



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★



★ 2025 ★

VETERANS

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Dear Friends,

New York State has a proud history of national service. A New Yorker has answered the call to defend our freedom in every conflict fought by the United States of America, beginning with its independence. Today, more than half a million veterans call the Empire State home.

Every year, the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame ceremony honors the contributions of our veterans. This event gives “duty, honor, and country” a name, a face, and a home in our Great State. We induct these men and women to ensure that their legacy of service lives on and inspires generations to come.

These veterans have been nominated not only because of their military service, but because of their enduring contributions at home. Their post-military professions are as diverse as the Senate districts and communities they call home. Each of these nominees possesses a sense of purpose and a lasting commitment to public service that inspires and benefits us all.

Honoring these individuals strengthens the fabric of the Empire State. We give our sincerest thanks to the 2025 New York State Veterans Hall of Fame inductees for their service to our State and Nation.



Andrea Stewart-Cousins

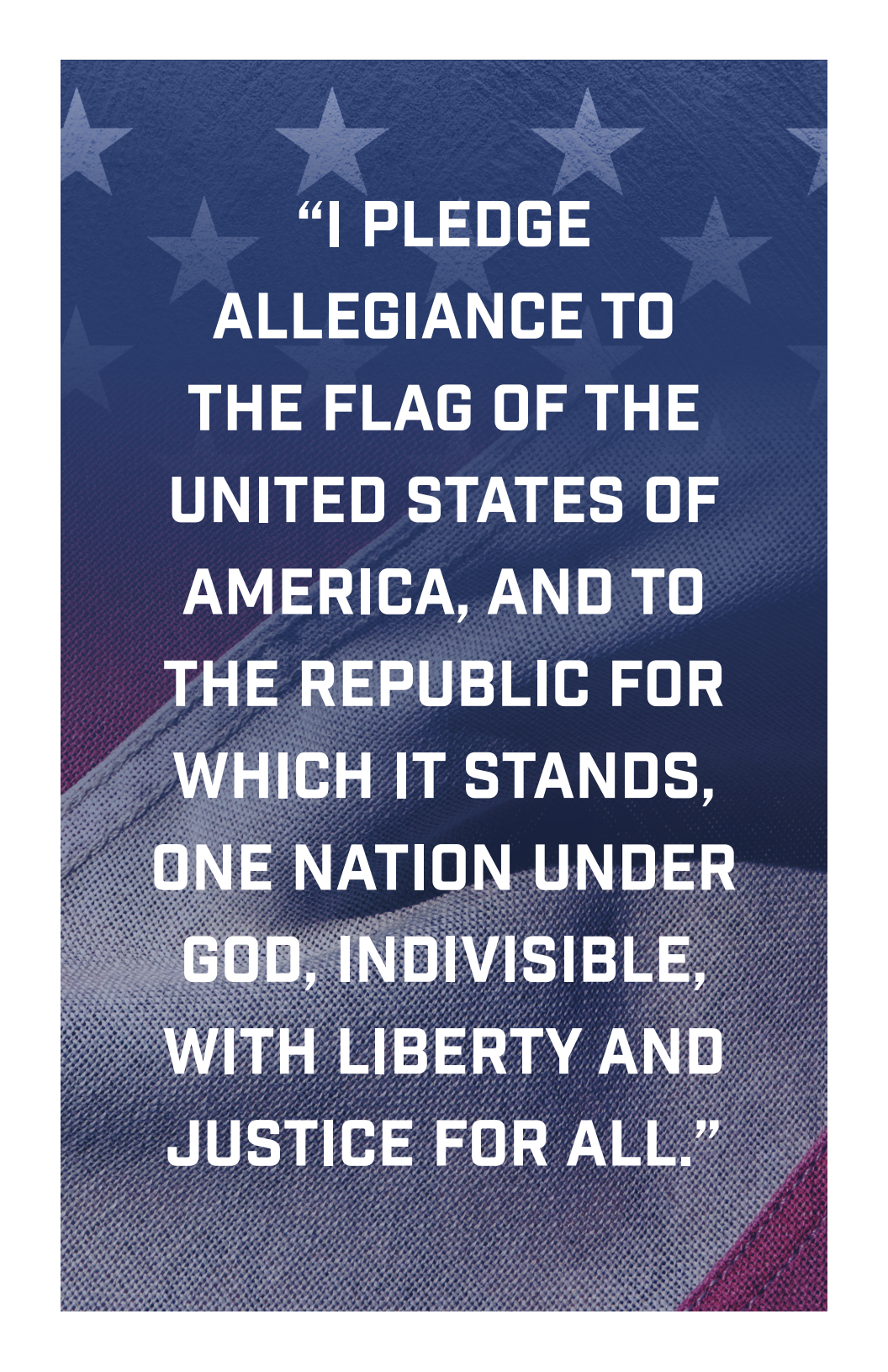
Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore
NYS Senate Majority Leader



Robert G. Ort

Senator Robert G. Ort
Minority Leader



The background of the image is a close-up, textured view of the American flag. The top half shows a field of white stars on a dark blue background, while the bottom half shows the red and white stripes. The texture of the fabric is visible.

**“I PLEDGE
ALLEGIANCE TO
THE FLAG OF THE
UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA, AND TO
THE REPUBLIC FOR
WHICH IT STANDS,
ONE NATION UNDER
GOD, INDIVISIBLE,
WITH LIBERTY AND
JUSTICE FOR ALL.”**

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LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING THE 2025 NEW YORK STATE SENATE VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

HONORING the distinguished veterans from the State of New York upon the occasion of their induction into the New York State Senate 2025 Veterans Hall of Fame

WHEREAS, Members of the Armed Services from the State of New York, who have served so valiantly and honorably in wars in which this country's freedom was at stake, as well as in the preservation of peace in peacetime, deserve a special salute from this Legislative Body; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor the distinguished veterans from the State of New York upon the occasion of their induction into the New York State Senate 2025 Veterans Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame inductees are members of any branch of the United States Armed Forces, which include Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Marine Corps; these exceptional men and women are chosen for this prestigious honor based on either service in combat or notable work performed after discharge from the service; and

WHEREAS, The 2025 inductees include: Joaquin Afonso, Jane Altachon-Davis, Arthur G. Austin, Jr., Lawrence Badger, Vicki Bello, Richard Bingham, Edward R. Blankenhorn, David Brisbane, Captain Patrick J. Cassidy, Ventura Colon, John Cooper, Jr., Betsy Crumity, Matthew J. DeGregorio, Max Donatelli, Marisa Estrella, John Flynn, Brian Garcia, Frank F. Gee, The Honorable Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor, Dan Guida, Thomas James Harnisher, Ronnie Hart, James A. Hodges, Sr., Morrison John Hosley Jr., Detrel Howell, Randy Jurgensen, Michael Kilano, Ted Kniazuk, Frank LaMarsh, Eladio Lamboy, Aaron Leonard, Daniel Luciano, Louis Lupinacci, Luke A. Magliaro, Jr., Joseph Bert Mahoney, Benjamin W. Margolius, Robert McCarthy, Steve Mejia, Private First Class Thomas Francis Minogue, John W. Mullen Jr., Michael Gerald O'Connor, Louis Joseph Picarazzi, Thomas Pike, Anthony Rabasco, The Honorable Charles B. Rangel, Alphonse Joseph Ranni, Bing Crosby Reaves Sr., Salvatore Riccobono, Gloster Rogers, Patrick R. Rourke, Michele Sardo, Kenya Lamonte Smith, Robin Michelle Smith, Kevin Swab, Neil D. Thomas, Hector Vazquez, Scott M. Ward, Patrick Wemitt, Mark Woods, Jr., and Aaron Yi; and



WHEREAS, The banner of freedom will always wave over our beloved New York and all of America, the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms and security we cherish as Americans come at a very high price for those serving in the military in times of conflict; it is fitting and proper that we, who are the beneficiaries of those who risk their lives, must never forget the courage with which these men and women served their country; and

WHEREAS, Our Nation's veterans deserve to be recognized, commended, and thanked by the people of the State of New York for their service and for their dedication to their communities, their State, and their Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor the distinguished veterans from the State of New York upon the occasion of their induction into the New York State Senate 2025 Veterans Hall of Fame; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the 2025 inductees.



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HONOREES

NEW YORK STATE SENATE



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As we mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, Americans are uniting to express heartfelt gratitude to Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice. At the forefront of this national effort is the *United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration*, a 50th anniversary initiative authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense, and launched by President Barack Obama in 2012. Congress outlined five key objectives for the Commemoration, with the primary goal being to thank and honor our Vietnam veterans and their families.

To help fulfill this mission, this Commemoration united thousands of organizations in recognizing more than 7 million living Vietnam veterans around the world, along with members of the 10 million families whose loved ones served in the conflict. As a gesture of appreciation, each veteran will be presented with a Department of Defense-provided Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin, a lasting symbol of our Nation's respect and gratitude.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION



The Commemoration is providing Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins to Commemorative Partners for dignified public presentations to U.S. military veterans who served during the Vietnam War as a lasting memento of the Nation's thanks.

LAWRENCE BADGER

RICHARD BINGHAM

DAVID BRISBANE

VENTURA COLON

MATTHEW J. DEGREGORIO

MAX DONATELLI

FRANK F. GEE

DAN GUIDA

THOMAS JAMES HARNISHER

JAMES A. HODGES, SR.

MORRISON JOHN HOSLEY JR.

TED KNIAZUK

FRANK LAMARSH

LUKE A. MAGLIARO, JR.

JOSEPH BERT MAHONEY

BENJAMIN W. MARGOLIUS

JOHN W. MULLEN JR.

MICHAEL GERALD O'CONNOR

ALPHONSE JOSEPH RANNI

SALVATORE RICCOBONO

PATRICK R. ROURK

PATRICK WEMITT





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JOAQUIN AFONSO

Joaquin Afonso achieved the rank of Staff Sergeant in the United States Army Reserve.

Born during World War II, Mr. Afonso moved from Brooklyn to Mineola, New York at just one week old. Growing up in a family deeply committed to military service, he was inspired by their dedication and followed in their footsteps. After receiving a college deferment, he enlisted in the Reserve in 1964, reporting to Fort Dix for basic training.

Mr. Afonso was assigned to the 340th Battalion's Military Police Unit. He served with distinction and was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant in May 1970. Soon after, he was activated in the Army Reserve to assist during the U.S. Postal Strike, continuing his commitment to serving the Nation.

After discharge, Mr. Afonso dedicated 35 years to working as a Senior Probation Officer for Nassau County, retiring in 2000. In 1998, he was recognized as New York State Probation Officer of the Year for outstanding service. Retirement, however, did not mark the end of his service; it provided a new avenue for giving back.

As a longtime leader in the Williston Park American Legion Post 144, Mr. Afonso served as Post Commander from 2003 to 2006. After being awarded life membership, he continues to serve as Chairman of the Board. Under his leadership, the Post has remained a vital part of the community, working with Scout Troops and organizing parades, honor guards, blood drives, and dances for developmentally challenged youth. For over two decades, Mr. Afonso has spent time flagging the graves of veterans in Holy Rood Cemetery in Westbury to honor fallen Post members who have served in the Armed Forces.

Beyond the Legion, his advocacy for veterans remains steadfast. As a Town of North Hempstead Veterans Advisory Board member, Mr. Afonso has helped improve access to VA hospitals, organize clothing and gift card drives, and provide vital resources for fellow veterans. The most recent gift card drive raised over \$10,000 – just one example of his unwavering dedication to those who served.

Through it all, Mr. Afonso has always been steadfastly supported by his loving wife, Barbara, and their two daughters, Kristine and Kimberley. His devotion to family, country, and community is a testament to his character and a legacy that will endure for generations.



JOAQUIN AFONSO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JACK M. MARTINS

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JANE ALTACHO-DAVIS

Jane Altacho-Davis served in the United States Army for 33 years, enlisting as a Private and rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

During her decades of service, she participated in three military conflicts, including Iraq in 2006, Kuwait in 2012, and again in Kuwait in 2015.

Throughout her career, Ms. Altacho-Davis was honored with numerous accolades for her service. As a soldier, she was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and the Iraq Campaign Medal for her contributions to the logistics efforts.

Ms. Altacho-Davis has also worked on behalf of her community by serving as a Detective in the New York Police Department for more than 20 years.

Her commitment to service extends beyond her professional career. Ms. Altacho-Davis has been a longtime resident of Shore Haven, where she raised her family, and she served on the Shore Haven Board for two years. Her efforts as a board member contributed to the betterment of her neighborhood for her fellow community members. Ms. Altacho-Davis is also an active member of her church and a dedicated participant of her women's ministry group.

Ms. Altacho-Davis holds a Bachelor's degree from Regent University and an Associate degree in Accounting from Manhattan Community College.

Among her proudest achievements has been raising her three children. Her eldest child, Justin, has been serving our Nation in the United States Air Force for fifteen years. Her twins, Neena and Nyrell, are both excelling in their academic pursuits – Neena is a junior at Emmanuel College, majoring in Nursing, while Nyrell is a junior at MIT, majoring in Electrical Engineering.



JANE ALTACHO-DAVIS WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JOSÉ M. SERRANO

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ARTHUR G. AUSTIN, JR.

Arthur G. Austin, Jr. served in the United States Army National Guard and retired as a Brigadier General.

Mr. Austin is a distinguished veteran whose life of service spans more than three decades of military excellence. A native of Michigan, Mr. Austin enlisted in the United States Army National Guard in 1977, beginning his career in the Military Police. He quickly rose through the ranks, commissioning as an officer after graduating from Michigan State University in 1982.

Over the next 37 years, Mr. Austin served with unwavering dedication. His deployments included critical conflict zones such as the Cuban Refugee Crisis, Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Katrina, and Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. His leadership roles, from Platoon Leader to Deputy Commanding General of the 46th Military Police Command, earned him numerous accolades, including the Bronze Star and Meritorious Service Medal.

Upon his 2014 retirement from active service, Mr. Austin settled in Cuba, New York. He has channeled his time and energy into supporting veterans through various local programs, including mentoring and assisting in veteran support organizations. Among those benefiting from his involvement are the Veterans Outdoors Experience and the Community Veterans Outreach, where he advocates for veterans' needs, from VA assistance to awareness programs, including suicide prevention initiatives.

Mr. Austin's dedication was recognized when he was named the 2024 Outstanding Veteran Volunteer of the Year by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) for his tireless work supporting fellow veterans. This honor, bestowed at the local, State, and national levels, is a testament to his leadership and patriotism. His motto, "Honorable Service after Honorable Discharge," reflects his commitment to his country and his fellow service members.

In addition to his volunteer work, Mr. Austin has served as an educator, guest teaching at Cuba-Rushford High School and St. Bonaventure University. He continues to inspire future generations, urging them to be "part of the solution, not part of the problem."

Mr. Austin's legacy is defined not only by his exemplary military career, but also by his unwavering dedication to veterans and his community. He lives with his wife, Karen, in Cuba, New York, where he remains a pillar of support and inspiration to all who know him.



ARTHUR G. AUSTIN, JR. WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR GEORGE M. BORRELLO

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LAWRENCE BADGER

Lawrence Badger courageously served in the United States Army during the Vietnam conflict and obtained the rank of Sergeant.

A graduate of Thomas R. Proctor High School in Utica, Mr. Badger enrolled at Mohawk Valley Community College before enlisting in the Army as a Paratrooper Infantryman while the Vietnam War was escalating. He attended basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina; infantry training at Fort Gordon, Georgia; and Paratrooper Airborne training at Fort Benning, Georgia.

When Mr. Badger received his Airborne wings, he was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Airborne Division, and eventually the 173rd Airborne Division in Vietnam. He was promoted to the rank of E-5 Squad Leader in June 1968. Mr. Badger served in numerous campaigns, including Phase III and V of the Vietnam TET Counteroffensive. During his service, Mr. Badger showed remarkable bravery, leadership, and selflessness under intense pressure and difficult conditions.

After his tour in Vietnam, Mr. Badger volunteered an additional six months and was assigned to the 58th Infantry until his departure in July 1969. He received the Purple Heart after he was wounded on March 13, 1968, as well as the Bronze Star, Combat Infantry Badge, Army Commendation Medal with "V" device, Vietnam Service Medal, Parachute Badge, Air Medal Citation, Good Conduct Medal, and three Overseas Service Bars.

Mr. Badger remains committed to helping veterans and their families and ensuring that the memories of fallen service members never fade. You will often find him working hard behind the scenes to ensure that veteran-related ceremonies and other events go smoothly. He plays an instrumental role in many regional veterans' organizations, including serving as Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 944, Finance Officer of the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 490, Officer in the Masonic War Veterans Post 55, Trustee of the VFW Yorkville Post 6001, and Director of Wreaths Across America for Rome, New York. Mr. Badger is also a member of the New Hartford American Legion Post 1376, the Combat Infantry Association, and the 173rd Airborne Association.

