



Jul-Sep 2025

LI 202 AFA NEWS

Chapter Officers

Fred Di Fabio	President
Steven Latus	Vice President
Ray Donnelly	VP Corporate Development
Kenneth J. Nevor	VP Veterans Affairs
Andrea Nordquist	VP Media Relations
Cathy Ward	Secretary
Bill Stratemeier	Treasurer

Visit us on the WEB:

LIAFA.ORG

Visit us on FACEBOOK:

Air & Space Forces Association—Long Island Chapter 202

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Newsletter editor: Steven Latus

CALENDAR OF LIAFA EVENTS 2025

Vietnam Medal Ceremonies

No further ceremonies planned for 2025

Women's Military Service Medal Ceremonies

No further ceremonies planned for 2025

84th Anniversary Annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony— Dropping of the Roses

Sun, Dec 7, 2025

American Airpower Museum
1230 New Highway
Farmingdale
10:30 AM

President's Message

You may have noticed the new logo displayed at the upper left of this page. As per AFA National:

“AFA’s new Star-Delta logo is a visual representation of our brand. Its design combines historic elements that trace to our earliest history, evoking the “Hap Arnold Star” of World War II fame, as well as the Space Force’s Delta and Polaris, indicative of the Space Force’s role as the guiding light of all the armed forces.”

We are still accepting applications for both the Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal as well as the Women’s Military Service Medal. Please see towards the end of this newsletter for applications as well as the requirements for each medal.

As of September 30, we have 411 chapter members.

If you change your email address or have never supplied AFA National with your email address, please log into your account on afa.org, click on *My Account* and enter the information into your profile.

Special Announcement

By: Bill Stratemeier

Treasurer, Long Island Chapter #202, Air & Space Forces Association

Cathy Ward: A Pillar of Service and Dedication as Chapter Secretary

Nearly thirty years ago, Cathy Ward moved from Massachusetts to Long Island to be with her parents during her recovery from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Her parents, Lyn and Walter Zywan, were prominent figures in the Nassau-Mitchel Chapter #202 of the Air Force Association at the time. Recognizing Cathy's abilities and spirit, they quickly involved her in chapter activities, marking the start of her long and dedicated service to the AFA.

Cathy's commitment as the Chapter Secretary has been unwavering. She has devoted countless hours to supporting a wide range of programs and administrative tasks. Her efforts have been vital in organizing New York State AFA Conventions, veteran ceremonies, and various community outreach initiatives. Cathy's willingness to volunteer her time and energy has been a cornerstone of the chapter's success, always stepping up to help in every way possible.

Cathy's outstanding contributions were recently acknowledged during the Vietnam Commemorative Medal ceremony at the American Airpower Museum. As she prepares to move to Buffalo to spend more time with her son Bryce and granddaughter Letti, the chapter sincerely wishes her all the best in this new chapter of her life.

<<< PHOTOS ON NEXT PAGE >>>



L to R: Andrea Nordquist, Ray Donnelly, **Cathy Ward**, Bill Stratemeier, Steven Latus, Ken Nevor and Sue Latus.

Photo credit: From Bill Stratemeier's phone



Cathy Ward, 5th from the left; Andrea Nordquist, 4th from the left; and other Blue Star mothers.

Photo credit: From Bill Stratemeier's phone

Recent Events



The annual 24-hour marathon lacrosse team tournament Shootout for Soldiers was held **Wednesday and Thursday, July 9-10**, at the Field of Dreams in Massapequa. It was the 11th anniversary of Shootout and in that time the Long Island Shootout for Soldiers has raised over \$1.6 million for veterans causes—over \$100,000 for this year alone. This is a tribute to the SFS Team headed by Mike Nelson and Tom Campolettano combined with the spirit of patriotism of the Long Island Lacrosse Community.

Shootout began in Baltimore by a group of high school students and was quickly adapted by the Long Island Lacrosse community lead by Mike, Tom, and Harry Jacobs, all of whom have special family links to the Veterans community. Using their connections both on and off the field, the event has become one of the primary fundraisers for veterans groups on Long Island.

