

LEGION NEW YORK

AUTUMN 2026
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Department Commander Encounters Unique Sights During Visits

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LEGION
NEW YORK

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'TODAY'S YOUTH IS TOMORROW'S FUTURE'

That's the theme and focus for the 2026-2027 commander of the American Legion Department of New York – Vietnam-era veteran Thomas R. Schreck.

"I will be pushing the youth programs," noted Schreck, a U.S. Navy veteran whose election as Department Commander capped the 108th annual Department Convention, held July 16-18.

He pointed to such Legion programs as Boys State, Girls State, Junior Shooting, Oratorical, and Scholarships. In particular, "I'm pushing" for the expansion of Boys State, which immerses high school juniors into the governmental and political arenas on the city, county, and state levels.

His passion for mentoring future generations began in 2004 as a Boys State counselor. "I've been there ever since... I've seen a lot of good success stories."

Enlisting in the U.S. Navy in 1969, after high school, Schreck trained as a Signalman in Newport, RI and entered the Amphibious Squadron of the Atlantic Fleet in 1970 to serve on the USS San Marcus (LSD-25) and the USS



Department Commander Thomas Schreck

Plymouth Rock (LSD-29) based in Little Creek, Virginia. He was deployed to the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America, and was honorably discharged in 1974.

A member of Chili American Legion Post 1830 since 1989, Schreck has been in leadership roles at every level of the American Legion. He is a charter member of the Chili Post Color Guard and a member of the Monroe County American Legion Honor Guard. Schreck attended the American Legion College of New York in 2007 and has been an instructor since 2009.

COVER

Department Commander Tom Schreck is busy visiting counties across the state, meeting Legion Family members, and more often than not, encountering unique sights -- such as the M60A1 Main Battle Tank at Veterans Memorial Park in Malone, Franklin County. *Photo by Andrew Williams. More photos on back cover.*



POST 876 LEGION FAMILY BRINGS AWARENESS TO COMMUNITY

‘Be the One’ Is Focus of Motorcycle Ride, Fair

By THE AMERICAN LEGION

Four years ago, American Legion Riders Chapter 876 in Sherburne, N.Y. made a connection between the Legion’s *Be the One* veteran suicide prevention mission and the mission of the Riders.

That connection started with a motorcycle ride and grew to include a community wellness fair, the most recent taking place in mid-September and drawing multiple local and federal agencies focused on mental health and veterans’ assistance.

“It was pointed out to us that *Be the One* is ‘Ask, listen, reach out,’ which is ALR, which are the initials of the Riders,” said Melanie Haines, ALR Chapter secretary and Auxiliary Unit president. “Our Rider family is just that – we’re a family, and everybody was passionate about the *Be the One* program. So we decided to do a ride to support the mission.”

Chapter Director Bill Haines – Melanie’s husband and a member of both the Post and Sons of The American Legion Squadron 876 – said the wellness fair came about the following year. “I’ve been on rides before, and I know that’s nothing going on back at the post,” he said. “I was thinking that maybe we should have some kind of fair or something to bring in other organizations and put out information. At the same time, the ladies that were back at the post were also talking about the exact same thing.”

Melanie said both she and Bill had attended suicide prevention and education talks, which led to teaming with Chenango County Suicide Prevention Coalition to put on the wellness fair.

“We wanted to reach out to the community to let everybody know...” Bill said. “It’s dear to me. I was diagnosed a couple years ago with PTSD and depression and anxiety. I did have suicidal tendencies. I’m better now. This really helped me focus on myself and to be helping other people in the community.”

Money raised through the ride goes toward Post 876’s *Be the One* program and supporting veteran mental wellness. “Our thought it that is doesn’t matter how many people we get,” Bill said. “It’s that we’re getting the word out about *Be the One.* If we touch one person about it, it was well worth it.”