When Mr. Badger returned home, he was employed by the U.S. Postal Service for over 30 years. He was the Chief Steward for the American Postal Workers Union for over 25 years and was also on the Veterans Committee for the Utica Post Office before retiring in 2008.



LAWRENCE BADGER WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JOSEPH A. GRIFFO

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VICKI BELLO

Vicki Bello enlisted in the United States Navy in 1985, serving on active duty as a Radioman.

A native New Yorker, Ms. Bello's various commands included Adak, Alaska and Ford Island, Hawaii. After completing her active service in 1989, she continued to serve in the Naval Reserve at Fort Schuyler in the Bronx for two additional years before receiving an honorable discharge.

After military service, Ms. Bello attended LaGuardia Community College in Queens, where she graduated with an Associate degree with honors. She then earned a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Herbert H. Lehman College in the Bronx, graduating *summa cum laude* with minors in Puerto Rican and Women's Studies. Her academic achievements include election into the International Golden Key Honor Society and induction into Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society.

After graduating from Lehman, Ms. Bello returned to LaGuardia Community College, where she served as the Program Coordinator and, later, as the Director of the Veteran's Upward Bound Program, a federally funded college prep initiative designed to support returning service members in their pursuit of higher education.

An active member of New York City's veterans' community, Ms. Bello has served on the City University of New York Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Borden Avenue Veterans Residence Advisory Committee. Recently, she was the Vice Chair of the Bronx Borough President's Veterans Advisory Council.

Ms. Bello currently works as the Program Coordinator for the Theatre Development Fund's Veterans Theatergoers Program, which partners with veteran organizations throughout the City to provide complimentary tickets to Broadway shows.

In 2016, Ms. Bello was recognized by *City & State NY* with the Veterans Still Serving Award for her dedication to the veteran community. In 2019, she was honored with a Citation of Merit by the Bronx Borough President during the Bronx Week Veterans Breakfast. Most recently, in 2023, she received Samaritan Village's Veteran Partner Award, recognizing her contributions toward providing services that enhance the treatment experience for veterans.

Ms. Bello resides in the Bronx and has three daughters. She is married to Joe Bello, a longtime veterans' advocate and Navy veteran.



VICKI BELLO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR NATHALIA FERNANDEZ

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RICHARD BINGHAM

Richard Bingham served in the United States Army and the Army Reserve and achieved the rank of First Sergeant.

Mr. Bingham's unwavering dedication to his country began on April 23, 1968, when he answered the call to serve and was drafted into the Army. Deployed to Vietnam as a Motorpool Sergeant with the 1st Aviation Brigade, he spent a year and a half in the heart of the conflict before returning home in December 1969. Even after completing his military obligation in 1974, his commitment to service never wavered.

In 1977, Mr. Bingham joined the 414th Civil Affairs Company in Utica, New York, marking the beginning of his long and distinguished career in the Army Reserve. When life took him to California, he continued his service with the 426th Civil Affairs Company in Upland, California, where he took on the role of Military Police Supervisor (MOS 95B5M). Upon returning to New York, Mr. Bingham dedicated seven years as a Basic Training First Sergeant with the 1165th Training Unit, shaping the next generation of soldiers during annual training.

Over nearly four decades in uniform, Mr. Bingham's leadership, dedication, and service earned him numerous commendations, including the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. His commitment in the Reserve was further recognized with the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, and many other honors.

In 2007, Mr. Bingham retired as a First Sergeant (1SG) with an Honorable Discharge, closing a chapter of service that defined much of his life. Yet, his devotion to his fellow soldiers and his country remains steadfast. For Mr. Bingham, wearing the uniform was more than duty – it was an honor, a privilege, and a lifelong commitment. He takes immense pride in having served alongside so many courageous men and women, and his legacy of service continues to inspire all who know him.



RICHARD BINGHAM WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR PETER OBERACKER

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EDWARD R. BLANKENHORN

Edward R. Blankenhorn served in the United States Marine Corps and achieved the rank of Corporal E-4.

Mr. Blankenhorn enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on February 29, 1960, and completed boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) on Parris Island, South Carolina. Additionally, he received advanced combat training at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina (CLNC).

Mr. Blankenhorn attended technical school at MCRD in San Diego, California. He graduated at the top of his class and was awarded certification as a Radio Relay Repairman (occupation code 2761). He was retained in San Diego as an instructor in basic electronics.

Later, Mr. Blankenhorn transferred to Marine Corps Air Station in Iwakuni, Japan as an electronics technician, which included service in Okinawa and the Philippines. He then transferred again to Camp Lejeune until his discharge on February 28, 1964.

Along the way, Mr. Blankenhorn acquired a number of skills. He was a relay radio operator, a truck driver, a marksmanship coach, and a blood donor.

After his discharge, Mr. Blankenhorn took on several small local jobs. In 1966, he was hired by Grumman Aerospace (which later became Northrop Grumman) as an electronics technician, leveraging his military experience. With Grumman's support, he enrolled at Hofstra University as an engineering student. Upon completing his college degree, he was reassigned as a program-level Operations Analyst, where his primary responsibility was to monitor program performance at all levels and inform the program manager about how well things were progressing. Eventually, he retired in 1998.

Mr. Blankenhorn graduated from Lindenhurst High School in 1975. He received military training in radio repair. Mr. Blankenhorn also attended many seminars in program control and management and estimating technology. He graduated from Hofstra University in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering.

Mr. Blankenhorn met the love of his life, Elizabeth Marie (Kohler) Blankenhorn (deceased), through a mutual friend in 1957, and they married in 1964. They have a daughter, Dawn Marie (Blankenhorn) Newland, who resides in Venice, Florida.



EDWARD R. BLANKENHORN WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ALEXIS WEIK

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DAVID BRISBANE

David Brisbane achieved the rank of Corporal E-4 in the United States Marine Corps.

Mr. Brisbane enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1964 and served on active duty through 1967 during the Vietnam War. From 1967 to 1970, he served on inactive reserve duty.

Mr. Brisbane recalls joining the military because it was simply what young country boys did when they were old enough. He followed in the service of his older brother.

After his service, Mr. Brisbane took college courses and worked as a machinist at Gleason Works, a manufacturer in Rochester, New York. He retired as a manufacturing supervisor after 47 years with the company. He says the training and discipline he learned in the Marine Corps helped him advance from machine operator to supervisor.

Mr. Brisbane is a Purple Heart recipient and earned numerous other honors for his service, including the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with three Stars, Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, Navy Meritorious Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, and Rifle Sharpshooter Badge.

In continued service to his community and fellow veterans, Mr. Brisbane is a member of the VFW, American Legion Post 256, and Marine Corps League Memorial Day Detachment 468, where he is Commandant. He is North West Area Vice Commandant of the Marine Corps League Department of New York.

For many years, Mr. Brisbane has led the annual Marine Corps Toys for Tots program, collecting and distributing thousands of toys to area children. He is a longtime volunteer for the Canandaigua VA and Honor Flight and a member of the Challenge 22 management committee, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring greater awareness to veteran suicide and support for veterans.

Mr. Brisbane participates with the Honor Guard units of American Legion Post 34 in Shortsville and 256 in Canandaigua, and he organizes the Color Guards for Memorial Day and Fourth of July parades. He was instrumental in establishing Wreaths Across America at the former Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery, now the New York State Veterans Cemetery - Finger Lakes.

Mr. Brisbane is a resident of Bloomfield, New York.



DAVID BRISBANE WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR PAMELA A. HELMING

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CAPTAIN PATRICK J. CASSIDY

Captain Patrick J. Cassidy enlisted in the United States Army and the United States National Guard.

He enlisted in the Army in October 2011 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in September 2013. He began his career as a Platoon Leader with D Company, 2-108th Infantry, demonstrating strong leadership and dedication.

In 2017, Captain Cassidy deployed to Ukraine with the 2-101st CAV to train the Armed Forces of Ukraine at the Yavoriv Training Center, contributing significantly to their future success. In 2018, he was assigned as a Plans Officer in the 2-101st CAV, earning the rank of Captain. After a year in this role, he was selected for Command of C Troop, 2-101st CAV, serving with distinction for two and a half years.

In January 2021, he mobilized in Washington, D.C. in support of the Presidential Inauguration. His leadership and commitment to duty earned him a second command in February 2022 at Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2-101st CAV, where he played a key role in improving combat readiness and the squadron's ability to support civil authorities.

Captain Cassidy's service was recognized through numerous awards, including the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal (10LC), Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal (20LC), National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Services Medal, and others at both the federal and State levels.

Outside of his military service, Captain Cassidy was deeply involved in his community. He served on the Westhill Central School District Board of Education, where he was instrumental in selecting the current superintendent. An avid rugby player, he was a dedicated member of the Syracuse Chargers and Le Moyne Koonducks, and he was known for his passion and reliability both on and off the field.

Captain Cassidy was also a gifted teacher and mentor, always willing to share his knowledge to help others grow. His selfless dedication extended beyond his professional roles, leaving a lasting impact on all who knew him.

Captain Cassidy is survived by his beloved wife, Ariane, and their two young children, Ronin and Lorcan. His legacy of service, leadership, and generosity continues to inspire those who had the honor of knowing him.



CAPTAIN PATRICK J. CASSIDY WAS SELECTED
POSTHUMOUSLY AS A 2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME
INDUCTEE BY **SENATOR CHRISTOPHER J. RYAN**

2025



VETERANS

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VENTURA COLON

Ventura Colon was inducted into the United States Army and achieved the rank of Specialist 4th Class, serving one year in Vietnam as a medic.

Mr. Colon was born in Puerto Rico and relocated with his family to Buffalo in 1956 when he was 10 years old. He graduated from Seneca Vocational High School with a concentration in Industrial Electricity. As a young man, he helped create a youth civic action group to help combat discrimination against the Hispanic community.

Drafted into the Army, he earned a number of medals, including the Combat Medical Badge, awarded to medical personnel who provide care under fire in combat zones, in 1967 and the Army Presidential Unit Citation, an award given to units that demonstrate exceptional heroism in action against an armed enemy.

After completing his tour of duty, Mr. Colon was honorably discharged from the Army. Once home, he attended the State University of Buffalo and received a Bachelor of Science in American Studies and Sociology. His studies led him to obtain a national license as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

Mr. Colon was employed by Lakeshore Behavioral Health as Director of the Outpatient Drug and Alcohol Counseling Center from 1987 until his retirement in 2008.

Mr. Colon's community involvement includes an extensive list of memberships: the WNY Hispanic and Friends Organization, the Erie County Youth Board, founding member of Hispanics United of Buffalo, and the originator of the Hispanic American Veterans Memorial at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park. He currently serves as President of the Memorial and as Service Officer of the Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post 1928.

Mr. Colon continues to remain actively involved with activities in the local Hispanic and veterans community. At present, he assists by packing and distributing food for needy families, seniors, and veterans with the Belle Center on the West Side of Buffalo, the Westside Community Services, and the PS #30 Frank A. Sedita School.

His numerous honors include the City of Buffalo's Community Service Award for exemplary leadership, and he acted as Grand Marshal for the Hispanic community's annual parade.

Mr. Colon has been married to Susana Gonzalez-Colon for over 25 years. He has two sons, Javier and Jaime, and eight grandchildren.



VENTURA COLON WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR SEAN M. RYAN

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

JOHN COOPER, JR.

John Cooper, Jr. served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Sergeant.

Mr. Cooper served six years in the Army as a Sniper, from 2015 to 2021, with the 25th Infantry Division, 3rd Brigade, Reconnaissance Commandos (Recondo) and 10th Mountain Division, 1st Brigade, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment. He served one tour of combat duty in Afghanistan as a Sniper Section Leader.

For his service to his Nation and bravery, Mr. Cooper earned numerous accolades, including the National Defense Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Award. Mr. Cooper served in multiple leadership positions in the infantry, including Senior Sniper, Anti-Armor Section Leader, Headquarters Platoon Sergeant, QRF Squad Leader, and Sniper Section Leader.

An ordained Baptist Pastor, Mr. Cooper studied at Liberty University to earn a Master of Divinity with a focus on Organizational Leadership. While serving in the Army, he also volunteered in the ministry service and volunteered here in New York, as well as in Pennsylvania, Hawaii, and Afghanistan.

Mr. Cooper is a fierce advocate for veterans, including those struggling with addiction and homelessness. He serves as the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Niagara Gospel Mission, a nonprofit organization in Niagara Falls that focuses on the physical and spiritual needs of the people it serves. The Mission operates a soup kitchen, offers free clothing, serves as a code blue shelter, has transitional housing, and offers a special program for struggling veterans. To bring additional money to the Niagara Gospel Mission, Mr. Cooper raised more than \$16,000 to benefit homeless veterans in his care by "Rucking for Rescue." He filled up his old Army bag, strapped it to his back, and marched more than 200 miles to raise awareness of the issues faced by the many people who struggle with homelessness.

Mr. Cooper actively supports veterans in many ways, including hosting a podcast and website called The Godly Grunts, a platform to discuss topics that affect combat soldiers and how they can strengthen their faith, along with showing correlations between the physical battlefield and the spiritual battlefield.

Mr. Cooper grew up in Niagara Falls, New York, where he currently resides with his wife and their four children.



*JOHN COOPER, JR. WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ROBERT G. ORTT*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

BETSY CRUMITY

Betsy Crumity served in the United States Army and the United States Army Reserve and achieved the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

In addition, her service in the Armed Forces includes the Signal Corps, Reserve Officers Training Corps, and active duty.

Ms. Crumity worked in communication and electronics at the Signal Corps, with most of the work being done outdoors in the field. Communication is commonly defined as the transmission of information, facsimile, tactical ground-based communications, terrestrial microwave, tropospheric scatter, satellite communications systems and equipment, surveillance and signal analysis, security, direction finding and jamming. The most urgent purposes are to communicate information to commanders and orders from them.

In 1984, due to Ms. Crumity's mother's health decline, she returned to Rochester to care for her. Her mother passed nine months later. Initially, her hope was to return to service, but instead, she remained in Rochester to care for her aunt's three grandchildren. The three boys eventually came under her care and lived with Ms. Crumity until they graduated from high school and attended college.

In addition to her military life, Ms. Crumity has served on the boards for Anthony L. Jordan Health Center and William Warfield Scholarship Fund, Inc.

In October 2024, Ms. Crumity completed the United Way of Greater Rochester African American Leadership Development Program. Currently, she is an integral member of the Breast Cancer Coalition's Advocacy Committee, advocating for the breast and gynecologic cancer survivor community.

For the past seven years, she has hosted a Saturday morning radio show, *Crumity's Corner*, where members of the community share their life's journey. Her mantra is, "Never give up, never quit, and never surrender, because on the other side of failure is success."



BETSY CRUMITY WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR SAMRA G. BROUK

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MATTHEW J. DEGREGORIO

Matthew J. DeGregorio, a United States Air Force and Vietnam veteran, has dedicated his life to serving his country and community.

Born in Brooklyn and raised in Levittown, New York, Mr. DeGregorio attended the local school system before enlisting in the United States Air Force. Trained as an Aircraft Maintenance and Crew Chief, he rose to the rank of Sergeant and served with the 602nd Fighter Squadron (Commando) in Vietnam and Thailand.

For his service and valor, Mr. DeGregorio earned the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Air Force Good Conduct Medal, and other distinctions.

Following his honorable service, Mr. DeGregorio returned to Levittown, where he became an unwavering advocate for veterans. As Post Commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Levittown–Island Trees Post 9592, he has worked tirelessly to support veterans, military families, and the local community.

Mr. DeGregorio lives and breathes the VFW. Under his leadership, the Post organizes hospital visits for ailing veterans, sends care packages to deployed troops, assists local military families, and mentors youth. He also ensures the Post actively participates in community events, parades, and flag retirement ceremonies.

Mr. DeGregorio has made the VFW a welcoming place for all veterans – male or female, young or old, from today's conflicts, past wars, or even small operations that many have forgotten. His commitment to inclusion underscores his big heart and deep dedication to his country and community.

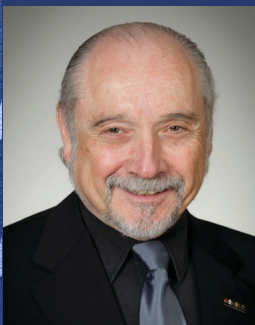
Committed to veteran advocacy, Mr. DeGregorio works with local, State, and national representatives to champion policies that improve veterans' lives. He also encourages middle and high school students to engage with the VFW's youth scholarship programs, fostering civic engagement and patriotism.

Beyond his service to veterans, Mr. DeGregorio is a devoted husband to his wife, Maryanne, a proud father of three daughters, and a loving grandfather to five grandchildren. His leadership and dedication exemplify the values of the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame, making him a deserving honoree.