Charity partners of the Long Island Shootout were Long Island Chapter 202 of the Air & Space Forces Association (LIAFA), the Joseph J. Theinert Memorial Fund, the Army Ranger Lead The Way Fund and the Warrior Ranch Foundation.

As in past years, LIAFA held a Vietnam Veterans Medal Recognition Ceremony on the field at 5 PM on the first day of the tournament. Twenty Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals were presented to a group of proud and worthy veterans in front of family and friends (see next article).

There are too many teams to thank individually, but we'd like to offer a special nod to Shootout's corporate sponsors: PSEG Long Island, National Grid, Betatronix, Transaero, GSE Dynamics, Retlif Testing Labs, Curtis-Wright, Greiner-Maltz Real Estate, Cona Elder Law, M&T Bank, Jake's 58 and Oerlikon. Your commitment is greatly appreciated and we look forward to seeing you next year!



Photo credit: Facebook page for Shootout for Soldiers



[FDNY takes the win against NYPD.](#)

Photo credit: Facebook page for Shootout for Soldiers

47th Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal Ceremony

Twenty Vietnam veterans were presented with Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals and Certificates of Appreciation on **Wednesday, July 9**, at the Town of Oyster Bay Field of Dreams in Massapequa during the first day of the annual Long Island Shootout for Soldiers. Distinguished guests included Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor **Joseph Saladino**, National Executive Director of Shootout for Soldiers **Erik Mineo**, Shootout for Soldiers Co-Chairmen **Mike Nelson** and **Tom Campolettano**, Aviation Center Director at Farmingdale State College USAF Colonel (Ret.) **Michael Canders**, Nassau County Veterans Service Agency Director **Ralph Esposito** and Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency Director **Marcelle Leis**.

Special thanks to our supporters: Shootout for Soldiers, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Band, American Legion Riders from Greenlawn Post 1244, Patriot Guard Riders, Rolling Thunder Chapter 6, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 82 Color Guard and Lt. Quentin Roosevelt Civil Air Patrol Cadet Squadron NY-288. Thanks also to our Shootout sponsors: Town of Oyster Bay, PSEG Long Island, National Grid, Transaero, GSE Dynamics, Retlif Testing Labs, Curtis-Wright, Long Island Chapter of the Navy League, Greiner-Maltz Real Estate, M&T Bank, Jake's 58 and Oerlikon.



Presenting the colors.

Photo credit: Facebook page for Shootout for Soldiers



Several of the honorees.

Photo credit: Facebook page for Shootout for Soldiers

Nassau County Veterans New Sneaker and Fresh Produce Giveaway

This drive-through-only event was held on **Saturday, July 12**, at Eisenhower Park, Parking Field 3 and was sponsored by General Needs, Long Island Cares and the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency. Veterans were provided with new sneakers, fresh produce, socks, hats, pet goods, cleaning supplies and more.

Nassau County Salute to Veterans

This annual event was held on **Saturday, August 2**, at Eisenhower Park, Harry Chapin Lakeside Theater, East Meadow. *Salute to Veterans* honored five people in the veteran community who have devoted their time and lives to helping Long Island veterans. After the honorees received their recognition and awards, a concert was held featuring The American Bombshells and Street Fighter. The honorees were **Richard Guevara**, Vietnam Veterans of America; **Ron Sorrentino**, VFW; **Kerry Englander**, American Legion; **Bill Marinaccio**, American Legion; and **Wayne Cohen**, Rolling Thunder. Congratulations to the honorees!



L to R: Richard Guevara, Ron Sorrentino, Kerry Englander, Bill Marinaccio and Wayne Cohen.

Photo credit: Facebook page for Nassau County Veterans Service Agency

PFC Dwyer First Annual Bike Run

The motorcycles left from the Marine Corps League Sunrise Detachment Hall in Massapequa on **Saturday, August 9**, at 11:30 AM during this five-hour event that started at 10:30 AM. They traveled to Eisenhower Park for a special wreath-laying ceremony in tribute to Army medic Joseph P. Dwyer and then returned to the Marine Corps League for an afternoon of great food, raffles and live music. The proceeds collected went to support the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program.