“It’s just letting our veterans and our community know where they can reach out to when they’re struggling,” Melanie said. “And it’s letting them know about the *Be the One* program so that they can have a tool in their back pockets through the app so that they can recognize the signs, and look at their friend or neighbor and say, ‘Hey, I can see that you are struggling. What can I do to help?’ That’s important.”

Schacher Appointed Department Adjutant

U.S. Navy Veteran and Past Department Commander Gary Schacher is the new adjutant for the Department of New York. He succeeds James W. Casey in the senior leadership role.

Having served on ship in the Persian Gulf in the early 80’s and with the Navy Seabees ground forces in Iraq in 2004-2005, Schacher retired in 2006 as a Chief Petty Officer. On the civilian side, he is retired from the New York State Police.

In 2017 he was recognized by the NY State Senate for distinguishing himself both in military and civilian life and was inducted into the NY State Senate Veteran’s Hall of Fame.

Schacher is a 35-year member of the American Legion, and in 2018 he was elected as Department Commander for its 100th Anniversary year. He served as National Commander Jim Troiola’s Aide in 2022-2023. He has served on the National Security Council, National Membership and Post Activities Committee and the National Media and Communications Commission.





2025-2026 Department Commander John Miga with WWII vet David Detler and his wife, Sierra.

Salute to WWII Vet Kicks Off 108th Gathering

By ROBERT STRONACH

The 108th annual Department Convention kicked off with a salute to those who came before — to veterans who sacrificed for our nation's freedom.

That is when David Detler, a 100-year-old World War II veteran, suddenly found himself facing a standing ovation, with hundreds of younger veterans cheering and applauding, as outgoing Department Commander John Miga pointed to him sitting in the front row.

Detler is a U.S. Army infantryman, who served in England and France and in "Belgium in the Battle of the Bulge," Miga said. He suffered severe injuries and was medically discharged in October 1945. Detler is also a "proud Legionnaire" from Liverpool Post 188, Miga said, and is "accompanied today by his lovely wife, Sierra."

•••

The spotlight on Detler immediately followed opening ceremonies, which included the myriad veterans rending salutes as the Department Color Guard presented the colors and removing their caps as Department Chaplain Rev. Mattie McIntyre invoked God's "presence and blessings upon this meeting." Then Master-at-arms Margaret Folk led the Pledge of Allegiance and Thomas Schreck conducted the POW/MIA Remembrance ceremony.

CONVENTION HIGHTLIGHTS

The convention featured speakers and reports, with a focus on recognizing outstanding first responders, youth, and Legionnaires.

Deputy Syracuse Mayor Corey Dunham brought a joint proclamation declaring it *American Legion Week* in the city and Onondaga County.



Syracuse Deputy Mayor Corey Dunham



Delegates render salutes during posting of the colors at the opening of the convention.

In his farewell address , Miga noted:

"As commander, I learned something important. Leadership is not about the title. It's about responsibility. It's about showing up. It's about listening. It's about serving." And in traveling across 62 counties, he discovered that Legionnaires everywhere "embody those values."

He concluded: "Our challenges are real, our opportunities are greater. We must keep moving forward, welcoming new members, strengthening our programs, and supporting every veteran who needs us."

IN GOOD FISCAL SHAPE

Dept. Treasurer Catherine Erwin announced that the Department was in fine fiscal shape and that the Finance Committee and Executive Committee approved the 2026-2027 budget, adjusted for changes in revenues and expenses. While she couldn't speak for the National Finance Committee, the Department of New York was not increasing membership dues, she said to cheers and applause.