*MATTHEW J. DEGREGORIO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR STEVEN RHODS*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MAX DONATELLI

Max Donatelli served as a Sergeant in the United States Air Force. He worked as an aircraft mechanic in Vietnam and taught English to Vietnamese children on the base.

While enlisted from 1968 to 1972, Mr. Donatelli earned several prominent honors, including the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and Republic of Vietnam Service Medal.

In 2016, after 42 years of service, Mr. Donatelli retired from Baker Victory Services. He worked in numerous roles, including direct care worker, clinician, Director, and Department Head, helping high-risk youth in foster care and families throughout the community.

Mr. Donatelli is the former Executive Director of the Parent Network of Western New York and the co-creator of a new not-for-profit called Art of Advocacy, Inc.

He is former Chair and current Secretary of the Erie County Community Services Board for Mental Hygiene. He is also a member of the Health Leadership Fellows Action Network, Developmental Disabilities Alliance of the WNY Family Committee, Leadership Buffalo, and is a founding member of the Hamburg Coalition of Equity and Inclusion.

Mr. Donatelli is former Vice Chair and a current member of the Community Veterans Engagement Board of Western New York, which includes local organizations serving veterans.

In addition, Mr. Donatelli is a founding member and the first Chair of the Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition. He regularly writes articles in the media and speaks publicly on advocacy topics. Mr. Donatelli has been honored with several awards, most recently the NY Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation Community Advocacy Award and the National Federation of Just Communities "Lana Benatovich Lifetime Achievement Award." He is also a 26-gallon Red Cross blood donor.

Mr. Donatelli earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Sociology and a Master of Science in Counselor Education, both from Canisius College.

Mr. Donatelli resides in Hamburg, New York. He and his wife, Joyce, have raised two children, Connie and Craig. Craig has Down syndrome, lives semi-independently, and works in competitive employment. The family are staunch advocates for people with developmental disabilities, those with mental health challenges, and for inclusion and equity locally and statewide.



MAX DONATELLI WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR PATRICK M. GALLIVAN

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MARISA ESTRELLA

Marisa Estrella served in the United States Army as a Chaplain Assistant.

Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, Ms. Estrella enlisted in the Army at the age of 24, serving honorably through two tours before being discharged in November 2006. As a single mother, she raised her two children with the support of her parents while pursuing higher education.

Ms. Estrella earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Mercy College in 2001, a Paralegal Certificate from the New York Paralegal School, and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Monroe College in 2006. With over 20 years of customer service experience, she is a dedicated professional known for her integrity, leadership, and diligence.

Passionate about serving others, Ms. Estrella has volunteered extensively in churches, assisting the homeless population and disadvantaged individuals. Fluent in English and Spanish, Ms. Estrella effectively engages with diverse communities in the Bronx, offering support and guidance to those in need.

Her extensive professional background includes roles as a business owner, entrepreneur, commercial loan officer, auditor for the IRS, paralegal, real estate principal, marketing director, assistant teacher, and United States Army Chaplain. Ms. Estrella's military training instilled in her the discipline, leadership, and compassion that continue to guide her work and community service.

In 2015, she founded Worldwide Veterans and Family Services, Inc. (WVFS), a nonprofit dedicated to assisting veterans and families with housing, healthcare, mental health support, job training, and essential resources. WVFS operates through partnerships with the United Breast Cancer Foundation, World Vision, community churches, and over 26 nonprofits and businesses.

WVFS collaborates with the Bronx VA Medical Center, feeding 15 to 20 veterans regularly. It also partners with food pantries in New York City, Rhode Island, and beyond, serving 300-500 veterans weekly. Additionally, WVFS works with the Small Business Development Center to help veterans access job training, funding, and business development resources, creating new opportunities for success.

Ms. Estrella has been recognized with numerous awards from government agencies, churches, and community organizations for her unwavering commitment to veterans and families. Through her leadership, WVFS continues to bridge gaps in care, ensuring those who served receive the support, dignity, and assistance they deserve.



MARISA ESTRELLA WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR LUIS R. SEPÚLVEDA

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

JOHN FLYNN

John Flynn served as a Private in the United States Army. An Iraq War veteran, he is a pillar of the Highland Falls community.

Mr. Flynn serves as a teacher, board member for local community organizations, and Commander of the local O'Connor Doyle American Legion Post 633.

As Commander, he “single-handedly brought the [Post] back to life,” according to his brother, Patrick. A nearly defunct chapter of the American Legion was made into an active community center through Mr. Flynn’s personal intervention. He completed major renovation work to the Post, including extensive plumbing and heating work. It was because of his dedication that Post 633 became instrumental in recovery efforts during the devastating flooding that occurred locally in July 2023.

As main roads connecting Highland Falls and the hamlet of Fort Montgomery were washed out, Post 633 became a hub for affected residents and service organizations such as the local churches and the Red Cross.

Keeping the Post open 12-plus hours a day, Mr. Flynn and his fellow members picked up and delivered food, cooked lunches and dinners, and delivered those to residents in need. With donations of clothing coming in, the American Legion became something of a pop-up thrift store, where anyone could grab what they needed right away. Local wells and pipes were damaged by the storm, and Mr. Flynn, with help from other members, provided pallets of water to neighbors in need. His leadership during this tragic natural disaster was essential to recovery efforts.

As an active DJ with his brother, he loans his equipment and services to whoever needs them and performs in the Village. For years, they hosted a charitable event, known as “John and Pat’s Pantry Raid,” to collect donations for the local food bank, a tradition now continued by their sons. Mr. Flynn also serves as a board member for the Center of Highland Falls, a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of local residents.

Alongside his brother, he serves as a teacher at Highland Falls Intermediate School. He is beloved by his students and is affectionately referred to as the “favorite” Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Flynn has shown a true calling to service, both in his local community as a civilian and to his country, showing great bravery during a time of national turmoil.



**JOHN FLYNN WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JAMES SKOUFIS**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

BRIAN GARCIA

Brian Garcia served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Captain.

As a Field Artillery Officer, Mr. Garcia demonstrated exceptional leadership and tactical expertise throughout his military career. As a Battery Fire Direction Officer and Battalion Fire Support Officer, he played a crucial role in coordinating artillery support for combat operations, ensuring precision and effectiveness in battlefield engagements.

During his time with the 4th Infantry Division, Mr. Garcia deployed to Afghanistan from 2011 to 2012 as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom. His outstanding service and leadership during this deployment earned him the prestigious Bronze Star Medal, recognizing his meritorious service and exceptional performance in a combat zone. He also received the Operation Enduring Freedom Campaign Medal for his service in Afghanistan.

Following his distinguished military career, Mr. Garcia transitioned to civilian life with a continued commitment to excellence. He pursued higher education at the University of Michigan, where he earned both a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and a Master of Public Policy (MPP), building upon his leadership skills to prepare for new challenges beyond military service.

Mr. Garcia's dedication to service extends well beyond his active-duty years. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Common Defense, where he advocates for veteran causes and ensures the voices of former service members are heard in policy discussions. Recognizing the challenges many veterans face, Mr. Garcia has become particularly involved in suicide prevention initiatives, regularly hosting discussions aimed at addressing this critical issue within the veteran community.

His commitment to his fellow veterans is further demonstrated through his personal mentorship efforts, where he provides one-on-one guidance to service members transitioning from military life to higher education and careers in the commercial sector. Through these efforts, Mr. Garcia continues to exemplify the leadership, dedication, and service that characterized his military career, making a meaningful difference in the lives of veterans across the country.



**BRIAN GARCIA WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

FRANK F. GEE

Frank F. Gee served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Specialist (E-4).

A Vietnam-era veteran, Mr. Gee was honorably discharged in September 1963 after two years of service. After his induction in 1961, he underwent intensive medical training and was stationed in Alabama at a military hospital.

Since joining the American Legion, Lt. B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 in 1990, Mr. Gee has held officer positions at the Post, county, district, department, and national levels over the past three decades. In recognition of his service to both his Post and his community, he was awarded with "Life Membership" status. The American Legion Department of New York further acknowledged his contributions by naming him Legionnaire of the Year in 2013 at the Department Convention in Niagara Falls.

For eight years, Mr. Gee served as a volunteer counselor for the American Legion New York Boys' State program. He instructed youth on leadership principles and governmental structure at local, county, and State levels. Through this and other experiences, Mr. Gee built lasting connections that deepened his community involvement.

As a founding Board Member of the Chinatown Business Improvement District and a co-founder of the Chinatown YMCA, Mr. Gee has made significant contributions to the Chinatown and Lower Manhattan community. During his tenure at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, he helped secure post-9/11 funding from the Small Business Administration (SBA) to implement training for business owners seeking a fresh start. Mr. Gee additionally completed the necessary SBA courses himself to become an instructor for the twenty-week program.

In his service in the military and to his community, Mr. Gee has exemplified exceptional commitment to the American Legion and the military values of duty, loyalty, and integrity. He shows his love of country by lifting up and supporting the development of the next generation of leaders in our community. We are grateful for his service and honored to present him with this recognition.



**FRANK F. GEE WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR BRIAN KAVANAGH**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

THE HONORABLE YADHIRA GONZALEZ-TAYLOR

The Honorable Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor served in the United States Army Reserve and achieved the rank of Specialist E-4.

Judge Gonzalez-Taylor served as a Military Police Officer for six years and earned numerous awards, including the Good Conduct Medal and the Army Service Ribbon.

She is a dedicated lifelong public servant, educator, and author. Judge Gonzalez-Taylor was elected to the Civil Court in Bronx County in 2022, where she currently serves as Supervising Judge of the Bronx Criminal Court.

Born and raised in the Bronx and a proud graduate of the New York City public school system, Judge Gonzalez-Taylor earned her Bachelor of Science, *magna cum laude*, and Master of Arts from The City University of New York John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a Juris Doctor from New York Law School.

Her legal career began in 2002 as an Assistant District Attorney in the Bronx, where she prosecuted cases involving economic crimes, arson, animal cruelty, and public corruption. In 2006, Judge Gonzalez-Taylor joined the New York Police Department as an internal prosecutor, handling misconduct and corruption matters. She later served as an Administrative Law Hearing Officer for the New York City Department of Education.

Outside the courtroom, Judge Gonzalez-Taylor is an adjunct professor at Monroe College and a mentor to law students and aspiring judges through various bar associations and the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Mentorship Program.

Her commitment to community extends beyond her legal work. Judge Gonzalez-Taylor has served on congressional military academy nominating committees and actively supports literacy and cultural programs in the Bronx. She volunteers with veterans' organizations and serves on the New York State Bar Association's Judicial Wellness Committee.



THE HONORABLE YADHIRA GONZALEZ-TAYLOR WAS
SELECTED AS A 2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME
INDUCTEE BY **SENATOR JAMAAL T. BAILEY**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

DAN GUIDA

Dan Guida was drafted into the United States Army in February 1966 and achieved the rank of Lieutenant.

While in the reception station at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, he qualified for Officer Candidate School (OCS). Due to listing armored vehicles as his preference, he received basic training as part of the Second Armored Division, Hell on Wheels, at Fort Hood, Texas.

After basic training, Mr. Guida was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as an 11E Armored Crewman. After AIT, he attended OCS and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in January 1967, MOS 1203 Tank Unit Commander.

In September 1967, he received his orders for Vietnam and was sent to the Panama Canal for intense jungle training. Upon arrival in Vietnam, Mr. Guida was given command of the First Platoon of A Troop 1st Squadron 1st Cavalry.

Many of his operations were platoon-level search and destroy missions in the areas of Tam Ky and Cigar Island. His main major battles fought were the 1968 TET Counteroffensive and the battles of the Pineapple Forest and Burlington Trail.

For his bravery and service to his Nation, Mr. Guida was awarded a Bronze Star for distinguishing himself in connection with military operations against hostile forces.

After returning from service, Mr. Guida went back to college under the GI Bill and became a Certified Public Accountant. Currently, he is an active member of VFW Post 6249 Rocky Point, New York. His activities as Quartermaster for the VFW include assisting with their annual 5K charity run and the annual golf outing. The funds received at these functions support many veterans in need, as well as organizations such as Tunnel to Towers.

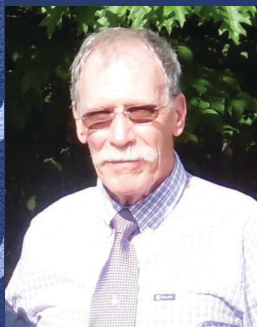
Currently, Mr. Guida is involved with several local schools. When students are studying the Vietnam conflict, he participates as a guest lecturer, giving lifetime experiences and answering questions.

Mr. Guida has spent time as a volunteer at the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stonybrook. There, he stepped up to help transport his military brothers to their medical appointments. For some, he is able to assist with their therapy treatments, as well as accompanying them on field trips.



DAN GUIDA WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ANTHONY H. PALUMBO

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

THOMAS JAMES HARNISHER

Thomas James Harnisher served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 2.

A lifelong resident of the island community of Broad Channel, Mr. Harnisher enlisted in the Army at the age of 19. He served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot and was honorably discharged in November 1969. As Mr. Harnisher proudly states, "There I was, just 20 years old and flying combat missions with the elite First Cavalry Division in Vietnam. It was an unforgettable experience." Mr. Harnisher's tenure in Vietnam from 1967 to 1969 coincided with the heaviest fighting in the War, including the Battle of Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive.

Mr. Harnisher amassed over 1,500 combat hours, and in recognition of his meritorious service, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Air Medal and Silver Star. He is also a Purple Heart recipient. His Silver Star citation reads, "Without regard to his own safety, Warrant Officer Harnisher stayed in the rescue area, exposed to intense enemy fire, until all members of the team had been rescued. Warrant Officer Harnisher is credited with saving the lives of the men in the patrol team. His gallant action reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army."

After completing his military service, Mr. Harnisher joined the brotherhood of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY). During his 34 years with the FDNY, he was assigned to Engine 214 (Brooklyn), Engine 331 (Howard Beach-Queens), and Marine 1 (Manhattan). In 1998, Mr. Harnisher received the prestigious Life Saving Benevolent Award for a daring sea rescue.

On September 11, 2001, Mr. Harnisher was off duty, but upon learning of the horrific attack on the World Trade Center, he succeeded in getting to Ground Zero to offer assistance. He surprisingly met up with his brother, John, a retired FDNY Lieutenant who had the same idea. Both narrowly escaped the collapse of the 7 World Trade Center building. For days afterward, Mr. Harnisher and other Marine 1 firefighters doused the smoldering ruins of the World Trade Center from their fireboats.

Today, Mr. Harnisher enjoys skiing, boating, and spending time with his wife of 37 years, Debi, who is an Air Force veteran.



THOMAS JAMES HARNISHER WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JAMES SANDERS JR.

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RONNIE HART

Ronnie Hart served in the United States Air Force and achieved the rank of Airman 3rd Class.

After leaving tech school, Mr. Hart joined the Air Force in April 1955 to serve his Nation. He played a critical role in helping the U.S. Air Force achieve mission success. After serving valiantly, he was honorably discharged in December 1957.

Mr. Hart worked as a jet engine mechanic in the rank of Airman 3rd Class in the 311 Bomber Squadron. He was stationed in Japan and was later sent to Osan Air Base in South Korea. Mr. Hart concluded his service in Taiwan.

Following his return to the United States, Mr. Hart continued to reside in South Carolina. Eventually, he relocated to New York State in 1958.

After being employed by various organizations, Mr. Hart decided to pursue a career in transportation. As a 25-year tractor trailer operator, he was responsible for long-distance commutes and deliveries throughout the Northeast. Mr. Hart secured, loaded, and unloaded cargo, along with compliance with regulations, planning routes, and proper maintenance of the vehicle.

Mr. Hart was blessed to find the love of his life, Jeanette, with whom he shared 50 wonderful years and seven children.

He is proud to have a granddaughter who followed in his footsteps and enlisted with the United States Air Force as a Reserve Cyber Security Officer.



RONNIE HART WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ROXANNE J. PERSAUD

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

JAMES A. HODGES, SR.

James A. Hodges, Sr. served in the United States Army and attained the rank of Command Sergeant Major.

Mr. Hodges was born in Tifton, Georgia on May 24, 1928, the seventh of 12 children born to Edgar J. Hodges and Easter Gervin Hodges. Growing up in a segregated South, where the only option was to pick cotton, Mr. Hodges instead joined the military at 16 years old, enlisting in the United States Navy.

It was not long before the Navy discovered that he was too young to have enlisted. However, Mr. Hodges was not discouraged and shortly thereafter proceeded to enlist in the U.S. Army, where he was active in three wars: World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Mr. Hodges remained in the military, rising in rank along the way. While serving with the Army, he was simultaneously employed as an electronic engineer with Airborne Instruments Laboratories, a division of Eaton Corporation.

Mr. Hodges retired from the Army, having attained the rank of Command Sergeant Major, after serving 40 years and nine months. However, his dedication to his fellow man did not stop there. He oversaw the Nassau County Auxiliary Police Department, Roosevelt Unit 124, for 26 years, while also providing community services through a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week childcare program.