Long Island National Cemetery—80th Anniversary of the End of World War II Ceremony

This ceremony was held on **Thursday, August 14**, at the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale. Several World War II veterans were in attendance. The speaker for the event was Long Island National Cemetery Director **Jeffrey Taveras** (on the left in photo).



Photo credit: Steven Latus

Tunnel to Towers Foundation Wins Approval from Town of Hempstead for Veterans Housing in Island Park

On **Wednesday, August 20**, the Town of Hempstead's Board of Appeals granted approval of requested zoning variances for a veterans housing complex to replace the long-vacant, run-down Long Beach Motor Inn on Austin Boulevard in Island Park. The motel has been closed since Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

The Foundation was seeking variances in height and occupancy regulations to build a 57-unit single-room-occupancy Veterans Village on the motel site. Foundation representatives told the board that the project would feature private bathrooms and kitchens in each unit, 24/7 on-site staff and clinicians, and services ranging from job training and entitlement advocacy to behavioral health care—all funded and operated by Tunnel to Towers. Nassau County had donated the parcel to Tunnel to Towers last year.

The hearing room was packed to overflowing with veterans and local Island Park residents, who showed up to support the proposal. Former Congressman **Anthony D'Esposito** (an Island Park native), as well as Island Park Mayor **Michael McGinty**, Representative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development **Jason Loughran** (an Oceanside native as well as a veteran) and **Ralph Esposito**, Director of the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency, presented their arguments in favor of the proposal. Usually, the Board of Appeals would adjourn and come back with a decision at a later time, but in this instance, the board voted their approval immediately, which brought forth thunderous applause from the audience.



County officials, Tunnel to Towers representatives and Island Park veterans and community members celebrated the approval of variances for the Veterans Village project that is planned to replace the Long Beach Motor Inn in 2026.

Photo credit: J.J. Byrne, Long Island Herald

48th Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal Ceremony

Forty-three Vietnam veterans were presented with Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals and Certificates of Appreciation on **Saturday, August 30**, at the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stony Brook. All of the honorees were residents at the Home, many of them in wheelchairs. Distinguished guests included the Executive Director of the Long Island State Veterans Home **Fred Sganga, FACHE**, Deputy Executive Director of the Long Island State Veterans Home **Jonathan Spier**, Director of the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency **Ralph Esposito** and Deputy Director of the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency **James Brennan** (USMC Col. [Ret.]).

Many thanks are due to our sponsors: the Long Island State Veterans Home, Shootout for Soldiers and the Hicksville Veterans Association, and to our supporters: the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Band, Military Blue Star Mothers of Nassau County NY14, Greenlawn Post 1244 American Legion Riders, Patriot Guard Riders and Lt. Quentin Roosevelt Civil Air Patrol Cadet Squadron 288.



Photo credit: Ken Nevor

Museum of American Armor—80th Anniversary of the End of World War II Ceremony

This ceremony was held on **Tuesday, September 2**, (when Japan's formal surrender was signed aboard the USS Missouri in 1945, AKA V-J Day) at the Museum of American Armor in Old Bethpage. Three Shinto priests from Japan joined Nassau County Executive **Bruce Blakeman**, Suffolk County Executive **Edward Romaine**, Executive Director of the Japan Center at SUNY Stony Brook **Dr. Eriko Sato** and reenactors dressed in period WWII uniforms in conducting a bi-county program of remembrance.

From Patch.com for Long Island, New York:

Among those attending is Colonel Jason Halloren (Ret.), an Armor Museum trustee and former Deputy Commandant of West Point. “This gathering will underscore how two nations that were bitter enemies eighty years ago are now staunch allies in the shared defense of democracy. It has been an extraordinary journey, but the presence of three Shinto priests dramatically underscores the road that our two nations have traveled from the deck of the USS Missouri in September of 1945 to today.



A memorial bell, taps, and a Shinto ceremony marked the 80th anniversary of the end of WW II.