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE YEAR

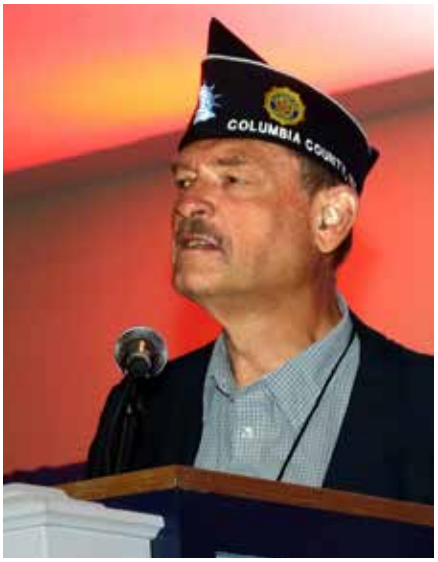
The Legionnaire of the Year is Tom Fisher from Columbia County, Committee Chair Victoria Ferris announced. "He exemplifies the highest ideal of the American Legion through unwavering dedication, servant leadership, and an extraordinary commitment to veterans, youth, and community service."

LEGION VOICE HAS IMPACT

2025-2026 National Executive Committeeman Frank Peters reported on a national headquarters endeavor to make it easy to contact senators and congressional representatives on pending legislation that the American Legion supports.

"The American Legion Grassroots Action Program" explains legislative issues and encourages Legionnaires "to engage elected officials on Capitol Hill, by either in person visits, phone calls, or through emails, using the Grassroots Action Program webpage." One can access the program at this link:

https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home



Legionnaire of the Year Tom Fisher

Noting that, "as the American Legion family, we are better together," he said the Department of New York passed a resolution at last year's convention, "asking the national organization for action and support of a local campaign to present the Medal of Honor posthumously to Staff Sgt. Michael H. Ollis, who was killed in action while protecting his troops from a suicide bomb on August 28, 2013," in Afghanistan. The National Executive Committee approved the resolution last October and it "was sent to the desk of President Donald J. Trump, Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll, Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis, Senator Charles Schumer, and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand for action and support."

On March 3, 2026, "President Trump presented the Medal of Honor to Robert and Linda Ollis," recognizing their son's "conspicuous gallantry."

,He added: "I have no doubt that

our resolution played a significant role in a renewed effort to see this honor bestowed on the Ollis family."

AUX, SAL AT LEGION COLLEGE

Legion College Dean Timothy Collmer reported that 104 persons had signed up for the college's 2026 session, held June 5-7 at SUNY Morrisville.

The class included 63 Legionnaires, 32 Auxiliary members and nine members of the Sons of the American Legion.

"We graduated 94."

SCOUTING AWARDS HIGHLIGHT COMMITMENT TO YOUTH

Department Scouting Chair Jean Williams announced two awards: The Eagle Scout of the Year and the Scouter of the Year, with the latter, for the first time, going a Girl Scout leader, Kearie Baumgartner from Monroe County in the 7th District. Monroe County Commander Joe Perkins accepted the Scout leader award on behalf of Baumgartner.

This year's Eagle Scout of the Year is David Clearwater from Troop 8 out of Sawkill in Ulster County in the 3rd District. Eagle Scout Clearwater accepted a plaque and scholarship check and addressed the assembly, thanking the American Legion for all it does for youth.

Scouting complements the American Legion's mission "by teaching leadership, citizenship, service, respect for our nation," he said. These are values that "helped shape the person I am today."

Williams also reported a couple of recent changes with Scouting



Eagle Scout of Year David Clearwater

America. "In support of the military, Scouting America is waiving registration fees for children of Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve service members. Additionally, Scouting America introduced the new Military Service & Veterans badge to the Scouts BSA Test Lab. The badge helps Scouts explore the values, history, and human stories behind military service while connecting with veterans and service members."

Regarding recognition for an outstanding Girl Scout, Williams noted that thanks to a resolution passed at the previous year's convention, a committee has developed a proposal and has submitted it to the Department for review.

CONVENTION PUTS FOCUS ON FIRST RESPNDERS

The Conventionput the focus on the outstanding work of first responders. In announcing this year's honorees, Committee Chair Cynthia Nelson said she was "excited to report" that last year's officer of the year, Chautauqua County Sheriff's Deputy Jason Beichner, "was selected by the National Committee on Law and Order to receive the **Northeast Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year** Award." Beichner 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 and capture fleeing suspects. This year's honorees included:

• **Officer of the Year** Nicole Amatore, of Rochester Police Department. She was cited for shooting and stopping an armed suspect, while under fire herself, after three of her fellow officers were wounded last December.

