



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Murphy: My Brother Vinny Helps Give Veterans A Place They Can Call Home

TERRENCE MURPHY August 8, 2016

YORKTOWN, NY- Senator Terrence Murphy has been a voice and an advocate for our veterans, sponsoring legislation to have the Vietnam Veterans of America recognized as benevolent order, supporting tax and transportation bills that enhance their quality of life, and authoring laws to protect military spouses.

In seeking like-minded organizations to aid our veterans, Senator Murphy and his staff discovered "My Brother Vinny," a charity that has helped over 340 for military personnel by distributing food, clothing, furniture and house wares to veterans, outreach groups, and shelters in the Hudson Valley. All of the veterans that My Brother Vinny assists come from various branches of the military and have varied disabilities and hardships.

"Our veterans have fought and sacrificed so that we can lead better lives. Many come back to the states unsure of their future with no place to live," said Senator Murphy. "My Brother Vinny gives back to those who have given us our freedom. They offer hope, friendship and a way to turn an empty space into a home. They provide a vital, valuable service that I urge our community to support."

Senator Murphy recognized the charitable work of My Brother Vinny with a proclamation in August 2015, when the organization helped its 200th veteran. Other community service

awards My Brother Vinny has received include the Robert J. Uplinger Distinguished Service Award, the Brandel Murphy Youth Service Award, the Yorktown Elks Club Distinguished Citizenship Award, the Yorktown Rotary Paul Harris Fellow Award, and the Cortlandt Rotary 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award.

My Brother Vinny was founded in 2013 by Yorktown resident Paula Miritello. The charity is named in honor of Ms. Miritello's special needs brother, who lived his life with cerebral palsy before passing away in 2000, but refused to be defined by his disability. Ms. Miritello said of her charity, "I wanted to give Vincent a legacy. In 2011 I was in a car accident that left me unable to walk for four months. My brother spent his whole life in a wheelchair. I clearly understood his physical limitations and needs. The work I did with helping people with mental issues, disabilities and homelessness evolved into the work we do helping veterans start over."

My Brother Vinny's motto is: "Helping mankind one good deed at a time." Ms. Miritello does not charge the veterans; the organization is solely dependent on donors and contributions from the community.

All of the items donated to My Brother Vinny are in pristine condition and are stored in weather-proof units until they are ready to be disbursed. Many are donated by families; some of the items even come from movie sets.

Ms. Miritello's entire crew is made up entirely of volunteers, including veterans Ronald Hansford and Wayne Reese as well as college students Tom Guzzo, Vinny Daddonna and Stephen Donohue.

Ronald Hansford is playfully known as "#211," being the two-hundred-and-eleventh veteran helped by My Brother Vinny. "I served in Vietnam and was taught to fend for myself. So I

was shocked when a group of people came to my apartment and gave me furniture and everything else you could imagine to restart my life. I offered them money - they wouldn't take it. They did it out of the kindness of their hearts, without expecting anything in return. That's when I fell in love with Paula and her organization, and I've been involved ever since."

"It's all about giving back to the people who served their country," added Wayne Reese, veteran #190. "You give somebody a couch, a few lamps and a bed and they feel more like they have a real home, a real life. That's enough of a payment for us."

Senator Murphy's staff recently accompanied Ms. Miritello and the My Brother Vinny crew to Montrose and Croton-on-Hudson to help two veterans furnish their new homes. Tim, veteran #328, was overwhelmed with joy when he received several couches, lamps, and a bed.

Nick Santamaria, an intern with Senator Murphy said, "What makes My Brother Vinny so unique is its humanity. Every veteran, no matter what their story, background or age, is given the tools to make a home, start over, and know they are cherished by the country they served. Paula is living proof that a single passionate individual can inspire others to go out and change the world one act of kindness at a time."

In addition to her moving company, Ms. Miritello runs community events such as "My Brother Vinny Play Time With a Purpose," a free monthly program at Gymboree Play and Music in Yorktown that combines arts, music and dance. She runs an annual My Brother Vinny Walk, which helps local animal shelters and rescue groups. She also participates in the walk for Special Olympics and collects food and winter coats in memory of her brother. My Brother Vinny is fortunate to have enough furniture and furnishing to help veterans. What they need most is financial support to pay for transportation and storage. To help, visit their website at mybrothervinny.org.