Photo credit: From the Facebook page for the Museum of American Armor

Nassau County Veterans Picnic and Resource Fair

This annual always-much-anticipated three-hour event was held on **Thursday, September 18**, near Parking Field 6 at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow. The weather was bright and sunny, making for a very pleasant day for the hundreds of veterans in attendance. LIAFA had a table there in addition to those of many other organizations, businesses and government agencies. Music was provided by Tommy Sullivan (Oldies Tribute) and the American Bombshells.

POW-MIA Ceremony

Friday, September 19, was the day for this annual ceremony at Veterans Memorial Plaza at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow, which this year was conducted starting at 5 PM instead of at the usual start time of 7 PM due to a scheduling conflict with a concert held nearby. The vigil was to honor the POWs and MIAs from Nassau County by conducting the POW/MIA Missing Man Table ceremony and by reading the names of these local heroes. The event was hosted by the Vietnam War Veterans Association of Nassau County and sponsored by the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency.

Walls of Honor Ceremony

The ceremony took place on **Saturday, September 20**, at the Veterans Memorial Plaza at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow. It honored 200 veterans whose names were newly inscribed on the Walls of Honor. Two prominent names were also added to the Walls: the late **Joseph P. Dwyer** and the late **Michael P. Murphy**.

Joseph Patrick Dwyer was an Army Specialist combat medic who became famous for a photograph of him helping an ailing Iraqi boy. He died of an accidental drug overdose on June 28, 2008; he had been suffering from PTSD. The Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project bears his name.

Michael Patrick Murphy was a Navy SEAL Lieutenant who was KIA in Afghanistan on June 28, 2005, during a reconnaissance mission with a four-man team. After his team's location was discovered by the Taliban, a firefight ensued. With his team outnumbered and outgunned, Murphy left cover, exposing himself to enemy fire, in order to obtain a signal on his satellite phone to request help. That decision cost him his life, but he was able to get the call out. A rescue helicopter was dispatched, but it was shot down by an RPG, killing all 16 personnel aboard. Three of the four team members were also killed; Marcus Luttrell was the only survivor, who was rescued days later. Murphy was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions that day. He is the first Navy recipient since the Vietnam War.

The Walls of Honor is a place of remembrance within Veterans Memorial Plaza. These are honor walls, not memorial walls, and are open to all currently serving and to all veterans with an honorable discharge, living or deceased, and who are current or former Nassau County residents. There is a \$100 application fee for each name to be engraved. A copy of the two-page application form is attached to the end of this newsletter. For more information, please call Allison Ridam Krivosheiw at (516) 236-3245 or email her at alliridam@gmail.com.



Joseph P. Dwyer carries a 4-year-old Iraqi boy to safety, March 2003
Photo credit: Warren Zinn/Army Times



Micheal P. Murphy in Afghanistan, 2005.

Photo credit: U.S. Navy

49th Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal Ceremony

Seventeen Vietnam veterans were presented with Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals and Certificates of Appreciation on **Saturday, September 27**, at the American Airpower Museum in Farmingdale. Distinguished guests included American Airpower Museum Operations Manager **Larry Starr**, President, Retlif Testing Laboratories **Walter Poggi**, Chaplain, ANG 106th Rescue Wing Lt. Col. **Brian McNamara**, Director of Nassau County Veterans Service Agency **Ralph Esposito** and Deputy Director of Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency USMC Col. (Ret.) **James Brennan**. Thank you to our sponsors—Shootout for Soldiers, Hicksville Veterans Association and Retlif Testing Laboratories as well as special thanks to the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Band, Long Island Chapter of the Navy League, Military Blue Star Mothers of Nassau County NY14, American Legion Riders from Greenlawn Post 1244, Patriot Guard Riders, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 82 Color Guard and Civil Air Patrol Lt. Quentin Roosevelt Cadet Squadron #288.



One of the medal recipients, with family.

Photo credit: Steven Latus

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Upcoming Non-LIAFA Events

Suffolk County Veterans Resource and Stand Down Event

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 9:30 AM TO 1:30 PM at the Suffolk County Community College Health & Wellness Center, 121 Speonk-Riverhead Road in Riverhead. Sponsored by the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Catholic Health and General Needs. For more information, please call (631) 853-8387.