• **Firefighter of the Year** Paul Glasser Sr. of Averill Park Sand Lake Fire Department. He was cited for 51 years of dedicated service that included leadership and instructor roles in both the fire department and its rescue squad. Glasser is a U.S. Navy vet who served in Vietnam.

• **EMT of the Year** Sara Stadler of Erie County Medical Service. As a paramedic she supports suburban EMS units that have minimal manpower. She was cited in particular for taking control of a rainy, chaotic nighttime motor vehicle accident scene, assisted by two other EMS units. Using flash lights to see, she

revived a severely injured person who had been thrown from a vehicle, and continued to care for the victim enroute to the hospital.

• **EMS Squad of the Year** Bellmore Merrick Volunteer Ambulance Service in Bellmore, NY. The squad was cited, in particular, for responding to a private residence where paramedics found an elderly female lying on the floor, unresponsive and not breathing. They were able to revive and stabilized her for transport to the hospital.

• **Police Department of the Year** Jamestown Police Department. Despite operating below minimum staffing, officers responded to over 3,000 calls in 2025, including over 1,000 for serious crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle thefts. Officers voluntarily participate on special teams to further enhance their capability.

• **Fire Department of the Year** Milford Fire Department of Milford, NY. With 50 volunteers, the department responds to over 500 calls per year. Members attend mandatory training and drills. During a blaze last July that destroyed several buildings, Assistant Chief Jonathan Ashe and Firefighter Will Smith rescued a victim trapped in a second floor bedroom.

Nelson noted that the Department of NY was able to honor outstanding first responders thanks to the committees that submit nominations on the post, county and district levels. She singled out for special recognition East Meadow Post 1082 and Post Chairman Leonard Volpe; Nassau County and its chairman, Kevin Tirman; and the 8th District and its chairman, Ted Balbierz



Northeast Officer of Year Jason Beichner with his family and 2025-2026 Department Commander John Miga.





Officer of Year Nicole Amatore and Firefighter of Year Paul Glasser with 2025-2026 Department Commander John Miga.



Jamestown Police Department Deputy Chief Adam McKinley and Chief Scot Forrester accept the Police Dept. of the Year Award.

JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS PROGRAM TAKES AIM AT SAFETY AND MARKSMANSHIP

The American Legion's Junior Shooting Sports Program teaches safety education marksmanship to youth in air rifle target shooting. Posts that field teams during the year look forward to participating in the Department of New York League Championships (held at Cicero American Legion Post 787).

The team from Middletown Post 151 took top honors in the three-position air rifle state championship (sporter category), Jr. Shooting Co-Chair Zack Wallace reported . Team members included Bryan Morales, Yaniel Rodriguez Vera, Estefani Barba, and Guadalupe Delarosa Cuenca.

In the precision category, the Central Square Post 915 team shot to the top. Members include Cameron Corasanti, Megan Revenaugh, Shelby Mosher, and Jennasis Wagner.

passed at the previous year's convention, a committee has developed a proposal and has submitted it to the Department for review.

Individual high scorers were:

• Emily Harwood of Warsaw Post 532 in the sporter category.

• Allyson Gadway of Morrisonville Post 1619 in the precision category.

MEMBERSHIP AWARDS: NEW MEMBERS SLIGHTLY OUTPACE THOSE AGING OUT

The number of new members in the Department of New York slightly outpaced those aging Legionnaires who transitioned to "Post Everlasting" this past year – 2,400 vs. 2,313, Membership Chair Joseph Patnode reported.



The Middletown Post team took first place in the Junior Shooting State Championships (Sporter category).



Emily Harwood is the top shooter in the sporter category.

Two counties hit over 100% of their membership goal:

"Canada County" (a portion of Canada home to Legionnaires) in the Eighth District had 118.52%.

