhyans



911 DISPATCHER OF THE YEAR
Corey Gavette

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

Law and Order Awards

Continued from previous page.

assisting firefighters as they treated over 20 patients, and transport eight children and four adults with significant injuries .

Police Department of the Year honors went to the 5th Precinct of the Nassau County Police Department . The precinct covers the communities of Elmont, Franklin Square, West Hempstead , Valley Stream, North Valley Stream, Lakeview, South Floral Park, and Garden City South. The members were cited for their commitment to serve their communities, as demonstrated by one incident in particular . Four officers responded to a call about a possible suicidal

individual . They found a man with a cut wrist, unconscious and submerged in a bathtub , who also had swallowed pills. They removed the victim from the water and rendered immediate aid. He regained consciousness and was transported to the hospital.

The **Fire Department of the Year** is the Seaford Fire Department in Nassau County. With 70 firefighters and medics, the department responds to an average of 600 calls per year and has been providing emergency services since its formation in 1900.

One example of the department's quick response involved a house

fire where members searched floors and bedrooms in dangerous conditions before finding and extricating an unconscious victim who survived.

Also receiving recognition were outstanding post, county and district law-and-order programs and chairpersons.

The honorees are:

—Manhasset Post 304 in Nassau County and Chair Donald O'Brian.

— Chautauqua County Legion and Chair Jeff Levandoski.

—10th District and Chair Dawn Samuel.



POST CHAIR OF YEAR
Donald O'Brian



COUNTY CHAIR OF YEAR
Jeff Levandoski



DISTRICT CHAIR OF YEAR
Dawn Samuel

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION CANDIDS

Photos by Robert Stronach.



DEPARTMENT CONVENTION CANDIDS



DEPARTMENT CONVENTION CANDIDS



Owego Post 401 Has a Winning Foursome

The team from Post 401 in Owego took first place in the Department's 33rd Annual Legion Family Golf Tournament, held at Maple Hill Golf Club in Marathon NY last August.

Department Golf Chairman Auskalis G. Krumins reported that 15 teams participated this year.

"The weather this year was perfect, making for any enjoyable day," he noted.

The first place team was cap-

tained by Steve Livermore.

Second place went to Tom Hurlbut's team from Post 974 in Whitney Point.

Third place went to William Buckley's team from Post 973 in South Otselic, NY.

Longest drive for men went to Nick Rollins and longest drive for women was hit by Margaret Sweredoski from Post 162 in Lowville, NY. Closest to the pin for men was hit by Marty Drum from

Post 1645 in Binghamton, NY.

The prize for Most Honest Team was awarded to Scott Diskin's team from Post 42 in Chatham, NY, which included Past 2024-2025 Department Commander Keith Koster from Saratoga County.

"Congratulations to all Prize winners!" Chairman Krumins said, adding that he hopes to see even more teams participate next year on August 7, 2026 "in this simply fun day of golf for all Legion Family members."



Owego Post's winning foursome.

AMERICA'S VETERANS DAY PARADE IN NYC

Story and photos by National Historian Dave Lockhart.

The Department of New York American Legion Family had a strong showing in the 2025 NYC Veterans Day Parade {the nation's largest commemoration of veteran services} on November 11.

Joined by members from New Jersey and Massachusetts Legion families, the parade celebrated anticipated 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The Revolutionary War saw the establishment of the US Army, US Marine Corps and US Navy.

As part of the milestone, the parade spotlighted three Grand marshals representing those three service branches. Army Staff Sgt. and Medal of Honor recipient Clinton

Romesha; Marine Corps veteran and U.S. VETS Homeless Advocate Stephan Peck; NASA Astronaut and Navy officer Sunita "Suni" Williams. (Suni was unable to attend due to the government shutdown.)

Among the participants were PNC Vincent James Troiola, PNC Richard (Ric) J Santos and Wife Linda, Department Adjutant James Casey and wife Paulette, Department Commander John Miga and his wife Audrey, Auxiliary President Maureen Morgan and Husband Ike Bosford, Detachment Commander Joe Guidice, and National Historian David Lockhart.

The New York City's Veterans Day Parade traces its roots back to

annual marches on Evacuation Day {Nov. 25} celebrating Gen George Washington's triumphant return to the city at the end of the American Revolution.

The seeds of the modern Veterans Day Parade were planted after World War I as hundreds of thousands of returning troops were welcomed home with a parade up 5th Ave. on Nov 11, the first Armistice Day celebration. These commemorations expanded as did the parade following WW II. The holiday was redesignated Veterans Day in 1954.