Mr. Hodges remains involved in community activities and services with the 55 Mansfield Avenue Community Center and the Mount Sinai Baptist Church in Roosevelt, New York. To that end, planning is in progress to have Mansfield Avenue named in his honor.

Mr. Hodges recently celebrated his 97th birthday. He continues to be a man of the people, a man of the church, a man of the community, and a family man.

In 1951, he met Eura Lee Davis. They married and had three children: Tara (Hodges) Gilbert, James A. Hodges, Jr., and William Reese Hodges. They were married for 56 years until her passing in 2007.

Mr. Hodges has treasured his ability to help others and continues to strive to bring positive community enhancement to make a better place for all.



**JAMES A. HODGES, SR. WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR SIELA A. BYNOE**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MORRISON JOHN HOSLEY JR.

Morrison John Hosley Jr. enlisted in the United States Army and United States Army Reserve and achieved the rank of Colonel.

A graduate from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1961, Mr. Hosley enlisted in the Army and completed basic training at Fort Dix, where he was awarded Trainee of the Year. He then completed Pharmacy School at Fort Sam Houston and was assigned to Fort Richardson, Alaska.

In 1963, Mr. Hosley was commissioned and took command of the 64th Field Hospital. His unit responded to the Great Alaska Earthquake in 1964, setting up the 64th Field Hospital; the seven-story Air Force hospital had been destroyed.

Mr. Hosley was then assigned to Fort Hood, where he served as the Assistant Operations Officer at the base hospital. During his tenure, he directed the transition of the hospital from the old barracks to a modern medical facility at the Darnell Army Hospital. Later, he was given command of the 514th Medical Detachment.

Mr. Hosley was accepted into the Army helicopter training program and graduated in 1966. He was sent to Vietnam to fly as a medevac pilot, where he served two 12-month tours, separated by a 14-month tour in Japan.

Mr. Hosley was promoted to the rank of Major and received many commendations, including the Silver Star for Valor in Combat, the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Stars, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, two Purple Hearts, 16 awards of the Air Medal, one Air Medal for Valor, and two Army Commendation Medals. Two of Mr. Hosley's four combat commands were also awarded Presidential Unit Citations. He separated from active duty in 1972, but continued to serve in the U.S. Army Reserve until 1992, when he retired as a full Colonel.

Mr. Hosley continued his public engagement by serving on the local school board, including 10 years as its President. He was elected as Town Supervisor, a position he held for 16 years. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Tupper Lake National Bank for 34 years.

In July 1963, Mr. Hosley married Loretto Ehrbar. For more than 50 years, Mr. Hosley and his family have owned multiple businesses serving the Adirondack community, including Hoss's Country Corner, their flagship store.



MORRISON JOHN HOSLEY JR. WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR MARK WALCZYK

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

DETREL HOWELL

Detrel Howell served in the United States Army Reserve and achieved the rank of Specialist E-4.

Ms. Howell, from Jamaica, New York, honorably served in the Army Reserve from 1987 to 1995. In 1990, she was deployed to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield as a member of the 800th Military Police Brigade.

During her eight years of service in the military, Ms. Howell earned numerous recognitions and medals. She has also spent more than 30 years working in the fields of human services and law enforcement, driven by a strong desire to help as many people as possible.

Ms. Howell is the founder of United In Sisterhood, a nonprofit organization dedicated to female veterans. The organization aims to uplift its members through positive encouragement and innovative approaches that focus on physical and emotional health, networking, and social engagement through outings and virtual events.

Ms. Howell has been an integral member of WoVeN (Women Veterans Network), which has been fostering connections among female veterans since 2020. She now serves as a National Trainer for the organization.

Additionally, Ms. Howell is the Public Relations Officer for the National Association of Black Military Women - NYC Chapter, where she is a lifetime member. Recently, she was appointed as a board member of Black Vets for Social Justice. Ms. Howell is also a lifetime member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and enjoys spending time with fellow veterans.

Ms. Howell holds dual Master's degrees from Fordham University and New York Theological Seminary. She was honored with an Honorary Doctorate in Humanitarianism from the Global International Alliance in Atlanta, Georgia.



DETREL HOWELL WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR LEROY COMRIE

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RANDY JURGENSEN

Randy Jurgensen is a decorated U.S. Army veteran, retired NYPD homicide detective, acclaimed author, and film industry consultant whose career exemplifies extraordinary dedication to public service — both in the military and law enforcement.

Born in Harlem in 1933, Mr. Jurgensen served as a Paratrooper during the Korean War, fighting in the Battle of Pork Chop Hill. His heroism earned him three Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart, and his helmet is displayed at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in recognition of his service.

In 1958, Mr. Jurgensen joined the NYPD, where he spent over two decades as one of the Department's most respected homicide detectives. He led major investigations, including the 1972 Harlem mosque incident, in which Officer Phil Cardillo was fatally shot. His 2006 book, *Circle of Six*, reignited public interest in the case, leading to a new investigation and a lasting tribute to Officer Cardillo in Queens.

Mr. Jurgensen's exceptional bravery and service were recently recognized with the prestigious NYPD Combat Cross, one of the Department's highest honors, awarded for acts of heroism in the line of duty. His distinguished assortment of accolades also includes the Medal of Valor from the Honor Legion and the Isaac Bell Medal for Bravery.

Beyond law enforcement, Mr. Jurgensen became a sought-after technical advisor and actor in major films, lending his expertise to classics such as *The French Connection*, *Donnie Brasco*, and *Cruising*. He appeared in over 50 films, including *The Godfather*, and co-wrote and produced the film *Heart*.

Now, his remarkable career is the focus of the upcoming documentary *Reel Cop*, which explores his journey from the streets of New York to Hollywood, offering an insider's perspective on the portrayal of law enforcement in film.

Mr. Jurgensen's life of service — as a soldier, police officer, and storyteller — has left an indelible mark on public safety and American culture. His contributions embody the best of New York's veterans and public servants, ensuring his legacy continues to inspire generations.



RANDY JURGENSEN WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE AND
NYS SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MICHAEL KILANO

Michael Kilano served in the United States Marine Corps from 1999 to 2003.

Born and raised in Queens, Mr. Kilano is a dedicated veteran advocate and crisis coordinator who has transformed his personal struggles into a mission to help and support others. Shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, he was deployed to the Middle East, participating in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Mr. Kilano's service left him with deep scars. His battalion was one of the first units deployed to Iraq, and after only three months, he noticed that the experiences were beginning to change him and take a toll on his mental well-being. As a result of the many combat missions, he struggles with daily life activities, anxiety, and has been diagnosed with combat-related PTSD. The impact on Mr. Kilano's life has been profound, particularly in his role as a father. Raising five children while managing PTSD has presented unique challenges, requiring patience, resilience, and constant effort to maintain a stable and nurturing environment. Despite these difficulties, he has found ways to manage his PTSD, allowing him to be the great father that his children need.

While receiving inpatient care at the Northport VA Hospital in New York, Mr. Kilano met a fellow veteran who was part of Paws of War, an organization that helps pair veterans with PTSD with a fully trained service animal. When Mr. Kilano was discharged from the VA Hospital, he set out on a mission to find a dog that could help him. The pivotal moment in his recovery came when he received his service dog, Nova, from Paws of War. This lifesaving support not only improved his mental health, but also enhanced his ability to be present and engaged with his family.

Inspired by Nova and the positive change in his life, Mr. Kilano now works full time with Paws of War, helping other veterans navigate their own struggles. He plays a crucial role as Director of Veteran Advocacy and as a Crisis Coordinator, assisting with various tasks, including community outreach presentations, transporting dogs, and helping veterans in need.

His journey from combat to advocacy shows his resilience and commitment to making a difference in the lives of fellow veterans. Balancing his responsibilities as a father with his commitment to helping other veterans, Mr. Kilano exemplifies the meaning of dedication.



*MICHAEL KILANO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR MONICA R. MARTINEZ*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

TED KNIAZUK

Ted Kniazuk was drafted into the United States Army. He served as a Specialist-4 from 1966 to 1968, including one tour in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, Mr. Kniazuk was stationed in the Central Highlands, where he supplied power to various sites. This crucial role ensured communication capabilities between his sites and other bases, allowing them to receive essential air support and artillery assistance as needed.

The Vietnam conflict took a toll on Mr. Kniazuk, along with his fellow soldiers. In addition to the horrors of battle, he was exposed to Agent Orange, the very substance used by the country he was serving; the effects continue to affect him today.

Despite this, Mr. Kniazuk visits the local VA Hospital for treatment and also volunteers with AMVETS Post 8113, serving ice cream and assisting at the Golden Age Games. Even during his time in Vietnam, Mr. Kniazuk's commitment to others was evident as he helped a local priest at an orphanage secure extra supplies to care for war-affected children. Today, he and his wife, Janet, regularly donate clothing and supplies to the Homeless Veterans organization in Buffalo.

Mr. Kniazuk serves as Provost Marshal of AMVETS 8113 and is a trustee of American Legion Post 735. He is a longtime member of the Color Guard, providing honor guard services at events and funerals. Mr. Kniazuk also places American flags on graves for veterans, including at the "forgotten" cemetery for African American veterans in West Seneca. Additionally, he collaborates with local schools that request a veteran's presence for educational purposes.

Beyond his work with veterans, Mr. Kniazuk is an active, lifelong practicing Roman Catholic involved at St. Adalbert Basilica. He opens the Basilica for visitors, maintains the grounds, organizes the marching crew for the Dyngus Day and Pulaski Day parades, and helps raise funds at the Broadway Market during Easter. Mr. Kniazuk also volunteers with his son's nonprofit, The Big Easy, and at the annual Music is Art Festival.

Mr. Kniazuk was born in 1944 and raised in the Old First Ward. He later raised his family in the Broadway-Fillmore neighborhood and currently resides in Kaisertown. He has been happily married to his wife, Janet Sobolewski, for 59 years and has one son, Tod.



**TED KNIAZUK WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR APRIL N.M. BASKIN**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

FRANK LAMARSH

Frank LaMarsh enlisted in the United States Navy and achieved the rank of Petty Officer 3rd Class.

After high school, in 1969, Mr. LaMarsh trained at the Naval School of Construction in Davisville, Rhode Island and was assigned to the Public Works Great Lakes Naval Training Center as a member of CBMU 401. He was reassigned to MCB 62, working on the Seabee base at Gulfport, Mississippi that was destroyed by Hurricane Camille.

Mr. LaMarsh volunteered for duty in Vietnam and was deployed to NSA Da Nang, Vietnam to work with Vietnamese Seabees and civilians on construction projects. Later, he transferred to CBMU 302 in Bien Hoa. After duty in Vietnam, Mr. LaMarsh was discharged in February 1972 and served three years in the Reserve before receiving an honorable discharge in 1975.

For his service to our Nation, Mr. LaMarsh earned numerous military honors, including the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Civic Action Award First Class, the M16 Marksmanship Ribbon, and NYS Medal of Merit.

Mr. LaMarsh served as American Legion Gold Star Post Commander for two years and then was elected County Commander, followed by his election as 2nd District Commander. He took the role of Department Legislative Chairman, working on resolutions and memorandums of support benefiting New York State veterans. As Department Legislative Chairman, he testified before the New York State Assembly and New York City Council. Additionally, he served on the National Legislative Commission and currently serves as Department Legislative Advisor.

He was elected American Legion Department Commander from 2021 to 2022. During his term, Mr. LaMarsh traveled throughout the State meeting with veterans and offering assistance, highlighted by speaking at the dedication of the Purple Heart monument in Watertown, New York.

Presently, he is serving on the National Children & Youth Committee and various State-level committees. Mr. LaMarsh also served as Gold Star Post's Adjutant for over 20 years, County and District Adjutant, New York State Department Vice Commander, editor of the Post newsletter, and Richmond County's Staten Island Legionnaire for 20 years.

Mr. LaMarsh's other affiliations include Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Salvation Army Advisory Board.

He is married to his wife, Nancy, and has five children: Jamie, Jared, Jonathan, Jessica, and Jordan, along with eleven grandchildren.



**FRANK LAMARSH WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ANDREW J. LANZA**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

ELADIO LAMBOY

Eladio Lamboy served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Sergeant First Class.

Mr. Lamboy entered the military in June 1980. His training encompassed areas of infantry, telecommunications, human resources, finance, and Equal Employment Opportunity. As part of his training, Mr. Lamboy was tasked with developing the skills necessary to help and train others to succeed and become leaders.

As a Noncommissioned Officer (NCO), he was deployed to Bosnia in support of Operation Joint Endeavor/Guard from January to September 1997. As NCO, one of his many duties was to ensure that troops were prepared and followed military standard operating procedures. He also assisted with security management protocols. In December 2003, Mr. Lamboy was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

For his dedication and service to his Nation, Mr. Lamboy received numerous medals and commendations, including the NATO Medal, Noncommissioned Officer's Professional Development Ribbon, Army Commendation Medal (2nd Award), Army Achievement Medal, Army Superior Unit Award, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal (4th Award), National Defense Service Medal (2nd Award), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Armed Forces Service Medal, and Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Bronze Hourglass with M/device. After his second deployment, in December 2005, he retired as Sergeant First Class (SFC) with an Honorable Discharge.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Mr. Lamboy is one of seven siblings. He attended the World University of Puerto Rico and graduated with a Master of Science in Accounting and a Bachelor's degree in Management.

For the last 35 years, Mr. Lamboy has served as Chief Executive Officer of Transfiguration Parish Federal Credit Union. He has made it his mission to serve the community and help others achieve their financial goals and acquire affordable fair housing.

Mr. Lamboy has been a volunteer board member with numerous organizations, including United for Fair Housing, Woodhull Hospital Auxiliary Board, South Side Mission, and Casa Betsaida.



**ELADIO LAMBOY WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JULIA SALAZAR**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

AARON LEONARD

Aaron Leonard served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

A combat veteran, Mr. Leonard retired from the Army in 2014 after more than 27 years in service.

Aware of the challenges many veterans face in transitioning from the military to a healthy and purposeful civilian life, Mr. Leonard developed and led therapeutic outdoor adventure programs.

Knowing from personal experience that time outdoors can help, he was focused on supporting the health and well-being of military service members, veterans, and first responders.

Beginning with the Sierra Club Military Outdoors in 2015, and then in 2021 as the Executive Director of Guardian Revival's Another Summit program, Mr. Leonard has been instrumental in training hundreds of veterans to be outdoor leaders, resulting in thousands of veterans having an opportunity to explore and enjoy the natural world.

Mr. Leonard founded and is Chair of the Outdoor Rx Coalition in New York. Its purpose is to increase access to State parks and public lands for the over 770,000 veterans living in the State. Additionally, he advises the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Task Force on Outdoor Recreation for Veterans. Mr. Leonard is a nationally recognized leader in outdoor adventure education, who regularly speaks at recreation conferences and symposiums regarding the benefits of outdoor programs designed for the veteran community.

Currently, Mr. Leonard is the Chief Executive Officer of Guardian Revival, a non-profit organization based in Beacon, New York. Its mission is to revive, improve, and preserve the mental health and well-being of military, veterans and first responders – our guardians – and their families, at no cost to them. A community-based organization with a national reach, Guardian Revival serves thousands of guardians and their families through eight programs, including Another Summit, Boots & Paws, Champions, Encore, Homefront, Peer Services, and Rise.

Mr. Leonard volunteers as a firefighter and Lieutenant with the Cold Spring Fire Company No. 1 and is a member of the American Legion Post 275.

A father of five, Mr. Leonard resides in Cold Spring, New York with his wife, Leslie.



AARON LEONARD WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ROBERT G. ROLISON

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

DANIEL LUCIANO

Daniel Luciano served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Specialist 4.

Mr. Luciano was born in Brooklyn in 1946. As his family's only male child, he was eligible for a deferment during the Vietnam War era, but he refused it, and in 1966, he chose to enlist in the Army and was stationed in Korea.

His father, also named Daniel, was a member of the United States Armed Forces who served in World War II, and his example of how a strong leader should act left a lasting impression. Inspired by his father's example and a strong sense of patriotism, Mr. Luciano saw that it was his duty to serve his country and fight on behalf of our Nation.

During his service, Mr. Luciano was tasked with guarding the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). There, he was exposed to an unidentified substance, an incident that later resulted in a 100 percent disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Despite the chronic pain that has followed him throughout his life, Mr. Luciano's resilience never let it dampen his spirit or limit his commitment to his family.

Soon after his discharge, Mr. Luciano married the love of his life, Jodi. Together, they raised two daughters, Janine and Laura, in the same Brooklyn community that he loved.

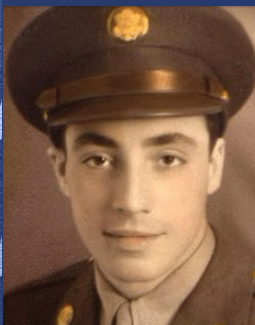
Mr. Luciano became a member of both the Disabled American Veterans and the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, finding camaraderie and commiseration among fellow veterans.