Yates County in the Seventh District had 103.21%

In all, 217 Posts achieved over 100 percent of their membership goals.

While "we are recruiting new members," he noted, "our membership efforts for the coming year must be focused on retaining our members." especially since New York achieved just over 94 percent of its goal of 72,100 members prior to the convention.

"As many of us have heard about the cost of membership, I saw a sign in a post that inspired me:

'It is not the amount you pay to be a member, but the price you paid to be eligible'."

Patnode announced recruiting awards, starting with two top individual recruiters. Receiving a Gold Recruiter Pin with Sapphire Stone was Tracy Lowe of colon-Couch Post 821 in Jefferson County for recruiting more than 25 members.

Receiving a Gold Recruiter Pin was Charles E. Hall of Doris Miller Post 213 in Kings County for recruiting over ten members.

Posts receiving a Membership Citation for achieving 125% or more of membership goals were:

Post 0041- Syracuse (Onondaga CountyJ

Post 0086 – Archie Mc Cord (Nassau County)

Post 0148 – Hanover Memorial (Chautauqua County)

Post 0176- Sullivan-Shafer (Ulster County)

Post 0203 – Beacon (Dutchess County)

Post 0425 – Herbert W. Carr (Niagara County)

Post 0688 – W. E. Coffey-A. E. Wilson (Kings County

Post 0812 – Francis J. Clark, C. M. H. (Washington County)

Post 0979 – LeRoy Gregory (Westchester County)

Post 1097 – North Castle (Westchester County)

Post 1297 – North Syracuse (Onondaga County)

Post 1338 – Francis J. Flaherty (Steuben County)

Post 1363 – Sylvan Liebla, Inc. (Sullivan County)

Post 1390 – Maine (Broome County)

Post 1504- Robert W. Howden (Allegan County)

Post 1689 – Ouleout Valley (Delaware County)

Post 1750 – U.S. Internal Revenue (Albany County)

PR AWARD RECOGNIZES LIMA POST'S OUTREACH

PR Chair Robert Stronach announced that the Excellence in Public Relations Award was going to Anthony Gaiter, commander of Lima Post 282, in recognition of the creation and impactful outreach of Regiment 282

"Through gaming, simple outreach, fellowship and crisis-prevention awareness, Regiment 282 has reached 78 Post members and touched hundreds of others," Stronach said. "The program has garnered the attention of public officials and the public as well as the wider veteran community."



Lima Post Commander Anthony Gaiter accepts Excellence in PR Award from 2025-2026 Commander John Miga.

Post 1766- Irving Hart (Suffolk County)

Post CN18-Tony Matthews (Canada County)

Canada County (Commander Robert J. Winder) and Yates County Commander John Antes) received the Membership Team Medal for achieving the highest percentage over their goals. Canada also received the

Maurice Stember, PNC, Plaque for being the first county to reach its goal and the Michael J. Kogutek, PNC, Plaque for the greatest percentage increase in members.

The Fang A. Wong, PNC, Plaque went to two Posts for being the first to achieve 100 percent in their respective size categories:

- Post 1087 – Cathedral (Nassau County)
- Post 0694 – Northport (Suffolk County)

Richard M. Pedro, PNC< Plaque went to the vice commander whose area had the greatest number of Posts over 100% — Donald C. Sisson, Districts 7 & 8.

Department Commander's Plaque went to the county and post with the greatest percentage increase over their goals: Canada County plus Hanover Memorial Post 148 (Chautauqua County) and Saranac Post 161 (Clinton County).

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Legionnaire Steve E. McCord, director of the Cattaraugus County Veterans Service Agency, is the 2026 John B. Sampson Veterans Service Officer of the Year, Veterans Services Chair Eilene Fisher announced.

