



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

## **Senator Larkin Announces The National Purple Heart Hall Of Honor Is Now Open To The Public**

William J. Larkin Jr.

December 19, 2006

This past weekend, Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) was joined by Governor George E. Pataki and Purple Heart recipients from across the country, to celebrate the official opening of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New Windsor.

Servicemen and women representing multi-generations and branches of service, along with their families and veteran organizations took part in the celebration. The day's events included a building dedication and formal military ceremony to mark the occasion and Veteran's Day observance. The Hall of Honor is the nation's only permanent archive, museum, educational center and memorial solely dedicated to Purple Heart recipients and commemorating their extraordinary sacrifices.

"The historic opening of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is a meaningful occasion that allows us to pay tribute to the heroic efforts and sacrifices made by our country's military men and women in pursuit of the freedoms we enjoy today,"

said Governor Pataki. "Visitors through the doors of the Hall will experience an important part of our country's heritage by learning about our veterans' remarkable acts of courage. The participation of our nation's Purple Heart recipients and their families in sharing these stories will enable visitors today and for generations ahead to understand

and appreciate the valor shown by our veterans in protecting our great nation."

Senator Larkin said, "This is an historic moment--a truly important event in our nation's history. After many years of planning, we now have a very special place to honor the lives of every single person throughout the nation's history who has ever received the Purple Heart Medal. Those who have received this award know exactly the price they paid to preserve our nation's freedom--and so do their loved ones. The Purple Heart Hall of Honor will honor those who suffered greatly; those who still suffer the scars of battle; and those we lost. It will be a place where family members in particular can feel the pride and gratefulness that we all feel for the brave individuals who so valiantly defended our country, and a place where we can all reflect on the meaning of their sacrifice. The Hall of Honor will preserve the stories of these ordinary men and women and the extraordinary things they have done in the name of freedom."

Highlights of the event included a keynote address by special guest Lieutenant General R. Steven Whitcomb, Commander of the 3rd Army, U.S. Army Central, performances by the 3rd United States Infantry Regiment Fife and Drum Corps, the United States Military Academy Band and the USO of Metropolitan NY, a flyover by Blackhawk helicopters, the premiere of the documentary film For Military Merit: The Purple Heart, and a book signing by the author of Heart of a Hawk. Throughout the day's program there were tours of the Hall, opportunities for Purple Heart recipients to share their stories, military re-enactors on site to interpret the history of the New

Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site along with other activities such as lectures, children's programs, and information displays.

Located at New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site, the \$6 million Hall of Honor project included the construction of a 7,500 sq. ft. facility with a reception area, gallery, exhibit hall, learning and education center for school groups and tours, and presentation room.

Through historical photographs, a documentary film by ABC TV, period objects and videotaped recollections by the veterans themselves, the Hall provides a multi-media experience exploring the spirit of the American people in times of conflict.

"From this day forward, Patriots and families for generations now have hallowed ground where all may visit, at the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, and reflect with pride the sacrifice of veterans who put aside all personal and cultural differences to defend America," said Tom Poulter, National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

The state committed more than \$4 million toward the planning, design and development of the Hall of Honor. The project has long been supported by veterans from across the country and their families, Congresswoman Sue Kelly, Senator Larkin, the Elaine and William Kaplan Family Private Foundation, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the national organization whose members are Purple Heart recipients.

So far, the personal stories of more than 12,000 veterans serving during World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan have been shared and the Hall continues to receive hundreds of stories each week. The collection includes valuable personal information on the background and service information of the recipient, the circumstances surrounding their wounding, photographs and letters home, and copies of discharge forms or citations that document receipt of the medal.

Anyone who would like to share his or her personal story or any family member or friend of a Purple Heart Medal recipient should contact the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, P.O. Box 207, New Windsor, New York, 12584 or call toll free at 877-28HONOR.

The New Windsor Cantonment was the final winter encampment of General George Washington's northern Continental Army during the American Revolution. It was during this period that General Washington created the Badge of Military Merit. The Badge is considered the precursor to the Purple Heart medal and the first award for valor. The present-day Purple Heart medal took as its inspiration the color and shape of the Badge and added the image of George Washington to honor the man who so valued the outstanding service of his soldiers.