Today, Mr. Luciano and Jodi are the proud grandparents of three granddaughters, Dakota, Autumn, and Hailey, who carry their grandfather's legacy of resilience and strength. His life stands as a testament to sacrifice, patriotism, and the enduring love of family.



DANIEL LUCIANO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR STEPHEN T. CHAN

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

LOUIS LUPINACCI

Louis Lupinacci enlisted in the United States Army during World War II, and he achieved the rank of Private First Class Antiaircraft Machine Gunner.

Mr. Lupinacci trained at Fort Sheridan as a machine gunner. He landed with the first wave at Easy Red Beach (a section of a five-mile-long beachhead code-named "Omaha") during the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. Mr. Lupinacci worked his way through France, Belgium, Holland, Scotland, England, and Germany, securing the beaches.

For his bravery and service, Mr. Lupinacci earned numerous recognitions and awards, including the Army Good Conduct Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World War II D-Day Commemorative Medal, American Campaign Medal, and the Army of Occupation Medal.

After returning home, Mr. Lupinacci was part of the 52/20 Club, a United States government program that gave WWII servicemen \$20 per week for 52 weeks until they were able to find employment. He first took a position in a fish packing company. Later, his uncle offered him a job in construction, and he worked his way up to foreman and then supervisor, retiring after 42 years.

Mr. Lupinacci is a proud veteran and member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Labetti Post in Rosebank on Staten Island. On September 13, 2024, he celebrated his 100th birthday. Borough President Vito Fossella presented a proclamation to Mr. Lupinacci in his honor and declared October 9 as Louis "Louie" Lupinacci Day in the Borough of Staten Island.

He met his wife, Nancy, in 1948, when she worked with his sister, Camille. They were married in 1951 and celebrated 56 years together before her passing. Mr. Lupinacci feels that his greatest accomplishment was becoming a father figure to his nephews and nieces. He has created precious memories with family and friends, which have grown to include their children and their children's children. Mr. Lupinacci is affectionately known by all as "Uncle Louie."



LOUIS LUPINACCI WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JESSICA SCARCELLA-SPANTON

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

LUKE A. MAGLIARO, JR.

Luke A. Magliaro, Jr. served in the United States Navy and achieved the rank of Commander.

Mr. Magliaro served in Vietnam as a Naval Flight Officer assigned to Carrier Air Wing 21, aboard the *USS Hancock* operating in the Gulf of Tonkin. He participated in Operations Babylift, Frequent Wind, and Eagle Pull, as well as the recovery mission of the *SS Mayagüez* from Communist forces in the waters off the coast of Cambodia. Following Vietnam, he was released from active duty and continued in the Reserve assigned to the *USS John F. Kennedy*. He retired in 2001.

For his valor and service to his Nation, Mr. Magliaro was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Navy Efficiency "E" Award, Navy Unit Citation with three stars, the Navy Meritorious Unit Citation with two stars, the Navy Sea Service Deployment Award with two stars, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Navy Expedition Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with three awards, and the Humanitarian Service Medal with three stars. He also earned several personal citations, including the Navy Marine Corps Medal, the Purple Heart, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Air Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Distinguished Service and Meritorious Service Medals, the Navy Commendation, Navy Achievement, and the Navy Rifle and Navy Pistol Expert Medals.

Mr. Magliaro became the first Vietnam veteran elected Post Commander of the PFC John J. Oliveri VFW Post 158. Under his command, the Post earned several community service awards and the distinct title of All-State and All-American Commander. Today, he continues to serve as Post Quartermaster and Judge Advocate.

Mr. Magliaro serves the VFW as National Deputy Chief of Staff and State Chief of Staff. As Commander of the Nassau County Council, he earned the status of All-State County Commander. In addition to being a Gold Legacy Life Member of the VFW, he is President of the Inwood Veterans Association, a Life Member of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States, a Life Member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, a Life Member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and a Life Member of the American Legion.

He serves his community as a member of the Inwood Fire Department and is a Senior Counselor of the Nassau County Critical Incident Crisis team. As a diplomate member of the Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, Mr. Magliaro is Board-certified in acute traumatic stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Mr. Magliaro is employed with the Town of Hempstead as a Veterans Service Counselor. He also serves as Veterans Affairs Advisor to New York State Senator Patricia M. Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick of the 9th Senate District and New York State Assemblyman Ari Brown.



**LUKE A. MAGLIARO, JR. WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR PATRICIA M.
CANZONERI-FITZPATRICK**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

JOSEPH BERT MAHONEY

Joseph Bert Mahoney served in the United States Navy and achieved the rank of Petty Officer Second Class AE-2.

A resident of Waterford, New York, Mr. Mahoney served in the Navy from 1964 to 1968 and participated in three combat tours in the Vietnam War.

Mr. Mahoney entered active duty on April 7, 1964, and served in aircraft maintenance as an Aircraft Electrical Inspector. After training in Great Lakes, Illinois and Jacksonville, Florida, Mr. Mahoney was assigned to VA-163 on board the aircraft carrier *USS Oriskany*. He served with this unit from May 1965 until his discharge in January 1968.

During its deployments to Vietnam, the *USS Oriskany* lost 71 aircraft and 79 service members, a shockingly high number by modern carrier aviation standards. While Mr. Mahoney was on board, the *USS Oriskany* experienced a horrible at-sea fire in October 1966, which claimed the lives of 44 sailors.

Mr. Mahoney also served in support of Navy pilot, then-Lieutenant Commander John McCain, who was shot down over North Vietnam.

For his valor and service to our Nation, Mr. Mahoney was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, Navy Unit Commendation Medal with one Bronze Star, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 Device.

Mr. Mahoney was trained at the U.S. Navy Aviation Electrician Mates School and numerous aircraft technical schools, as well as the U.S. Armed Forces Institute. He attended Hudson Valley Community College for Electrical Technology and SUNY Albany for Fire Service Management.

After his military service, Mr. Mahoney was employed by GE Silicone Products for 32 years, retiring as a Project Engineer/Electrical Instrumentation Supervisor.

An active participant in the Waterford community since 1968, Mr. Mahoney has been a member, Captain, Assistant Chief, and Chief of the Waterford Fire Department. He has diligently served as the Mayor of the Village of Waterford since 1998.

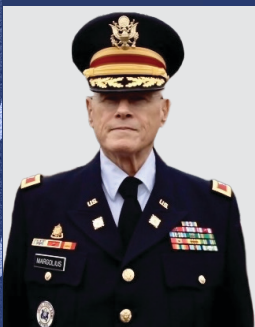
He is Past Commander of the Waterford Memorial Post 5800 VFW and a member of the American Legion Post 235, Waterford Knights of Columbus, and Cohoes/Waterford Elks.

Mr. Mahoney has been married for 57 years to Margie "Mike" Mahoney. They have two boys, Bert and Russell, and five grandchildren.



JOSEPH BERT MAHONEY WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JAMES N. TEDISCO

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

BENJAMIN W. MARGOLIUS

Benjamin W. Margolius served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Colonel.

After completion of his ROTC training, he was commissioned as an Army Second Lieutenant and entered active duty in the Transportation Corps in 1963. Mr. Margolius is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College Extension Course, and the Marine Corps Instructor Technology School.

In addition to serving as the Chief of Joint Operations for the U.S. Transportation Command, he held important positions in the fields of transportation management, operations, logistics, and war planning in Korea, Germany, Okinawa, Vietnam, the Netherlands, Virginia, Maryland, Florida, Kansas, and Illinois. Mr. Margolius served as a plank owner of the Rapid Deployment and in three unified commands. He retired in 1990, only to be recalled to active duty for Operation Desert Storm.

Following his military retirement in 1991, Mr. Margolius was, at different times, a senior logistics engineer, senior systems analyst, deputy program manager, and trained Six Sigma Black Belt for CEXEC, IBM Federal Systems, and Loral Corporations. He retired from Lockheed Martin in 2004 as a Senior Systems Analyst.

His numerous awards include medals for Defense Superior Service (with one Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star (with one OLC), Defense Meritorious Service, Army Meritorious Service (with one OLC), Joint Service Commendation (with one OLC), Army Commendation (with three OLCs), Navy Achievement, National Defense Service (with one OLC), Vietnam Service (with four campaign stars), Korea Defense Service, and Army Overseas Service (with five tours).

Mr. Margolius is the Past President of the New York Council, Military Officers Association of America, Past President of MOAA's Southern Tier Chapter, President of the Southern Tier Veterans Support Group, and President of the Macintosh Southern Tier Apple Club. He is a life member of MOAA, the Association of the United States Army, and the Military Order of the World Wars. He is also the team leader of the Binghamton Hometown Heroes Banner Program, a member of American Legion Post 1645, and serves on several boards, including Stand With Me Assistance Dog Team Training, Inc. and Deacon of the Silver Lake Christian Community Church. He is a volunteer with the American Red Cross and a military advisor to Guthrie Lourdes Hospice.

Mr. Margolius resides in Vestal with his wife, Sue, and they have two sons.



**BENJAMIN W. MARGOLIUS WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR LEA WEBB**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

ROBERT MCCARTHY

Robert McCarthy served in the United States Marine Corps and achieved the rank of Corporal.

Mr. McCarthy enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1988 and served during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He earned numerous recognitions for his bravery and service to our Nation, including the National Defense Service Medal, Meritorious Unity Citation, Liberation of Kuwait, and the New York State Desert Storm Service Medal.

After returning from his military service, he joined the New York City Police Department. Mr. McCarthy was part of the rescue and recovery operations at Ground Zero following the tragic events that took place on September 11, 2001.

After two decades of service, Mr. McCarthy retired from the NYPD and became a Court Security Officer at the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

Mr. McCarthy continues to work and care for his fellow veterans and community through his work with organizations and causes in Queens. In 2015, he joined the American Legion Post 1836 and serves as Post Adjutant. The following year, he joined the Board of Directors for the Boulevard Gardens Owners Corporation and has served as Board President since 2019.

Deeply committed to his community, Mr. McCarthy became a member of the Marine Corps League and works annually with the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program. His continued generosity exemplifies his deep care for others and desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

Mr. McCarthy was born in Astoria, Queens and has remained a lifelong Queens resident. He attended schools across New York City, including P.S. 19 in Corona, St. Bartholomew in Elmhurst, and John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where he earned a Bachelor's degree.



ROBERT MCCARTHY WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR MICHAEL GIANARIS

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

STEVE MEJIA

Steve Mejia is a distinguished United States Air Force veteran holding the rank of Senior Airman (E-4).

He is a dedicated public servant whose career reflects an enduring commitment to service, leadership, and excellence. A proud native of East Elmhurst, Queens, Mr. Mejia served honorably in the Air Force from 2002 to 2008 as a Communications Team Technician. In this critical role, he led and supported over 36 airborne and ground communications missions across 27 countries, ensuring secure, real-time communication for senior U.S. leadership, including the President and Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Mejia earned numerous recognitions for his outstanding service, including the prestigious Joint Service Commendation Medal and the Air Force Achievement Medal.

After completing his military service, Mr. Mejia continued his commitment to public service by bringing his leadership skills and technical expertise to federal government roles. He worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, helping manage critical infrastructure projects, before joining the General Services Administration (GSA), where he currently serves as a Leasing Specialist based at One World Trade Center. In this role, Mr. Mejia manages multimillion-dollar federal real estate projects and complex lease negotiations, ensuring that government agencies operate efficiently and effectively while maximizing taxpayers' value.

Mr. Mejia is a graduate of New York University, holding a Bachelor of Science in Real Estate, and has earned multiple professional certifications in his field. His seamless transition from military to civilian leadership is a testament to his resilience, adaptability, and dedication to mission-driven work.

Beyond his professional achievements, Mr. Mejia remains deeply connected to his Queens roots and is passionate about serving his community. His story is one of perseverance, integrity, and a lifelong devotion to both country and community. For his outstanding record of service – both in uniform and as a civilian – Mr. Mejia exemplifies the very best of what it means to be a veteran.



STEVE MEJIA WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JESSICA RAMOS

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS THOMAS FRANCIS MINOGUE

Thomas Francis Minogue served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Private First Class. He is recognized in honor of his extraordinary bravery and selflessness during the Vietnam War.

A young man from Inwood, Private First Class Minogue was deeply rooted in a community where service to the Nation was a revered duty. As a medic with the HHC, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, he showcased immense courage and a profound commitment to his comrades.

On March 21, 1967, during the Battle of "One-Niner," Private First Class Minogue made the ultimate sacrifice. With his company severely compromised by an enemy attack, he displayed exceptional valor by returning fire and tending to the wounded, all while protecting his company commander from enemy fire.

Private First Class Minogue's actions were crucial in keeping the command operational, allowing for essential support and medical evacuation calls. This selfless act not only saved the company commander, but also preserved the lives of many fellow soldiers.

The valor and extreme gallantry demonstrated by Private First Class Minogue during these critical moments speaks volumes of his character and dedication. His conduct was in the highest traditions of military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the Armed Forces of the United States.

For service to his Nation and for protecting his fellow soldiers, Private First Class Minogue was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

It is with great respect and admiration that we at the office of State Senator Robert Jackson put forward his name for recognition. We believe that Private First Class Minogue's bravery is deserving of our highest commendation.



*PRIVATE FIRST CLASS THOMAS FRANCIS MINOGUE
WAS SELECTED POSTHUMOUSLY AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

JOHN W. MULLEN JR.

John W. Mullen Jr. reached the rank of Specialist 4th Class in the United States Army.

Mr. Mullen's Army service began in 1965. He completed a year-long deployment in Vietnam as a Supplies Specialist at the Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

Mr. Mullen's service-connected disabilities could not hinder his tireless advocacy nor contain his boundless reservoir of compassion for his fellow veterans. He worked diligently to secure needed health coverage and earned benefits for innumerable veterans struggling to navigate government services, including those exposed to Agent Orange.

Mr. Mullen championed countless combat veterans who earned awards, badges, and medals but never received them, doggedly pursuing State and federal officials and elected government officials to redress the wrong and deliver the deserved recognition. He even ensconced the medals in shadow boxes at his own expense, providing the veterans with lasting tributes to their service that will be passed down in their families for generations. Mr. Mullen did the same for the family members and descendants of veterans, securing posthumous recognition for Purple Hearts and other awards.

Mr. Mullen served on the Board of Directors of the Rensselaer County Vietnam Veterans Monument in Troy. His deep community ties helped raise over \$500,000 for the project. He also assisted the Tri-County Council of Vietnam Era Veterans in fundraising for the Albany County Vietnam Monument.

Mr. Mullen was perhaps best known for founding The Rev. Francis A. Kelley Military Honor Society, an unmatched vehicle for educating our community on local military history and honoring veterans for their civic and military service. Each year, one decorated combat veteran from Albany County and one from Rensselaer County receive the Hometown Hero Award, one of the most prestigious military honors in the Capital Region.

It would be impossible to overstate Mr. Mullen's contributions to Capital Region veterans. No challenge was too big. No kindness was too small.

Born in Albany, Mr. Mullen graduated from Cardinal McCloskey Memorial High School. He resided in Troy and enjoyed a nearly four-decade-long career with the New York State Department of Public Service.

Mr. Mullen is interred at the Gerald B.H. Solomon National Cemetery.



*JOHN W. MULLEN JR. WAS SELECTED POSTHUMOUSLY
AS A 2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JACOB C. ASHBY*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MICHAEL GERALD O'CONNOR

Michael Gerald O'Connor is a Vietnam War veteran, public servant, and longtime community volunteer.

A resident of Ossining, Mr. O'Connor has been committed to serving our Nation and New York State. For decades, his exceptional leadership has had a significant impact on the lives of his fellow residents.

Mr. O'Connor served in the United States Army from October 1963 to October 1966. He was deployed to Vietnam from April 1965 to April 1966 and achieved the rank of Specialist 4th Class. Mr. O'Connor was awarded numerous recognitions, including the U.S. Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, U.S. National Defense Service Medal, U.S. Army Good Conduct Medal, and U.S. Army Expert Marksman with Rifle Badge. Additionally, he was awarded a Certificate of Commendation from the Commanding General of Fort Dix, New Jersey in 1966.

Dedicated to public service, Mr. O'Connor was a Council Member in the Town of Ossining for 16 years before being elected Superintendent of Highways for 14 years, where he modernized the Department. Mr. O'Connor has also served for 50 years as a volunteer with the Ossining Fire Department (OFD). Always stepping up to support local charitable causes, he packs and distributes OFD Christmas holiday food baskets and Elks Lodge food bank supplies to the needy.

In the mid-1980s, Mr. O'Connor was asked to help create a facility to house Ossining's young, unwed mothers with children. Thus, Job's Refuge was born and, after years of success, was absorbed into the Westchester County government. To celebrate his dedication to this program, Mr. O'Connor was awarded the Cardinal Cooke Award by the Archdiocese of New York.