McCord was cited for his grassroots advocacy and hands-on approach to helping veterans. For example, to break down geographic barriers for rural veterans, McCord created itinerant office hours—traveling personally to towns across the county to provide direct assistance with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit laws and healthcare systems



Service Officer of the Year Steve McCord is shown with his wife, along with then-Department Commander John Miga and Veterans Services Chair Eilene Fisher.

CONVENTION CANDIDS









DEPARTMENT CONVENTION CANDIDS















DEPARTMENT CONVENTION CANDIDS

photos by Andrew Williams & Robert Stronach



















DEPARTMENT CONVENTION CANDIDS

photos by Andrew Williams & Robert Stronach













ARCADE POST 737 LEGION FAMILY HONORS 'FIRST' VETERANS

Post Hosts Descendants of Revolutionary War Soldiers



Descendants of the Nichols, Parker, and Bakeman veterans are shown with Auxiliary members Cindy Thompson and Cher Mackiewicz — the team whose research led to this day. *FROM LEFT:* ***Paul Nichols and his children Camden and Leora, Cher Mackiewicz, Cindy Thompson, Marcia Garlapo Davis and her daughter Lisa, and Ellen Chandler.***

By CAROLE A. JONES

The American Legion Family in Arcade was honored to have descendants of four Revolutionary War veterans on hand to share in a remembrance of their ancestors' heroism and loyalty. Families related to John Nichols, Abraham Jackson, Leonard Parker and Daniel Bakeman were on hand on Saturday, July 25 for ceremonies at Arcade Rural Cemetery and at the shelter at the Post the Legion shares with VFW Post #374.

Jeff Mason, historian for Arcade's Hugh Lynch Post 737, as well as for the Village and Town of Arcade, began the day with a tour at Arcade Rural Cemetery. There he pointed out the Revolutionary veterans' graves and spoke briefly of how they ended up in the Arcade area — which in the late 1700s and early 1800s was still unsettled wilderness. Around 75 people enjoyed the tour, which was followed by a ceremony saluting each of the men with full military honors.

The ceremony featured Mason talking about the veterans' personal lives and Post Commander Dave Kellner elaborating more on their military service. Third-Vice Commander Rick Mackiewicz offered a blessing for the day and gave an overview of the war and the immense dedication and heroism it took for these men to fight against the British crown for the USA's freedom.

The group then traveled to the Post shelter for an "all-American" picnic of hot dogs, macaroni salad, baked beans, and chips, topped off with apple pie and ice cream.

A program to honor the veterans' descendants took place there, featuring Village Mayor Donna Schiener, who brought proclamations for the families, and Town Supervisor Doug Berwanger, who resented each family with a custom-framed proclamation, declaring a day in honor of each of their patriot ancestors: Leonard Parker Day on July 25; Thomas Dow Day on July 26; Abraham Jackson Day on July 27; John Nichols Day on July 28; and Thomas Root Day on July 29.

The families also received a gift bag which included a custom designed ornament and other memorabilia of the event.

Hugh Lynch Auxiliary Unit 737 President Claudia Miller said the day's celebration had been two years in the making. She explained it was in 2024 when Marcia Garlapo Davis (a descendant of Leonard Parker) ran into Auxiliary members Cher Mackiewicz and Cindy Thompson

Continued on next page.

ARCADE POST 737 LEGION FAMILY HONORS 'FIRST' VETERANS

Continued from previ9ous page.

selling fundraising tickets. She asked them if there were plans to honor Revolutionary War veterans for the 4th of July 2026.

This sparked the pair to ask Jeff Mason how many Revolutionary War vets were actually buried in the area. Finding there were nine — five at Arcade Rural, three at Punkshire, and one at Sandusky cemeteries — they made the decision to try to find living relatives of Thomas Dow and John Nichols, whose gravestones in Arcade are in very poor condition. After countless hours of research, telephone calls, and general inquiries, the two Auxiliary members had successfully located members of the Dow and Nichols families, and new bronze plaques were ordered in 2025.

