



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy announces \$185,000 for Westchester County's Veteran's Peer-to-Peer Program

TERRENCE MURPHY June 3, 2017

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Mt. Kisco, NY - Many of our veterans have selflessly served their country and are now paying the price for having been on the front lines. Having spoken with veterans in VA hospitals and in the community, Senator Terrence Murphy sought funding to help assist those affected by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Flanked by Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino and other elected officials at the American Legion Moses Taylor Post #136 in Mount Kisco, Senator Murphy announced

today that he had secured \$185,000 in funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Services Program in Westchester County.

Senator Murphy and Northwell Health had a second surprise announcement. In conjunction with Northern Westchester Hospital and Phelps Memorial Hospital, Northwell Health has formed a "barracks to business" program that will provide 1,000 jobs to veterans in Westchester County.

Among the elected officials, agency representatives and guests showing their support for our veterans were Westchester County Executives Francis Corcoran and Margaret Cunzio; Mount Kisco Mayor Michael Cindrich, and Ron Tocci, Director of the Westchester County Veterans Service Agency. Andrea Molina, Director of Veteran Services, Case Management Representative Jessica Encarnacion and Outreach Specialist Theodore Ottman represented Vet 2 Vet, and Cliff Brunell, Jacklyn Stern and John Paine were on hand from the Northern Westchester Veterans Committee. As Senator Murphy noted, the press conference was all about our veterans, who were ably represented by American Legion members Paul Hughes, Don Ford, Dan Muffucci and Post Commander John Odom. They were joined by New Castle Vietnam Army veteran James McCauley.

"Twenty veterans a day commit suicide. That is one every seventy-two minutes. The Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program has provided support to veterans and most importantly, saved lives," said Senator Murphy. "The program offers veterans an opportunity to support one another, to listen and benefit from each other's experiences. A veteran may be able to help a returning veteran readjust to civilian life, return to school, land a job, or obtain any veteran's services they may need."

Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino said, "Many of our veterans who returned

home, whether in past wars or the wars of today, come home with some sort of physical or mental scar. They are coming home to a scarier place. Perhaps they cannot find a job or have problems readjusting to civilian life. This program is an opportunity for veterans to speak one-on-one with someone who has been through what they are experiencing and can help get them back on their feet."

"This funding will be very beneficial to our veterans in Westchester," said County Legislator Cunzio. "On a personal level, I have two cousins who are veterans on active duty, including one who has served five tours in Syria. This is an important program that can help veterans who return home refocus their lives."

County Legislator Corcoran commented, "Thank you, Senator Murphy and County Executive Astorino for continuing to bring needed services to our veterans. This peer-to-peer program draws from the valuable experiences of men and women who have conquered their own demons and are willing to extend a helping hand to help others. It is another way we can say 'thank you' to our veterans for the many sacrifices they have made to protect our freedom."

A veteran and a member of the American Legion, Mount Mayor Michael Cindrich has seen first-hand how hard it can be for a returning vet to reacclimate. He worked with Senator Murphy to create S6577A, legislation that would allow business franchise and personal tax income gifts for the support of state run veterans' homes. "Mount Kisco has been steadfast in our devotion to our disabled veterans, particularly those with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries," said Mayor Cindrich. "The passionate and loyal support that Senator Murphy and County Executive Astorino have shown our veterans is unprecedented. We are proud to be partnering with Northwell and Northern Westchester Hospital to do more to help our veterans."

Ron Tocci, Director of the Westchester County Veterans Service Agency, commented, "Special thanks to Senator Murphy for his support to increase funding for the Peer-to-Peer Veterans program. No one understands the problems of a veteran better than another veteran does. Since its inception, the Peer-to-Peer Veterans program has been one of the most successful treatments for these special veterans. This therapy has literally been a life saver for many veterans."

Statistics show that as many as 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, 10 percent of Gulf War and 30 percent of Vietnam veterans experience PTSD. The program is run for veterans by veterans, providing peer-to-peer counseling between veterans who personally understand the effects of PTSD and TBI.

The Program is named for an Army medic from New York who enlisted following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 PFC Dwyer was deployed with his unit to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. During their combat mission to Baghdad, a photographer captured an image of PFC Dwyer cradling a wounded Iraqi boy. The image became a symbol of the American soldiers' dedication to duty.

PFC Dwyer returned home, but due to complications from PTSD, he was never the same. Wracked by his inner demons, PFC Dwyer committed suicide on June 28, 2008 at the age of 31.

The Program draws its inspiration from the camaraderie that comes from a shared experience of life in the military. The goals of the program include helping returning veterans adjust to civilian life, pursue outreach and education, to provide peer support, encourage a connection among family, friends, and community and to provide access to

suicide prevention/intervention initiatives.