



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Teams WITH Historians to Honor ‘Hometown Heroes’

PATTY RITCHIE August 24, 2012

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Exhibits in Jefferson, Oswego, St. Lawrence Counties Highlights Region’s Rich History of Soldiers Who Gained USA’s Top Military Honor

Marking the 150th anniversary of the creation of the Medal of Honor, State Senator Patty Ritchie has joined with area historians to spotlight the 45 local military veterans who have received the nation’s top military decoration of valor.

[CLICK THIS LINK TO VIEW THE EXHIBIT ONLINE.](#)

Senator Ritchie’s “Hometown Heroes” exhibit will be on display at museums across Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties over the next several weeks. The exhibit kicked off with a reception Thursday at the Jefferson County Historical Society in Watertown that was attended by historians, veterans,

representatives of Fort Drum and military history buffs.

“This exhibit honors not only our region’s rich military history, from the Civil War to the growth of Fort Drum, but recognizes the unique sacrifices of some of the USA’s greatest heroes, men and one woman from different walks of life who earned the enduring respect and admiration of a nation through their actions, valor and service,” Senator Ritchie said.

“It brings to light a history that many of us didn’t know, and should make us all proud of the role that individuals from our communities played in building this great nation.”

The exhibit includes brief biographies of 15 Medal of Honor recipients from the three counties, including:

- Oswego’s Dr. Mary Walker—the only woman ever to receive the Medal of Honor;
- Private Joseph Lonsway of Clayton, who swam across a river under heavy fire to secure a position for his comrades, and lead them to victory;
- A pair of brothers who each received the Medal of Honor;
- Waddington Lt. John Rutherford, who talked the commander of a vastly superior Confederate force to surrender after shooting his horse, and
- Sgt. Jared Monti, a 10th Mountain soldier who died in Afghanistan while aiding wounded comrades.

Senator Ritchie plans to add to the exhibit in future months.

The Medal of Honor was commissioned by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to recognize soldiers who exhibited extraordinary valor in the war to reunite the union.

Fewer than 3,500 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines have received the decoration in that war, and all intervening conflicts—and fully one-quarter of them have been New Yorkers—a fact that Senator Ritchie hopes to highlight through the exhibit and her accompanying proposal to rename certain bridges and overpasses in the state for these heroes.

“As New Yorkers, we can all be proud of the contributions of the men and women of our state to secure freedom and liberty throughout the world, including those who received the Medal of Honor, those who put on our nation’s uniform in all conflicts, and those who continue to serve today,” Senator Ritchie said. “We can be especially proud of those who called this region home, and who stood to defend a way of life that we all enjoy today.”

The “Hometown Heroes” exhibit is currently on display at the Jefferson County Historical Society in Watertown, as well as the St. Lawrence County Historical Association at Silas Wright House through Sept. 15.

It can also be seen at the St. Lawrence Power and Equipment Museum during next weekend's Old Fashioned Harvest Days in Madrid, and will be on display from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 at the Halfshire Historical Society Museum in Richland, Oswego County.

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Senator Ritchie thanked the Jefferson County Historical Society, and Executive Director Bill Wood; the St. Lawrence County Historical Association and Executive Director Trent Trulock; the St. Lawrence Power and Equipment Museum, and Old Fashioned Harvest Days President Roger Austin; Carrie Rutherford, the Madrid Town Deputy Historian; the Halfshire Historical Society and Executive Director Shawn Doyle, for their assistance in presenting the Hometown Heroes exhibit in their communities.