Along the way, that didn't seem like enough, so a plan was made to mark the USA's 250th Birthday with an event that would honor all nine veterans, and families were invited. In the interim, the ladies expanded their search, and additional families were located and invited to attend.

A performance by the Pioneer Community Band capped off the day of remembrance and honor. Conductor Jared Burch led the group through a dozen or more arrangements, choosing mostly patriotic numbers for the occasion. Funding for this event was provided by the NYS 250th Commemoration Commission & NYS Education Department, as administered through the Wyoming County Historian's Office.



Town of Arcade Supervisor Douglas Berwanger presented a custom plaque to Leonard Parker's descendant, Marcia Garlapo Davis, which proclaimed Saturday, July 25 as "Leonard Parker Day" in Arcade.



VFW Post 374 purchased a brick for its Veterans Memorial Walkway that is inscribed with the names of the Revolutionary War soldiers. *FROM LEFT:* ***Legionnaires Mike Jones, Rick Mackiewicz and Hugh Lynch Post 737 Commander David Kellner.***



Hugh Lynch Post 737 Historian Jeff Mason speaks to the crowd at Arcade Rural Cemetery, during the service there.

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS

Department Leaders at 9/11 Memorials





Firemen's Memorial in New York City and the 9/11 Memorial and Reflecting Pool. *Photos by Gary Schacher.*

A contingent from the Department of New York joined National Commander Jay Bowen in New York City Sept. 11 for the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In the morning the Legionnaires attended the Fireman's Memorial in Manhattan, where hundreds of firefighters from around the country came to honor 343 firefighters who perished at the World Trade Center's Twin Towers. The peel of a bell rang out after each name was read. Then New York Fire Department bagpipers played Amazing Grace, followed by a bugler rendering Taps.

"In the afternoon we paid our respects at the 9/11 Reflecting Pool and 9/11 Memorial," located where the World Trade Center once stood.



National Commander Jay Bowen with Bobby Straub, who is retired from the NYFD and a member of Theodore Korony Post 253 in the Bronx.

reported Department Adjutant Gary Schacher.

Noted National Commander Bowen: "I don't like to call this an anniversary because that suggests a happy occasion. This is a solemn remembrance. A quarter-century has passed but we must always remember what occurred. We owe it to the nearly 3,000 innocent people who were murdered that day."

In between visiting the Firemen's Memorial and the 9/11 sites, they had lunch at Kim Lau Post 129 The Post had put up a banner reminding everyone to "never forget".

In addition to Schacher and Bowen, the group included Department Commander Tom Schreck, Past

Continued on next page.

SPECIAL PROJECT RAISES OVER $20,00

Past Dept. Commander Presents Check to Safety Village

2025-2026 Department Commander John Miga, during his visits to 62 counties across New York State, advocated for the Chautauqua Safety Village as one of his Commander's Projects.

His project raised $20,470. In presenting a check for that amount to Safety Village officials, he said the donation "will make a huge impact on their mission to promote the well-being of children and community members through a wide range of experiential safety training and services."

For information about the organization, go to www.chautauquasafetyvillage.com



From left: ***Ashley Caruso, Lead Educator; Lisa McLaughlin, Associate Director; Jessica Dayton, Executive Director; John Miga, 2025-26 Department Commander, Jeffery Levandoski, 2025-26 Chautauqua County Commander.***

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS

Continued from previous page.

National Commander Fang Wong, Past Department Commander Frank LaMarsh, and Department Vice Commander Peter DelDebbio.

·**LEGION POSTS** across the state also took part in 9/11 rembrances. Here are a few examples:

In Amagansett at Post 419, Sons of The American Legion Squadron 419 and the East Hampton Fire Chiefs Association co-hosted a commemoration ceremony. East Hampton fire departments set up two ladder trucks with an American flag hoisted near a 9/11 memorial site.

In Malone, American Legion Post 219 teamed with Malone AMVETS Post 8, Sons of the AMVETS Post 8 and Malone Elks Lodge 1303 for a tribute ceremony. Volunteers at the St. André Bessette Parish gym read the names of those who lost their lives on 9/11.