Department Commander Miga and the Color Guard from Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 led our procession.



Color Guard from Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291

AMERICA'S VETERANS DAY PARADE IN NYC



Sporting Navy caps were Department Adjutant James Casey (left) and PNC Vincent J. James Troiola (right). Between them were PNC Richard J. Santos with Wife Linda and Paulette Casey.

Commander John Miga led the American Legion contingent.

BELOW: National Historian Dave Lockhart visited with the parade's grand marshals -- Army vet/Medal of Honor recipient Clinton Romesha (left) and Marine Corps vet/homeless advocate Stephan Peck



Legionnaire Installed in NYS Vets Hall of Fame

STEBEN COUNTY ARMY VET SCOTT WARD

During a ceremony at the Bath American Legion Post 173 on Oct. 30, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) welcomed Steuben County native Scott Ward, a decorated U.S. Army veteran, into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

O'Mara saluted Ward for a lifetime of distinguished military and civilian service. Ward is a member of the Board of Directors of American Legion Charles E. Westcott Post 0173. Commissioned through the ROTC program at Cornell University, Ward served in Iraq and later commanded a training center preparing troops for deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. He achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel and earned a



Scott Ward with Sen. Tom O'Mara.

number of awards, including the Bronze Star.

Ward and his wife Kari own and operate Windydale Farm in Avoca.



At the December 8th District Meeting, the Chautauqua County Committee donated \$500 to the Past National Commander Michael J. Kogutek Scholarship Fund. Pictured (from left) are Past 8th District Commander Henry Link, Scholarship Chair Jim Bojanowski, and Chautauqua County Commander Jeffery Levandowski. Photo by Sue Quirk.

Oriskany Riders Donate Holiday Goods to Help Vets

The American Legion Riders of Oriskany Post 1448 donated money, clothing, hygiene products, food, and other essential items to the Utica Center for Development in December, offering holiday support to local veterans and community members. The donation included about \$1,000 worth of canned goods and nonperishable food items.

Riders Director Kenneth Duveck told the Daily Sentinel that the donation was part of their ongoing commitment to giving back.

“Any money we raise goes back to our veterans and the community.”

Geneva Post Donates Supplies for Vet Apartments

American Legion Family members from the Winnek Post 396 in Geneva last July presented 27 baskets of supplies to Eagle Star Housing staff for the veterans residing in the new Huntington Apartments in Seneca Falls.

The post spent one month col-

lecting personal care and household necessities all placed in individual laundry baskets. In addition to the supplies, the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion added two \$20 gift cards to each basket.

Of the 53 apartments at Hun-

tington, 27 are for veterans in need of affordable housing in an energy efficient building. Rental subsidies and support services are provided by Eagle Star housing. They include case management, transportation, substance abuse counseling, medical and mental health services.



FRONT FROM LEFT: Kristen Fratto, Legion Post general manager; Helen Roberts, 1st vice president, Legion Auxiliary; Jessica Belle, Eagle Star program director; Carrie Ann Drake, assistant case manager at Eagle Star; REAR FROM LEFT: AJ Fratto, Legion Post commander; Ted Smith, Kitchen/Bar manager; Sharon Rayno, Legionnaire; Joyce Wheeler, Legion Auxiliary treasurer; Dwayne Gnau, SAL member; Ernie Bringham, Eagle Star driver.

Legionnaires hold Canadian Remembrance Day

By DON SISSON, Department vice commander, 7th & 8th Districts

On November 9, Milton J. Brounshidle American Legion Post 205 in Kenmore held the 2nd Annual Remembrance Day Ceremonies for Canadian veterans buried in the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo. Members of Post 205, along with members from the Canadian Naval Reserves, rendered honors to 14 Canadian servicemen buried there, including placing Canadian flags on their graves.

Special thanks goes to participants for braving the clod, windy and rainy day to pay proper respects to out

comrades in arms that served in the Armed Forces of Canada. Participants included Wayne Sorrentino, chairman, and the following members from Post 205 -- Commander Bruce Pawlik, Jim DeLair, Charlie Young, Derek Sansone, Nick Scott, Pete Gottler, Alex Mills, Luis Gonzales (and his children), Tim Balbierz and Octavio Cruz. Canadian Armed Forces were represented by Lt. Kyle Peterson, S1 Sicard, S2 Denbak, & PO1 Denbak. Also participating were Erie County Commander Jerry Kowalsi, Erie County Vice Commanders Howard Patton III and Pat Murphy.

