



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Klein, Koppel And Miss USA® Deliver Gifts And Valentines To Veterans At Bronx V.A. Hospital

JEFFREY D. KLEIN February 21, 2005

Bronx, NY – State Senator Jeff Klein, New York City Councilmember Oliver Koppel and Shandi Finnessey, Miss USA® 2004, honored veterans at the Bronx V.A. Hospital today, presenting them with products donated by local merchants and valentines made by neighborhood schoolchildren. The gift-giving was the culminating moment of Klein's 7th Annual Valentines for Veterans program, which also featured remarks by elected officials and the presentation of an award to local veteran Joseph Garofalo.

"As our military forces makes tremendous sacrifices in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is important that we recognize those who made their own many years ago, in Germany, Japan, Vietnam, and elsewhere," said Klein, in thanking attending veterans from the community and the V.A. nursing home.

Similar praise was voiced by Community Board 10 District Manager James Vacca, who said, "Without the veterans who were willing to put their lives on the line for our country, we would not have the freedoms we too often take for granted today."

The veterans were also commended by Ms. Finnessey, who was crowned Miss USA in April

2004, and has reached out to veterans and active duty military personnel throughout her reign. She has visited Cuba and Korea on USO tours and met with wounded service men and women at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital. Shandi has also worked with the USO of Illinois and the Intrepid Foundation in New York City.

Klein began the event as an Assemblyman in Morris Park, and was excited to have extended it to his new State Senate district. "Two new schools were added to the program this year," Klein said. "When children make valentines for veterans they become knowledgeable about the veterans' contributions. This helps to ensure that the veterans' legacy will remain strong."

The two schools participating in the program for the first time were P.S. 19 in Woodlawn and P.S. 175 in City Island. P.S. 108 and P.S. 83 continued their involvement. Together, the schools' students created over three hundred valentines for the veterans.

Local merchants contributed as well, providing hundreds of toiletries like toothpaste, toothbrushes, hand lotion and other goods commonly used by veterans at the nursing home in the Bronx V.A Hospital.

Neighborhood veteran Joseph Garofalo received a special honor for his efforts to preserve the history of Bronx veterans. Garofalo, a World War II veteran, has been working to establish a Bronx Military Museum.

---