"Today we gather as a community to remember the lives that were lost, honor the first responders, service members and every day Americans who answered the call and recognize the sacrifices made on that day and the years that followed," Post 219's Autumn Jenks said. "Today we gather not to simply remember how those lives were lost, but to remember how they were lived. We remember the husbands and wives, sons and daughters who began that morning believing it was just another ordinary day. We remember the firefighters, police officers, EMTs, first responders and ordinary citizens who ran towards danger when every instinct told them to run away."

In St. Regis Falls, area Legion posts joined with Franklin County first responders for a commemoration included a procession through St. Regis Falls and a ceremony, featuring local speakers who had responded to Ground Zero in the weeks following the terror attacks. American Legion Post 322 Commander Ralph LaPage, who served two tours in Afghanistan with the 10th Mountain Division, noted:.

"On Sept. 11, 2001, I learned of the attack when my company was in the field, trucks rolled up and we were brought back to the barracks and placed on lock down," LaPage said. "Three weeks later we were on a C-17 headed for Uzbekistan."

24TH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Band of the Tonawandas Hits High Note Again



ABOVE & BELOW: ***Band of the Tonawandas gives winning performance at the National Convention.*** *American Legion photos.*

American Legion Band of the Tonawandas, sponsored by Post 264 in Tonawanda, N.Y. again took the national championship in the 2026 American Legion National Convention Concert Band Contest held Aug. 29 at Louisville's Kentucky International Exposition Center.

This marks the band's 24th national championship. The internationally traveled band performed:

• "Esprit de Corps" by Robert Jager, commissioned in 1984 for the President's Own Marine band.

• Official West Point March" by Philip Egner, which at one point included most of the band's members singing along.

• "Danza Symphonica" by James Barnes

Judges gave the Band of the Tonawandas a top score of 95.33.



STATE SENATE VETERANS HALL OF FAME



Lori Dispenza with her family and Sen. George Borrello at Legion Post 434.

State Sen. George Borrello inducted U.S. Army veteran and longtime veterans advocate Lori Dispenza has been inducte into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame for 2026. She was honored during a September ceremony at American Legion Post 434 in Brocton.

The former staff sergeant served more than a decade, including a 15-month deployment to Kirkuk, Iraq, with the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division.

After leaving the Army in 2010, Dispenza earned a degree in psychology with a minor in criminal justice from SUNY Fredonia and an advanced certificate in Veterans Services.

She joined Chautauqua County Veterans Service Agency in 2014 and later served with the New York State Department of Veterans' Services before returning to Chautauqua County as a Veterans Service Officer in Dunkirk.



State Sen. Tom O'Mara formally welcomed Denis Oliver into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame during a September ceremony at Bath American Legion Post 173.

Denis Oliver, a longtime advocate for Steuben County veterans, was honored during a September ceremony at Bath American Legion Post 173, where State Sen. Tom O'Mara formally welcomed him into the Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

Oliver spent two decades as a service officer with the Steuben County Veterans' Service Agency, retiring in 2024. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1981 after graduating from high school, and was honorably discharged in 1985 after serving in Germany and the U.S.

From 2019 until his retirement, he also served as a NY Department of Veterans Services Advisor. The American Legion Department of New York named Oliver as Service Officer of the in 2011.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER ENCOUNTERS UNIQUE SIGHTS DURING VISITS

Department Commander Tom Schreck is busy visiting counties across the state, enjoying time with the Legion Family, and encountering unique features of many of those areas -- such as a fiddle-toting bear in St. Lawrence County, a guitar-strumming Legionnaire in Clinton County, a Northrop T-38 Talon military jet trainer in Franklin County, a canon demonstraton at Warren County's Fort William Henry, an eagle sculpture in Hamilton County, preference for sailors in Montgomery County, and being welcomed by perhaps the youngest Legion Family member. *Photos by Andrew Williams.*