Mr. O'Connor has been a member of veterans' organizations for over 40 years. He is the Commander of Ossining Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #1041, Vice Commander of Ossining American Legion Post #506, and Chairperson of Ossining Central Committee of Organized War Veterans.

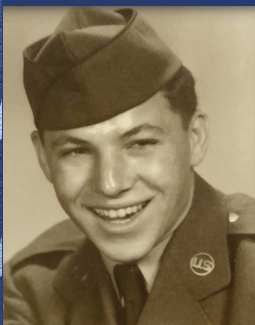
Mr. O'Connor oversees the annual grave decoration program and Memorial Day parade, as well as the Veterans Day and Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day memorial ceremonies.

Mr. O'Connor has been married to his wife, Mary, for 57 years. They have three adult daughters and four grandchildren.



**MICHAEL GERALD O'CONNOR WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR PETE HARCKHAM**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

LOUIS JOSEPH PICARAZZI

Louis Joseph Picarazzi, a lifelong resident of Selkirk, New York, has dedicated his life to service through military duty, public leadership, and community volunteerism. Born in 1931 to Domenick and Maria Picarazzi, Italian immigrants from the Lazio region, Mr. Picarazzi was the first of their nine children to be born in the United States. Raised during the Great Depression, his early life was shaped by the values of hard work, humility, and strong community bonds.

In 1951, Mr. Picarazzi answered the call of duty by enlisting in the United States Air Force during the Korean War. He served honorably until 1955, achieving the rank of Staff Sergeant and earning several commendations, including the Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Award. His military service was nationally recognized in 2024 when he was honored as the "Veteran of the Game" by the New York Yankees during a televised tribute.

Following his military service, Mr. Picarazzi began a long and respected career with the United States Postal Service. In 1964, he was appointed Postmaster of the Selkirk Post Office by President Lyndon B. Johnson, a position he held for nearly 30 years. Under Mr. Picarazzi's leadership, the Post Office was more than just a mail center – it became a vital community hub, connecting rural residents with government services and with one another. His detailed historical account of the Selkirk Post Office remains preserved in the Bethlehem Town Archives.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Mr. Picarazzi has been a stalwart of the Selkirk Fire Department, having served as a volunteer firefighter for over 75 years since joining at the age of 18. His steadfast presence at local fundraisers, farmers markets, and civic events – along with his iconic handcrafted wooden American flags – has made him one of the most recognizable and beloved figures in Bethlehem. Affectionately known as the "Mayor of Selkirk," Mr. Picarazzi's life is a testament to public service, patriotism, and the enduring power of community.

Now in his 90s, Mr. Picarazzi continues to inspire all who meet him, representing the very best of the American spirit.



LOUIS JOSEPH PICARAZZI WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR PATRICIA A. FAHY

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

THOMAS PIKE

Thomas Pike served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Colonel.

A native New Yorker, Mr. Pike served for over 30 years with the Armed Forces. He grew up in Manhattan and attended school on the Upper East Side. His career as a military intelligence officer prominently featured support for the Global War on Terrorism, where he held multiple leadership positions of increasing responsibility.

His commitment to service included five deployments—three to Afghanistan and two to the Balkans, where he held several leadership positions. During his final deployment, he served as the Director of Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, Afghanistan, providing critical support to U.S. and NATO forces. He returned to the United States to take command of a brigade.

In 2018, Mr. Pike returned to his New York City roots with his family. His final military assignment involved supporting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at its downtown Manhattan office. He assisted in several emergency response missions, including earthquake relief in Puerto Rico, a hurricane response in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and assistance to 50,000 Afghan refugees at Fort Dix, New Jersey following the fall of Kabul in 2021. His most extensive mission came during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he leveraged Department of Defense medical support at the Javits Center and 11 public hospitals in New York City. He subsequently assisted with FEMA's vaccine initiative, coordinating Navy and Air Force units as they administered vaccines in underserved communities in Queens and Brooklyn.

Today, Mr. Pike focuses on mentoring the next generation, teaching leadership and responsibility to children and teenagers across New York City. He serves as the Assistant Commandant for the Knickerbocker Greys, a historic after-school cadet corps for boys and girls established in 1881. Additionally, he leads the Military Order of Foreign Wars in New York, a non-profit organization supporting veterans' issues, youth development, and military history.

An accomplished author, Mr. Pike has published three books—two on the Vietnam War and one chronicling the history of the Knickerbocker Greys. He is frequently invited as a guest lecturer on topics related to the Vietnam War, intelligence operations, and critical infrastructure preparedness, where he shares his expertise with diverse audiences.

Mr. Pike's awards include three Legions of Merit, three Bronze Star Medals, three Defense Meritorious Service Medals, and the Combat Action Badge.



THOMAS PIKE WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR LIZ KRUEGER

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

ANTHONY RABASCO

Anthony Rabasco served in the United States Army during the Korean War and achieved the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Mr. Rabasco was born in January 1928, and shortly thereafter, our Nation sank into the Great Depression. His father, an immigrant from Italy, struggled to make ends meet, so at a young age, Mr. Rabasco went to work. Whether it was shining shoes, carrying blocks of ice up four-story walk-ups, or restocking sodas, he worked to help his family make ends meet.

While still a teenager, Mr. Rabasco was hired by electricians because they were impressed by his curiosity and knowledge. Over time, he learned the trade that carried him through much of his career. When he graduated from high school in 1947, Mr. Rabasco chose to enlist in the Army. However, before being called for active duty, he passed his electrical master's exam for the City of New York and was prepared to open his own business.

Once in Korea, Mr. Rabasco served as a member of the Signal Corps, providing communications links between headquarters and the frontlines. Due to the nature of his work, he served in combat duty for as long as two months at a time. Mr. Rabasco suffered from severe frostbite and recurring malaria before returning home in April 1952. He earned four Bronze Stars and a field promotion to Staff Sergeant.

Gradually, Mr. Rabasco acclimated to being home, and in 1955, he and his partner opened Metro Electric, specializing in large commercial work, postwar housing, and work on the trolley car in Yonkers. After several years, Metro Electric was reorganized into Bosco Electric, of which Mr. Rabasco became the owner. When that venture ended, he discovered a new opportunity as an Electrical Inspector working with various firms. He passed Electric General, followed by One- and Two-Family Dwellings exams in 2009 at the age of 81.

Mr. Rabasco has four devoted sons, two grandsons, Joshua and Benjamin, and one granddaughter, Jenna, who is graduating from R.O.T.C. at the University of Georgia. She is being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force.



ANTHONY RABASCO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

THE HONORABLE CHARLES B. RANGEL

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel served in the United States Army from 1948 to 1952 as a Staff Sergeant.

For his bravery and dedication to his Nation, Representative Rangel was awarded the Bronze Star. He earned the Purple Heart for his service in the Korean War when he led 40 United States soldiers from behind enemy lines despite being wounded himself.

Born and raised in Harlem, Representative Rangel graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School. He went on to earn a Bachelor's degree from New York University under the GI Bill in 1957. Three years later, he earned a law degree from St. John's University Law School.

In 1963, U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy appointed him Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. He later served as an aide to the Speaker of the New York State Assembly and was counsel for the President's Commission to Revise the Draft Laws in 1966.

In March 1965, Representative Rangel participated in the famous voting rights march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. In 1966, he won a seat in the New York State Assembly, representing Central Harlem.

Known in his Harlem community as the "Lion of Lenox Avenue," Representative Rangel rose to become the first African American Chair of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. With a House career that spanned 46 years, he was one of the longest-serving members of Congress in American history.

Representative Rangel helped found the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971 and was a staunch defender of urban economic development and international trade. His assignment to the Ways and Means Committee gave him considerable influence over America's tax policy, and he shaped major bills that ranged from anti-drug policies to health care reform.

In 2003, Representative Rangel introduced legislation to reinstate the military draft, revisiting an issue he had worked on before his first House campaign. "How can anyone support the war and not support the draft?" he asked amid U.S. conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. He argued repeatedly that the government relied on disadvantaged and working-class enlistees to fight its battles. Representative Rangel also sponsored the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax (HEART) Act to provide financial help to America's veterans. The bill became law on June 17, 2008.



THE HONORABLE CHARLES B. RANGEL WAS SELECTED
AS A 2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR CORDELL CLEARE

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

ALPHONSE JOSEPH RANNI

Alphonse Joseph Ranni served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Specialist 5th Class (E-5).

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Mr. Ranni is a veteran, business owner, and community volunteer. He graduated from John Adams High School in Queens and proudly served in the Army during the Vietnam War. Mr. Ranni was assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry, 9th Infantry Division and took part in critical missions, including the battles of Hue City and A Shau Valley.

As an Armored Reconnaissance Specialist (MOS 11D), Mr. Ranni operated with the 101st Airborne and the 3rd Marine Division. For his service from September 1968 to August 1969, he was awarded numerous honors, including two Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, two Presidential Unit Citations, the Combat Infantry Badge, and several Army Commendation Medals.

After his military service, Mr. Ranni returned to civilian life and held various roles in the accounting field. He later pursued a career change and successfully owned and operated a United States Customs Bonded Container Station at JFK Airport, a business he managed for over 25 years.

Mr. Ranni is active and engaged in the Queens community where he resided as a young child. Now retired, he dedicates his time to volunteering with local service and veterans' organizations.

Mr. Ranni is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 32, where he currently serves as Treasurer.



ALPHONSE JOSEPH RANNI WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JOSEPH P. ADDABBO, JR.

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

BING CROSBY REAVES SR.

Bing Crosby Reaves Sr. served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Master Sergeant.

Mr. Reaves is a decorated veteran, law enforcement professional, and community leader with a lifelong commitment to service. Born and raised in St. Petersburg, Florida, he relocated to Rochester, New York in 1970 after graduating from high school. Shortly after, Mr. Reaves began working for the City of Rochester Recreation Department before joining the New York State Mental Health system.

On November 11, 1971, Mr. Reaves was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he trained in Air Defense Artillery at Fort Bliss, Texas. After a brief assignment at Fort Ord, California, he was deployed to the Republic of Korea, serving 12 months with Alfa Company, 2/61st, and voluntarily extending his service by three months for an early discharge. Mr. Reaves later joined the 817th Medical Evacuation Unit before returning to his civilian job in mental health.

Seeking new challenges, Mr. Reaves transitioned to law enforcement and joined the Rochester Police Department (RPD), where he served with distinction for 32 years. Rising through the ranks to Sergeant, he worked as a patrol officer, sex crimes investigator, evidence technician, and booking sergeant, earning multiple awards for his lifesaving actions and exemplary service.

During his time with the RPD, Mr. Reaves reconnected with the military, joining the U.S. Army Reserve. Over 34 years in the 98th Division, he rose from Private to Master Sergeant, serving as First Sergeant of the 98th Division Band and as the Division Color Sergeant for over two decades. Mr. Reaves's contributions to operations and training helped lay the foundation for what is now Homeland Security. His service earned him numerous awards, including the Meritorious Service Medal and the Army Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters.

In retirement, Mr. Reaves remains deeply involved in veterans' organizations. He organizes the Rochester Memorial Day Parade, serves on multiple veteran advisory boards, and holds leadership roles in the VFW, American Legion, and Korean War Veterans. Mr. Reaves also educates the community on Buffalo Soldiers' history, continuing a 30-year tradition.

A devoted husband of 39 years and a father, Mr. Reaves has raised a grandson who now serves in the Navy. His lifelong dedication to service, leadership, and advocacy continues to leave a lasting impact on his community and beyond.



*BING CROSBY REAVES SR. WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JEREMY A. COONEY*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

SALVATORE RICCOBONO

Salvatore Riccobono proudly served in the United States Army Medical Corps from 1965 to 1967 and achieved the rank of Specialist E-4.

Stationed in Vietnam from May 1966 to May 1967, Mr. Riccobono was part of a combat support group for helicopter medical evacuation and the 93rd Evacuation Hospital. He participated in medevac missions and humanitarian flights to remote Montagnard villages – areas with no roads, electricity, or running water – bringing care and relief to those in need.

After his military service, Mr. Riccobono dedicated himself to protecting his fellow citizens as a New York City Police Officer. Assigned to the East Village on Manhattan's Lower East Side, then one of the City's most volatile neighborhoods, he spent over a decade in a plainclothes unit, working to remove dangerous criminals from the streets. Though the work was challenging and the pay modest, Mr. Riccobono took great pride in making his community safer.

In 1977, Mr. Riccobono joined the American Legion in Queens, New York. When he moved to St. James in 1999, he continued his involvement and, in 2000, became a member of VFW Post 395 (Sgt. John W. Cooke Post), where he currently serves as Junior Vice Commander. For over ten years, Mr. Riccobono has organized the Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades in St. James, ensuring local heroes are honored and remembered.

Mr. Riccobono is also a longtime member of the Greater St. James Civic Association and the Fraternal Order of Police.

He holds a deep love for the United States and the freedoms it offers – freedoms he has spent his life defending. From the jungles of Vietnam to the streets of New York, his unwavering belief in service, sacrifice, and patriotism has guided every chapter of his life.

Mr. Riccobono shares his life with his beloved wife, Patty Murray Riccobono. He is the proud father of two sons, James and Daniel, and adores his daughters-in-law, Suzanne and Maryvic. He is also blessed with five amazing grandchildren: Max, Molly, Brady, Emelyn, and Luca.

His life has been one of service – to country, community, and most of all, to family.



**SALVATORE RICCOBONO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR MARIO R. MATTERA**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

GLOSTER ROGERS

Gloster Rogers served in the United States Army as a Private First Class.

A proud veteran and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee, Mr. Rogers served during a critical moment in American history. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Mr. Rogers was drafted into the Army from 1961 to 1963. He proudly served on active duty, stationed in Munich, Germany, where he worked as a 106-gun operator. His service concluded with the rank of Private First Class, marking his commitment to duty and his country.

Born with a passion for music, Mr. Rogers became a celebrated bass singer in the 1950s and '60s with the legendary American singing group Anthony & The Imperials. His rich bass vocals can be heard on numerous beloved hits, including "Tears on My Pillow" and "Shimmy Shimmy Ko Ko Bop."

Following his honorable military service, Mr. Rogers continued his dedication to public service, working in maintenance at Bellevue Hospital. He then had a long and commendable career in the New York City Transit Authority, where he served in the Maintenance Department, and retired after 26 years of service.

When Mr. Rogers returned home to Brooklyn, New York, he built a life grounded in family, hard work, and community service. He married Loretta Amelia Rogers, and together they raised a loving family, including two children, Keith Rogers Sr. and Nicole Rogers, and a stepson, Todd Lewis Hunt. They also have four grandchildren: Tyrell Nathaniel Rogers, Keith Nathaniel Rogers Jr., Sasia Keia-Lanique Rogers, and Tristin Nico Fontaine.

In recognition of his contributions to American music and culture, Mr. Rogers was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2009 as a member of Anthony & The Imperials.

Mr. Rogers is a distinguished resident of Hamilton Park Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. He is celebrated not only for his musical legacy, but also for his honorable military service and lifetime of contributions to his community and family. It is with deep pride and gratitude that we recognize Mr. Rogers for his exemplary service and lasting impact.



GLOSTER ROGERS WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ANDREW S. GOUNARDES

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

PATRICK R. ROURK

Patrick R. Rourk served in the United States Air Force and achieved the rank of Chief Master Sergeant E-9.

He served in Vietnam in 1967 and again from 1968 to 1969. Mr. Rourk retired after a 24-year career in the Air Force as a Security Police Superintendent and Director of Security. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal 5th Oak Leaf Cluster amid 40 medals and decorations for his many years of distinguished service.

Mr. Rourk attained a position with St. Lawrence County as an Employment and Training Coordinator and subsequently was appointed as the Director of the Veteran Service Department in 1997. He finally retired from employment on December 31, 2011.

Unable to stand idle, Mr. Rourk holds various positions, including as a member of the National American Legion (TAL) Veterans Affairs Rehabilitation Commission Executive Committee. He is a former Vice Chair of the Commission, member of the TAL National TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee, past Chairperson and current consultant of the Veterans Services Committee for the American Legion Department of New York, President of the Board of Visitors for the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center (30-plus-year member), and Stand up Commander of the new 9th District of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., Department of New York. He holds several other positions within the District, County and Post levels of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Mr. Rourk served as the Enlisted Co-Chair of the Fort Drum Retiree Council for four years and remains an Emeritus advisor to the Council. He has been appointed to the Honor Flight Syracuse Board of Directors and is the historian for the organization.

Mr. Rourk wrote security and police policy for the Air Force, was a member of the Inspector General staff for Security Police, and served as a Superintendent in a multinational Security Forces Group and Squadron.

He holds degrees in Criminal Justice and Industrial Security and a certificate in Police Science from the University of Virginia. Mr. Rourk is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigations National Academy, Class 126 - 1981.

