



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Celebrates North Country Veterans at Ft. Drum Event

PATTY RITCHIE May 3, 2012

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

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31 Veterans from Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties Recognized

State Senator Patty Ritchie honored 39 veterans from across Central and Northern New York, including 31 from Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties today at a special ceremony at Ft. Drum.

***** [CLICK HERE TO SEE VIDEO OF THE FORT DRUM CELEBRATION](#) *****

*** [CLICK HERE FOR COMPLETE BIOS OF THE NOMINEES](#) ***

In addition to recognizing veterans from Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, the Senator announced retired US Army Col. Michael Plummer (Jefferson County), founder of the “Adopt-a-Platoon” program, as the 2012 inductee to the State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to say ‘thanks’ to these brave men and women who have one of the toughest, most selfless jobs there is—the job of protecting our freedom,” Senator Ritchie said.

“Their service has taken them across the globe—from Korea to Afghanistan—and they continue to serve even after returning home. We will never be able to repay the debt we owe these men and women, but we should take every opportunity we get to recognize their sacrifice.”

The 39 veterans all were nominated by family, friends, co-workers and comrades-in-arms for their military service to our nation, and their continuing work and involvement in causes that benefit and improve our local communities.

Each nominee was presented with a plaque outlining highlights of their service at the ceremony, which was held at USO Ft. Drum’s Heritage Center. Representatives of the Army’s 10th Mountain Division were also on-hand to recognize the honorees.

Short biographies of the Jefferson and St. Lawrence County nominees are available below. Full biographies can be found by [clicking this link](#).

Jefferson County

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Colonel Michael Plummer – a 21-year U.S. Army veteran who played a key role in bringing the 10th Mountain Division to Northern New York. Plummer is also the founder of the ‘Adopt-a-Platoon’ program at Ft. Drum. **Timothy Ambrose of Black River** – former Legion of the Year Award winner and Vietnam era member of the US Air Force who brought his firefighting skills home to Black River

Michael Bice of Watertown – a NY State Police sergeant, volunteer firefighter and member of the Army National Guard who is currently deployed, has already served overseas in Japan and Australia, and in combat missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan

- **Jeffrey Houghton of Watertown**—a U.S. Navy veteran who received the Good Conduct Medal. Houghton is currently an American Legion chaplain and a member of the American Legion Riders.

Paul Cortright – a 20-year Army veteran who has dedicated his life to veterans, rising from Post Commander to the American Legion’s New York State Department Commander

Luther Farnsworth – 30-veteran of Kuwait, Iraq and the Global War on Terror, he has continued to serve veterans as a past commander of his local American Legion and serving in the Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Riders

Cassandra Gould of Fort Drum – After 22 years of service in the Army, she continues serving her fellow veterans through the American Legion

Judy Gonzalez-Wallace of Carthage – Army veteran who has continued to serve the veterans community as a member of the American Legion, the auxiliary and the Legion Riders

Willie Hairston of Deferiet – Vietnam veteran who has continued to serve in the American Legion, where he served as post commander, and in the VFW where he served in positions at both the county and state department level

Stanley Kaminski of Watertown – 20-year veteran who served in Somalia, Bosnia, Vietnam and Desert Storm before advocating for veterans through veterans organizations as co-chair of the Fort Drum retirees council

Russell Lynch of Antwerp – after earning two Bronze Stars and being shot in the leg battling the Germans in WWII, he returned home where he played an active role in his community, serving as president of the rural letter carriers association

Leo Marc-Aurele Jr. of Evans Mills – Navy veteran who has continued to serve his fellow veterans in the American Legion

Charles McConnell of Brownville – Veteran of the US Air Force who served in Kosovo, Desert Storm and Desert Shield, he has continued to serve his community as a village trustee, member of

the fire department and member of the American Legion

William James Nasworthy Jr. of Watertown – After serving in the Global War on Terror, he has been an exemplary employee at Fort Drum, earning the customer service award and helping veterans through the VFW

Gerald F. “Jerry” Tighe of Watertown – After 24 years in the Navy submarine service during the Cold War, he has continued serving area veterans through the Veterans of Foreign Wars

Edward Wallace of Carthage – After serving in the Army in Germany, Egypt, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia where he was in the front line of during the first Gulf War, he has continued serving veterans in the American Legion

Rishel “Rick” White of Adams – During the Battle of Bulge he was taken prisoner by the Germans, but lived to tell the tale and has continued to educate new generations about WWII

James Williams Jr. of Felts Mills – A 20-year veteran of the Army, he has continued serving veterans in the American Legion, where he serves as post commander

Charles Van Sickle of Black River – A Vietnam veteran, he has continued to serve his fellow veterans as the past commander of his local American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and VFW.

Madison Cobb of Henderson – A survivor of what many described as a suicide mission at Pointe du Hoc during the D-Day invasion, the Navy veteran returned home where he continued to serve his community.

Raymond Gandia of Natural Bridge – Friends described the Army Ranger as a “soldier’s soldier,” but even after he left the service, when terrorists attacked on 9/11 he volunteered to help at Ground Zero.

Tyler Pickett of Antwerp – Killed in action during his second tour in Iraq, he was active in the American Legion in Antwerp and the VFW in Corning.

Joseph Theinert of Evans Mills – A member of the Army National Guard, he also made the ultimate sacrifice while serving with the 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan.

St. Lawrence County

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Clarence Berry of Ogdensburg – Veteran of U.S. Army in WW II, Korea and Vietnam era, longtime veterans activist and military historian

Nellie Coakley of Canton – Vietnam War Army Nurse who pioneered efforts to help veterans with post traumatic stress issues in Northern New York

Donald Cooke of Ogdensburg – Vietnam combat veteran, longtime member of the Army Reserves, and Ogdensburg veterans activist who helped bring the Moving Vietnam Wall to the city

Ronald “Joe” Fields of Lisbon – Air Force veteran who waited for orders during the Cuban Missile Crisis on whether he would bomb Havana and longtime Lisbon veterans affairs and community activist

Jeremiah Pete Havens of Ogdensburg – For 32 years, as New York State Veterans Counselor, Pete Havens advocated for North Country veterans

Thomas Morrison of St. Lawrence County – Army Russian interrogator who saw the end of the Cold War in Europe and uses his experiences to inspire his social studies students in the classroom

Patrick Rourk of Norwood – 24-year Air Force veteran and former St. Lawrence County Veterans Services Director and veterans advocate.

Arthur G. Wilson of Ogdensburg – WWII and Korean sailor and longtime veterans activist and advocate for disabled vets in St. Lawrence County.

Complete bios of all the nominees can be found by [clicking here](#).