A resident of Norwood, New York, Mr. Rourk is married to Patricia and has a son, Dean (Sheri), daughter, Kelly (Dan), five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.



**PATRICK R. ROURK WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR DANIEL G. STEC**

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MICHELE SARDO

Michele Sardo was drafted into the United States Army in 1958. As a Private, Mr. Sardo was sent to Ft. Hood in Texas for basic training, where he rose to the rank of Acting Sergeant (E-4) in 11 months.

Mr. Sardo was stationed at the Butzbach Army Base in Germany, where he was eventually joined by his wife, Bernadette, and daughter, Debra. At Butzbach, Mr. Sardo earned the rank of Sergeant (E-5) and had a son, Michael, who was born in the U.S. Army Hospital.

Mr. Sardo served in the 105th Artillery, 3rd Army Division, during the time of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. He was a member of General George S. Patton's "Hell on Wheels" unit. There, he was given the title of Forward Observer as part of Intelligence and Operations, spending 11 months crawling through Germany's Black Forest. In 1960, Mr. Sardo was discharged and received the Good Conduct Medal. He then returned by boat to the United States and established himself in the Bronx.

As a civilian, Mr. Sardo spent his career as a union electrician with Teamsters Local 363. Born on March 8, 1935, he lived in the Van Nest neighborhood of the Bronx his entire life and raised his family there. Both of his children attended St. Dominic's School in Van Nest and went to mass at St. Dominic's Church. Michael went on to Fordham Prep and Debra went to St. Raymond.

Mr. Sardo still lives in his house on Garfield Street. He also regularly attends meetings of the American Legion, John Fraser Bryan Post 19, the first Post in the Bronx, which was established on August 1, 1920. Mr. Sardo belongs to the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance and has worked tirelessly to preserve his neighbors' quality of life by addressing issues that concern his beloved community.



*MICHELE SARDO WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR GUSTAVO RIVERA*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

KENYA LAMONTE SMITH

Kenya Lamonte Smith served in the United States Air Force and the Reserve. He was an Aerospace Security Specialist.

Mr. Smith was deployed and participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, charged with leading a 44-man team. His military service took him around the world, and he later transitioned to the Reserve, receiving an honorable discharge.

Mr. Smith was born on January 31, 1964, in Harlem, New York to Harry Floyd Smith and Jean Eleanor Squire Smith. Raised in the New York City public school system, he was active in youth programs such as the Cub Scouts and Police Athletic League, where he developed leadership skills and excelled in sports and martial arts.

Mr. Smith attended August Martin High School (1978–1982) in Queens, where he was involved in athletics, Civil Air Patrol, and a flight program. He later earned a track scholarship to Tuskegee University and majored in Computer Science and Mathematics. Mr. Smith joined the Air Force ROTC and became a member of the Arnold Air Society and the Silver Trowel Masonic Lodge. He also played in the Tuskegee University Crimson Piper marching band.

Professionally, Mr. Smith has over 30 years of experience in IT and network services across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He is a long-standing Master Mason (York Rite and Scottish Rite 32°), a Prince Hall Shriner with Medina Temple No. 19, and holds the title of HPIP Imperial Deputy. He is also a martial arts Master Instructor with over 35 years of experience and has been a professional photographer for 35 years.

Mr. Smith's favorite quote is, "If success was easy, then everyone would be successful," by Mr. Magic.



KENYA LAMONTE SMITH WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR KEVIN S. PARKER

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

ROBIN MICHELLE SMITH

Robin Michelle Smith served as an Education and Training Technician in the United States Air Force Reserve.

Ms. Smith is a dedicated advocate, mentor, and leader with nearly 20 years of experience in both military and civilian roles, embodying the Air Force's core value of "Service Before Self."

As the Director of Veteran Services, Ms. Smith is a trusted resource for peers and community partners, providing expert guidance on the challenges veterans face, particularly in housing and employment. Her leadership is grounded in a deep commitment to supporting veterans as they transition to civilian life.

During her military career, Ms. Smith served with the 514th Aerospace Medical Squadron as the unit's Training Manager. In this role, she was responsible for ensuring all training met high standards, keeping the unit mission ready and prepared. She facilitated airmen's promotions by coordinating critical training, whether through distance or in-residence programs.

Before her current role, Ms. Smith served as the Human Resources Director for a residential drug treatment program. Known for her approachable nature, Ms. Smith combines her easygoing demeanor with decisiveness when needed, commanding respect through her direct approach.

With nearly 12 years of experience at Services for the Underserved, she has been instrumental in serving homeless and at-risk veterans and actively working to secure sustainable employment with livable wages. She has an acute awareness of the unique challenges veterans face in New York City and leads her team in confronting these issues head-on.

Throughout her career, Ms. Smith's dedication has not gone unnoticed. She was honored as NCO of the Quarter in 2016 and nominated for NCO of the Year. In 2017, she was also celebrated as the Veteran of the Game by the Brooklyn Nets.

Prior to the pandemic, Ms. Smith volunteered as a Veteran Peer Mentor for the Brooklyn Misdemeanor Veterans Treatment Court. Her experience in residential treatment has equipped her with a unique understanding of the connections between substance abuse, housing, and employment, and she collaborates closely with community partners to ensure veterans receive comprehensive support.

Ms. Smith is an active member of the NYC Veterans Alliance, continuously seeking ways to make a positive impact on the veteran community.

Her education and credentials include a Master of Science in Performance Management, a Professional Management Certification, and a Bachelor of Science, *cum laude*, in Interdisciplinary Studies.



ROBIN MICHELLE SMITH WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR ZELLNOR Y. MYRIE

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

KEVIN SWAB

Kevin Swab served in the United States Army and in the Army National Guard. He achieved the rank of Major.

Serving for 24 years in the Armed Forces, Mr. Swab began his career in 1987 as a Rifle Platoon Leader before leaving for active service and deployment to Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm in 1990.

In 1994, he was deployed again, supporting Operation Restore Democracy in Haiti before returning to the National Guard full-time in 2000 as a Battalion Operations Officer. Mr. Swab planned the deployment of soldiers for Operation Noble Eagle in 2001, the enhanced homeland security mission for his battalion, which provides soldiers to assist with security at commercial airports statewide.

Mr. Swab retired as a Major in 2009 and was awarded numerous recognitions, including the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Ranger Tab, and Airborne and Air Assault Badges.

After retiring, Mr. Swab worked for over 10 years as a Senior Military Science Instructor and for over six years as a Recruiting and Operations Officer with Cornell Army Reserve Officer Training Corps. Then he returned to service in the New York Guard, the State's self-defense force, where he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel during the COVID-19 pandemic after being asked to come out of retirement to provide his expertise in joint task force operations.

In January 2022, Mr. Swab became the Director of Veteran Services for Cayuga County. He has gone above and beyond, spending countless hours to seek out veterans and ensure they are receiving support to help them lead better lives. Mr. Swab encourages the local veteran community to continue to uphold the Army values and serve others while building the camaraderie they had in service. He reminds them they are Versatile, Experienced, Trusted, Energetic, Resilient, Astute, and Noble.

Mr. Swab holds a deep Christian faith and serves as an Elder at Auburn Alliance Church, where he has attended services for over 28 years. He teaches Sunday School, is a small group facilitator, serves in the church nursery, and chaired the committee for a multimillion-dollar addition. Mr. Swab volunteers for many events with Auburn Alliance Church, including Night to Shine, and at the local Auburn YMCA-WEIU.

Mr. Swab is married to his wife of 18 years, Lindsay, and has three children, Darby, Nathaniel, and Raegan.



KEVIN SWAB WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR RACHEL MAY

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

NEIL D. THOMAS

Neil D. Thomas served in the United States Marine Corps from September 1994 to September 2002 and retired at the rank of Sergeant.

Mr. Thomas was assigned to the 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), also known as the "USMC Raiders." As Corporal, his excellence in Company B prompted him to fill additional key billets within his unit, which included Squad Leader, Assistant Chief Scout Swimmer, and Forward Air Controller.

As Scout Swimmer, Mr. Thomas was tasked with doing forward reconnaissance of the beach before the arrival of the remainder of the raid force. While serving as Rifleman, he maintained ground combat operations. His duties included locating, constructing, and camouflaging infantry positions; evaluating topographical information; maintaining field communications; performing minesweeping activities on land; and participating in basic reconnaissance operations.

During his time as Platoon Sergeant, Mr. Thomas operated as the principal advisor of his platoon to the First Sergeant and Company CO. He was responsible for 12 NCOs, 21 Marines, and one Navy Corpsman in aspects including their health, welfare, morale, discipline, and performance.

After retiring, Mr. Thomas joined the FDNY in Brooklyn from May 2002 through May 2005, where he acted as a first responder to all types of emergency situations. Additionally, he has provided over a decade of service to volunteer fire and EMS units.

Currently, Mr. Thomas serves as Captain of Special Operations for South Country Ambulance in Brookhaven, New York; holds the rank of Class A Firefighter for Bellport Fire Department in Bellport, New York; and is a Town of Brookhaven Fire Marshal. His resume also boasts numerous certifications, including EMT – Basic, Hazmat Operations, and U.S. Coast Guard Boat Operator/Rescue Procedures.

Mr. Thomas is a 1994 graduate of Eastport High School in Eastport, New York.

Mr. Thomas's integrity and confidence in crucial roles has left impressions on superior officers and civilians alike. He married Amy Thomas (née Price) in 2012, and he is a father to son, Hunter, and daughters, Lochlyn and Eastlyn. Mr. Thomas and his family reside in Bellport, New York.



NEIL D. THOMAS WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR DEAN MURRAY

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

HECTOR VAZQUEZ

Hector Vazquez has spent his life in service, from the cockpit of a C-141B Starlifter as a Technical Sergeant in the United States Air Force to the streets of Manhattan.

Mr. Vazquez's journey began at Aviation High School in Queens, where he honed his technical expertise before enlisting in the Air Force in 1985. Initially serving as an Aircraft Technician, he soon transitioned into the role of Flight Engineer. After training in Oklahoma, he joined the 702nd Military Airlift Squadron.

His service spanned continents and conflicts. As a Flight Engineer, he supported critical missions worldwide, from Diego Garcia to the Arctic. During the Gulf War, Mr. Vazquez played a vital role in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, ensuring the success of military airlift operations.

After more than a decade in uniform, Mr. Vazquez returned to civilian life and settled in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York City. For over 25 years, he has been a persistent advocate for his community, working within the Tenant Association at NYCHA's Elliott-Chelsea Houses and, later, Fulton Houses. Collaborating with City agencies and local law enforcement, Mr. Vazquez has championed housing rights, public safety, and neighborhood improvements, ensuring his fellow residents have a voice.

His leadership extends beyond his block through his service as a member of Manhattan Community Board 4, among other local organizations, including the Hudson River Park Advisory Council, the High Line Neighbors Council, and the Whitney Museum Education Council. Mr. Vazquez also volunteers with Paws of War, an organization supporting veterans through the training of service dogs. This includes Mr. Vazquez's own dog, Jojo.

Perhaps his most meaningful contributions exist beyond his civic engagement. A cancer survivor, Mr. Vazquez's resilience is evident in the strength he brings to his family. As a proud father to Malia and Darien, he credits his late mother, a compassionate registered nurse, with instilling in him the values of perseverance, empathy, and unwavering dedication.

With a lifetime shaped by service, Mr. Vazquez remains steadfast in his mission to uplift those around him. He encourages others to step up and be the change their communities need. His motto is simple: "Get involved!"



HECTOR VAZQUEZ WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

SCOTT M. WARD

Scott M. Ward served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

A native of Steuben County, New York, Mr. Ward was commissioned through the ROTC program at Cornell University in 1988. He served as an Infantry Platoon Leader, Light Armored Cavalry Troop Commander, Infantry Brigade Liaison Officer, Basic Combat Training Company Commander, and Battalion/Brigade Operations Officer.

In his first combat deployment, Mr. Ward served as a Senior Military Advisor of a Military Transition Team (MiTT) with the Iraqi Intervention Forces (IIF) in Fallujah, Iraq from 2004 to 2005.

After transitioning out of Iraq, Mr. Ward returned stateside and was recruited for a Battalion Executive Officer position by the incoming commander of the new Regional Training Center East at Fort Dix, New Jersey. He supervised combat service support personnel to prepare soldiers for mobilization to Iraq and Afghanistan. During his tenure, more than 4,500 soldiers underwent training.

From 2009 to 2012, Mr. Ward served as Installation Mobilization Officer at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. While there, he was given the additional duty of Deputy Director of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security of the Installation. He was recruited to serve as the Officer in Charge of the South Carolina Agribusiness Development Team 3-49 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan in 2013.

Mr. Ward received numerous prestigious military awards, including the Bronze Star Medal (OLC), Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, Air Assault Badge, Airborne Badge, Meritorious Service Medal (OLC), Army Commendation Medal (OLC), and the Army Achievement Medal (two OLCs).

After returning home to Steuben County, Mr. Ward has continued a life of service as a member of the Bath Central School Board, Vice President of the Steuben County Farm Bureau, Board of Directors of American Legion Charles E. Westcott Post 0173, and member of the Safety and Security Team at Victory Highway Wesleyan Church. He is a well-known agriculture education promoter for area schools, a GST BOCES Agriculture Advisor, and a member of Congressman Nick Langworthy's Agriculture Advisory Committee.

He and his wife, Kari, have three children, sons Bradley (Gabrielle) and Christopher (Alexandra), and daughter, Danielle (Chase) Howard. They currently own and operate Windydale Farm in Avoca, New York.



SCOTT M. WARD WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR THOMAS F. O'MARA

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

PATRICK WEMITT

Patrick Wemitt is the embodiment of service to others. He served his country as a retired United States Marine Corps Sergeant E-5, his community as a civic leader, and the youth of Columbia and Greene counties as an educator and coach. Through his selfless contributions, Mr. Wemitt has left an indelible mark on our region, representing the ideal of good citizenship.

A lifelong resident of Chatham, Mr. Wemitt joined the Marine Corps in 1968, serving honorably for four years in Vietnam as an electronic repairman with a cryptography clearance. For his exemplary military service, he was decorated with multiple medals, including the National Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with one bronze service star, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Rifle Marksman Badge, and Honorable Reserve Discharge Button.

Returning to his native Columbia County, Mr. Wemitt began a long and distinguished career in public schools, dedicating his life to the idea that all children deserve a first-class education. Over a three-decade career, he prepared countless young people for successful lives and careers, serving as a teacher, Assistant Principal, and Principal at both the elementary and high school levels. Mr. Wemitt spent 20 years in the Taconic Hills Central School District, followed by another decade in the Catskill Central School District. A devoted educator, he influenced generations of students, demonstrating exceptional patience, empathy, and mentoring abilities.

In our small towns and rural areas, engaged citizens like Mr. Wemitt are the lifeblood of the community, helping to run the organizations that create a vibrant civil society. He has served his home county in countless ways, including as President of the S.W. Smith Hook and Ladder Co. of the Chatham Fire Department, as a Village of Chatham Trustee, as Director of the Columbia County Agricultural Society, and as Director of the Columbia County Fair. Mr. Wemitt has coached several sports and has even acted in productions at Chatham's Mac-Haydn Theatre.

Mr. Wemitt credits his wife of 53 years, Joan, for all of his success and cites her unwavering love and support as the reason he survived Vietnam.

The greatness of a nation is measured by the work of upstanding citizens like Mr. Wemitt, who commit themselves to the greater good of their communities. The people of Columbia County are fortunate to count him as one of their own.



PATRICK WEMITT WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR MICHELLE HINCHEY

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

MARK WOODS, JR.

Mark Woods, Jr. served in the United States Army and achieved the rank of Major while serving in Iraq.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Mr. Woods attended Catholic school and was inspired by his Vietnam War veteran uncle to pursue a military career. He attended The Citadel, excelling academically and as a leader, before being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Infantry. His first assignment took him overseas to Berlin at the close of the Cold War. Mr. Woods served in the United Nations peacekeeping mission during the Bosnian crisis, earning his Blue Beret.

After four years in the Army, Mr. Woods transitioned to law enforcement, working as a corrections officer and border agent before joining the New York Police Department (NYPD). Stationed in Coney Island before 9/11, he later assisted in rescue and recovery efforts, an experience that shaped his life.

In 2005, Mr. Woods was recalled to active duty and deployed to Iraq for a year, where he worked in Civil Affairs to foster democracy in a war-torn city under constant threat. Upon his return, Mr. Woods rejoined the NYPD, serving in the Vice Squad and Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). He was assigned to Vice to combat human trafficking and organized crime. He was subsequently transferred to the JTTF for his next assignment, where he fought United States-designated terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah.

After retiring from law enforcement, Mr. Woods devoted himself to veterans' advocacy. He was appointed Deputy Director of the Rockland County Veterans Service Agency, where he worked to secure housing, employment, and vital resources for his fellow veterans. Later, he led the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support mentoring program at BRIDGES, where he made a profound impact on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

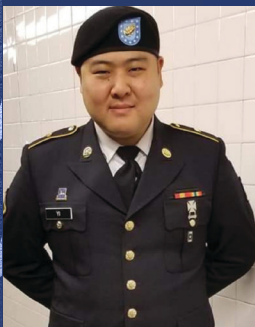
Elected to the Clarkstown Town Council, Mr. Woods diligently worked to improve community services, including championing an accessible playground for children of all abilities. He continued his unwavering devotion to veterans, organizing meaningful trips for them.

On May 17, 2024, Mr. Woods passed away suddenly at the age of 54, an immense loss to his family, friends, and the entire Rockland community. Mr. Woods lived a life of honor, sacrifice, and leadership. His legacy of service and compassion earns him a rightful place in the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame.



*MARK WOODS, JR. WAS SELECTED POSTHUMOUSLY
AS A 2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR BILL WEBER*

2025



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

AARON YI

Aaron Yi is a proud United States Army veteran who served as a Private First Class E-3.

Mr. Yi was honorably discharged due to injuries sustained during combat training. He was born and raised in Flushing, Queens. He has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to service and community.

After his medical retirement from the Army, Mr. Yi pursued higher education, earning an Associate degree from LaGuardia Community College and, later, a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Queens College.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he enrolled in the Institute for Career Development's AbillTy Cisco Academy – a program created in partnership with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to teach IT skills to students with disabilities. Although the Institute has since been dissolved, its mission lives on through Mr. Yi's ongoing commitment to empowering others.

Graduating from the program in May 2021, Mr. Yi became the first student to transition into a teaching role at the Academy, where he began as a teaching assistant. There, he provided accessible instruction tailored to students with diverse needs, drawing on his own journey as both a veteran and a student to create a meaningful, supportive classroom experience.

Mr. Yi's teaching philosophy – shaped by the Army's values of selfless service and never leaving anyone behind – continues to inform his approach to education and advocacy. Passionate about bridging gaps in healthcare and technology, he is now pursuing an Associate of Applied Science in Health Information Technology at SUNY Broome, preparing for a future at the intersection of patient care, data, and service delivery.

For his unwavering dedication to both country and community, Mr. Yi is being honored by State Senator John C. Liu as a 2025 inductee into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame. This recognition celebrates a journey of resilience, growth, and leadership – from soldier to student to teacher, and now to a future healthcare professional.

Rooted in Queens and driven by purpose, Mr. Yi continues to turn adversity into advocacy and service into a lifelong mission.



AARON YI WAS SELECTED AS A
2025 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY
SENATOR JOHN C. LIU

2025

VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Patrick Abrams
Robert Addison
Michael Adrian
Alex Aesch, Jr.
Murat Akaydin
George Alexander, Jr.
Charles H. Alexander, Jr.
William B. Allendorph
Frank X. Allkofer
Sullivan Alois
Jerry Alperstein
Ed Altenau
Querino A. Alteri
Ismile Althaibani
Abraham Althaibani
Hector F. Alvarado
Ambrose Anderson
Arma E. Andon
Joseph G. Angelino
Steven John Antonacci
Leroy Richard Archible
Robert W. Armenio
Leonard B. Aronica
Raymond Arroyo
W. Gerard Asher
Allan P. Atwell
Ed Babor
Roman Baca
Miguel Bach
George V. Baker
Emil Baker
Reverend Dr. Tony Baker, Sr.
Jai Bams

Margaret Bandy
Fred Baptiste
Herbert Barret
John F. Barry
John Barwinczok
Michael J. Basla
Ronald Bassham
Wayne Baumgartner
William A. Baxter
Glyger G. Beach
William Beatty
George W. Becker
Ray Beebe
Barbara Beebe
Sergeant Gary Beikirch
David Bellavia
Joe Bello
Analiza Benjamin
LaShaun Benjamin, Sr.
James Robert Benzinger
Justin Berbig
Donald Bernstein
Clayton W. Bihl
Charles E. Bilbrey
Nancy Bird
Stephen C. Biscotti
James Black
Lee Blackmon
LaTanga Blair
James Edward Blakely
Joseph D. Blanck
Walter Blum
Arcangelo Bollella



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Henry Bolus
Floyd Sanford Bonds, Jr.
Edward Borowski
John Bourges
Deborah Bourne-Alley
W. Michael "Mike" Bowen
Ralph Elliot Bowen
Steven W. Bowman
John F. Boyd, Sr.
Joseph H. Brady
John J. Brady
Daniel J. Brandi
Daniel Breier
Judge Michael J. Brennan
Michael G. Breslin
Douglas Brewster
Walter E. Bridgers
George R. Broadhead
Dr. Cleopatra Brown
Joe Robert Browne
William Brustman
Eugene Bryant
Thomas Bullaro
Tom Buono
Mario Buonpane
Eugene "Gene" Burch
Sylinthia Burges
Michael Burke
John Patrick Burke
Rosetta Y. Burke
Harold Burke, Jr.
Willie Burks
Daniel J. Bush

Thomas J. Butler, Jr.
Richard L. Butterfield
Edward L. Butts, Jr.
James Byler
William J. Byrne
Alberto Caiella
Ralph Calabrese
Anthony Caminiti
Julixa Campusano
Irving Cantor
William Capodanno
Phil R. Capraro
Jay Caputo
Ruby Carlisle-Thomas
Peter Carlo
Clayton Carpenter
Alyssa Carrion
Edwin Cartoski
Tom Carty
Eric Carver
Anthony Casamento
Frank Casazza
Anthony Catalano
Mary E. Cavanagh
Joseph M. Cetta
Joe J. Ceurter
Ralph L. Chinelly
Bernard Boowah Chong
Michael J. Christiano
David J. Clark
Bob Clark
Eugene "Mickey" Clark
Sidney T. Clark



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Roberto Clotter
Michael P. Cody, Jr.
Joseph A. Cognitore
Sydney Cole
Dr. Richard Collins
Peter Colombo
Frank Colon, Jr.
John Compitello
Joseph Conace
Douglas Condit Jr.
John Condon
Sal Conforto
Leonard B. Connelly
Martin C. Connor Jr.
Rick Connors
John Emmett Connors
Arthur P. Coon
Claude S. Copeland, Jr.
John Cortese
Anthony J. Costanzo
Marc Coviello
Lee Covino
Scott R. Cox
Warren Craig
Thomas Cray
Phyllis Mills Creamer
Arthur M. Cromarty
Harold G. Cronin
George C. Crouch III
Roswell L. Crozier, Jr.
Dr. Barry R. Culhane
Patrick J. Cunningham
Francis S. Currey

Peter Cuthbert
Christopher Czarnecki
Jordan Czerniawski
John Czuhanich
Sebastian D'Agostino
Anthony J. D'Arpino
Rocco V. D'Onofrio
Jerry D'Onofrio, Sr.
Silviu Dan Sr.
Sam Danial
Robert Danke
Clarence Dart
John S. Davanzo
Colonel Stephanie E. Dawson
Donald Day
Prisco De Angelis
Kathy Dean
Benjamin A. DeFonce
Melissa Del Valle-Ortiz
George S. Delianites
Stephen Delorenzo
Edward T. Dempsey
Stephen Dennis
Patrick W. Devine
Michael DeVito, Jr.
Alice Psirakis Diacosavvas
John Diana
Clifton Stanley Diaz
Joshua Jose Diaz
Eugene DiGiacomo
John T. Digilio
Christopher Dill
Frank J. DiNuzzo, Jr.



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Carmine DiPasquale
Teddy Ditchek
Theodore Dixon
Glenn Dodge
Robert Frank Dolcimascolo
Michael A. Donaldson
Gerald Donnellan
Ryan Donnelly
John C. Donovan
John Drago
Walter George Drago
William DuBose
Elana Duffy
Joseph Dugan
John Dulisse
Herbert J. Dunmore, Jr.
Howard Dunn
James H. Dunn
Randy Dupree
James Durkin
Harold Dworetzky
Dr. Max Eagelfeld
Sharon Earley-Davis
Nelson Eddy
Chester Edwards
Gene Edwards
George W. Egan
Geno Peter Egiziaco, Sr.
Steven W. Ellis
Lt. Col. Paul Engel, Jr.
Armen Enkababian
Harold James Enstice
Nicholas Erickson

Ralph Esposito
Michael J. Esposito, Jr.
Buddy Esptein
Al Etkin
Charles A. Eustis
Richard Evers
John Every
Barbara J. Exum
Sal Famularo
Joseph R. Farina
Derek J. Farley
Ben Farnan
Paul Albert Feddern
Fedele Family
Thomas Feeley
Dominick Feeney
Curtis Feggins
Edwin Feliciano, Jr.
Julio A. Feliu
Gayelle Marie Felix
Blossom Ferguson
Aphiel Fernandez
Luz M. Fernandez-Aviles
Anthony M. Ferrarese
Eric Fetterman
Alan Armand Feuer
Donald Fida
Edward Field
Russel C. Fielding
Dominic Filippone
Dennis Fink
Robert A. Fire
Robert L. Fish



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Floyd Fisher
Lawrence Fisher
James Fitzgerald
Peter Fiumegreddo
Gary L. Flaherty
Kenneth B. Fleiger
Eddie Fletcher
Osceola Louis Fletcher
Joseph S. Forte
William J.J. Forte
Freddy Fowler, Sr.
John Foy
Joseph T. Fraccola
William Arthur Francis
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski
Muriel O. Franzier
John Fratangelo
Jeffrey W. French
Kathie Freston
Anthony L. Frusciante, Sr.
Father Moritz Fuchs
Joan Furey
Anthony J. Gabriel, Jr.
Joshua Gaccione
Diana B. Gaetano
Armando Galella
Joseph Gallant Jr.
Tessie Shirley Pierce Garber
Ricardo Garcia
William Garnett, Jr.
Melvin Garrett
Edwin L. Garriss
Luke Gasparre

Catalina Gaviria
Joseph A. Gentiluomo
Merlin German
Joseph Germano
Margaret Gill
James Gillen
Richard T. Gillespie
Vito Giobbie
P. Earle Gleason
Peter J. Glennon
J. Leo Glynn
George Godfrey
Peter K. Goebel
Albert Goldberg
Roberta Goldenberg
Howard Goldin
Peter Gong
Hector Carmelo Gonzalez
Roxana Gonzalez-Jimenez
Arthur Grabiner
Ryan Graham
Tony Graziano
Corporal Abner Greenberg
Lawrence Gregory
J. Donald Griffin
Stephen T. Grogan
Patrick Gualtieri
Frederick Gundel
Henry Gurney
Russell A. Guthrie
Jordan Christian Haerter
James A. Haggerty
John L. Halford, Sr.



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Brian J. Hall
Colonel Elizabeth A.D. Hanson
Bob Harder
Jack W. Harrington
George M. Harrington
James A. Haynes III
Marlene Dietrich Heath
Rheyser Henry
John Hensel
Thomas J. Heron II
Wallace C. Higgins
Thomas F. Higgins
John Higgins
Sharon Hightower
Samuel Hill, Jr.
Eva Hinds
Charles Lee Hinkleman, Sr.
Thomas Michael Hoare
Walter Hobbs
Andrea H. Hodge
Harry K. Hodge
Ann Marie Hogancamp
Frank Hollister
Peter Holowecki
Christopher Holshek
Daniel J. Honsinger
Dr. Olivia J. Hooker
David R. Hooks, Jr.
Tom Horn
Vincent Horrigan
Katherine Horton
Ihor John Hoshowsky
Marie Carmel Houanche

John "Jack" Edward Howlett
Jukay Hsu
Walter Hughes
William Hughes
Indiana Hunt
Luis F. Hurtado
Henderson Leroy Hutchinson
Phuong Huynh
Renee Imperato
Joe J. Ingino
James Irwin
Daniel Izzo
Sandra Jablonski
Andrew P. Jackson
Shirley M. Jackson
Duane Jackson
Harry Janson, Sr.
Richie Jarcho
Marvin R. Jeffcoat
Jewish War Veterans
Charlie Johnson
Charles A. Johnson
Goerge A. Jones
Ellsworth Jones
Neil K. Jordan
Robert Jorolemon
Peter Ethrain Joseph
William R. Joyce
Jason A. Kaatz
Howard Kalachman
William K. Kastner
Anthony Kavouras
Donald Keeney



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Richard R. Keiser
James M. Kennedy
J. Arthur Kieffer
Charles John Kilbride
Lieutenant Benjamin Ralph Kimlau
Terence L. Kindlon
Tyrone King
Stephen M. Kinne, MD
Edward S. Kirkland
Walter Kittle
Keith Koster
Harry Kreter
Jaroslaw Kril
Ralph Kring
Peter Kurpeawski
Francis La Duc
Sabrina Lacy
Mary P. LaManna
Mike LaNassa
Joseph Landi
William J. Larkin
Joseph A. LaRocco
Robert Laskaris
Elder Stacey S. Latimer
Megan Leavey & Rex
Omar Lebron
Vanessa A. Lee
Gregory T. Lee
Nancy Leftenant-Colon
Andre LeGall
Chad Lennon
Peter S. Lennon
Pete Leon

Ryan Lepore
John J. Levulis
Michael Lewandowski
Leslie Ellis Lewis
James Licardi
Lewis Licht
Donald Linborg
Sean Lindstrom
James Lint
Mike Liquori
Herbert C. Loesch
Corine Lombardo
John B. Long
Ramon Agosto Lopez
Sergeant Luis Lorenzo
Tracy J. LoTemple
Joseph Lowe
Israel Lugo-Jorge
Michael C. Lutz
Jean Otto MacIntosh
Donald Maciver
Arthur Maggy
William T. Mahan
Martin G. Mahar
Jim Mahoney
Serphin R. Maltese
Alexander Mandara
Robert Mandel
Dr. Donald Mandel
Walter Mankoff
David Mann
Ismael M. Manolias
Hariton Marachilian



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Peter Maraday
Robert Marcor
Max Marcus
Regina Gallagher Marengo
Walter Maresco
Tom Marinello
John J. Maroon
Tony Marsella
Donald Marshall
Dave Marshall
Nancy Marte
Luis Martinez
John Martinko
Job Mashariki
Lance Edward Massey
Lewis W. Matthews, Sr.
Charles A. Maushardt
Bruce Mayfield
Michael L. Mayne
Silvio Mazzella
Nicholas L. Mazzola
Colleen McCarthy
Frank McClement
Wendy Charece McClinton
John J. McCormick
William McDonald
Terry McGuire
Robert Joseph McGuirl, Jr.
John McHugh, Sr.
Willie McLaughlin, Jr.
Robert McLean
Francis McLean
Daniel McMahon

Jeff McMillan
Louvenia McMillan
Thomas A. McMillen
June Brown McNiven
Eugene McSherry
Ray Melens
Jonathan De Sola Mendes
David J. Menegon
Charles W. Merriam
James W. Merritte
Dina M. Michael
Glennie Millard
Patrick W. Miller
Morris Miller
Louis Miller
Frederick H. Miller, Ph.D
Lester Modelowitz
Rafael Molina
Joseph Mondello
Matthew Mondoux
Karl W. Monson
Hector Carmelo Montes
Dabney N. Montgomery
Thomas Mooney
Charles J. Moore
Ken Moore
Rodney K. Moore
Paul Morales
Francisco Morales
Bob Moran
Frank Morea
Maureen F. Morgan
Kevin Moriarty



VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

RECIPIENTS 2005-2024

Thomas J. Morley, Jr.	Kevin F. Nolan
Robert Morrill	John Nonna
Roosevelt Morring	Robert Noonan
John L. Mosher	Deborah M. Norman
Alan Moskin	Zulma L. Novoa
Ralph A. Mottola	John P. Nowhitney
Bill Moye	Laquasia Nunez
Jim Mullarkey	Kenneth Nurse
Francisco Muniz II	Milton Nussdorf
Charles Murphy	Mark P. O'Brien
Kenneth Murphy	John O'Connor
Bob Murphy	Dennis O'Doherty, Sr.
John Murphy	Kevin O'Hare
Lester R. Muse Jr.	Michael O'Kane
Lt. Col. Joseph T. Nader	Paul O'Keefe
Nardolillo Brothers	Robert E. O'Malley
Frank S. Naro	Louis Levi Oakes
Paul Narson	Steven Oliver
Kamal Nasser	Michael H. Ollis
Charles A. Navarino	Richard A. Olsen
Tricia Navarro-Caraballo	Alirio Orduna
William Nazario	Michael Ortiz
Stephen Neftleberg	Benjamin Osborn
James B. Neider	Ralph J. Osterhoudt
Bill Nelson	Rosa Daysha Otero-Walsh
Anthony C. Nesci, Sr.	Stephen Owen
Larry Neumann	Brian R. Page
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