105th Birthday Drive-By Parade for Army Sgt. Anthony Catalano, World War II Combat Veteran

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, PARADE STARTING AT 1:30 PM. A resident of Mineola, Catalano served with Patton's 3rd Army during World War II. Participants will gather on Saville Road near Chaminade High School at 12:45 PM. **Vehicles:** enter Jackson Avenue from either Marcellus Road or Emory Road to Saville Road (northbound to Jericho Turnpike). **Walking participants:** gather on Clarissa Road between Herricks Road and Beebe Road to join the parade as it approaches. **Parade route:** West on Jericho Turnpike, north on Beebe Road and west on Nancy Road past Sgt. Catalano's home.

Thank You to Our Veterans Celebration

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 11 AM TO 2 PM at Clinton G. Martin Park, 1601 Marcus Ave. in New Hyde Park. Multiple agencies will be available so veterans can learn more about the resources, services and benefits available to them. Please call 311 or (516) 869-6311 to register. This event is presented by North Hempstead Town Supervisor Jennifer DeSena and the North Hempstead Town Board and is sponsored in part by FourLeaf Federal Credit Union.

Veterans Appreciation Breakfast

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 9 AM-11 AM at VFW Post 2937, 507 Long Island Ave. in Medford. Hosted by VFW Post 2937 and Assemblyman Joe DeStefano; sponsored by Suffolk Credit Union and McManus-Lorey Funeral Home. It's a complimentary breakfast for veterans and their families, along with valuable information from various agencies that offer veterans services. Please RSVP by November 1 by calling (631) 207-0073 or sending an email to destefanoj@nyassembly.gov.

Blood Drive by Blue Star Mothers

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 9 AM-1:30 PM at VFW Post 433, 400 Lakeland Ave. in Sayville. To make an appointment, please call Melissa Gatto at (917) 566-8537 or email her at mgatto@nybc.org. For medical eligibility questions, please call (800) 688-0900. Walk-ins are welcome!

United Veterans Organization of Nassau County (UVO) Annual Veterans Day Ceremony

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 10 AM TO 11 AM at Veterans Memorial Plaza (Parking Field 6A) in Eisenhower Park, East Meadow. Open to all; attendance is free.

Long Island National Cemetery Memorial Organization (LINCMO) Annual Veterans Day Ceremony

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2 PM TO 3 PM at Long Island National Cemetery located at 2040 Wellwood Ave. in Farmingdale. Open to all; attendance is free. *Please watch the LIAFA Facebook page for possible cancellation of this event due to the government shutdown.*

Free Dental Care for Veterans

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, FROM 9 AM TO 2 PM at Dental365. They have two locations on Long Island: 990 Franklin Ave. in Garden City and 701 NY-25A, Suite A1 in Mount Sinai. Services offered are cleanings, x-rays, comprehensive examinations and other same-day services. Please call (516) 464-8700 to schedule an appointment.

Annual Veterans Tribute Dinner

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 7 PM-9 PM at Kellenberg Memorial High School, 1400 Glenn Curtiss Blvd. in Uniondale. The Kellenberg Memorial High School History Club cordially invites you to honor the brave men and women who have served our country in the armed forces and those currently serving. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe8cmQm_KsR9M7Vw4ZcPCws7ANI6oBDMtgXqfG8_9c4GvU_W7g/viewform?pli=1 is the link to register online. Registration closes on Monday, November 3. Please contact Mr. Cartier at mrcartier@kellenberg.org with any questions.

250th Birthday Celebration for the U.S. Marine Corps

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, STARTING AT 4:30 PM at the Marine Corps League Sunrise Detachment Hall, 99 New York Ave. in Massapequa. Food, cash bar, cake ceremony, oldest/youngest Marine and Springfield 1903 rifle raffle. Call (516) 503-4963 for more information or any questions.

Special Screening of Warrior Ranch Documentary

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13 AT 6 PM at the David S. Mack Center for Training and Intelligence, Nassau County Police Academy, 1 Law Enforcement Way in Garden City. This award-winning documentary shows the profound role that horses play in healing the invisible wounds of veterans and first responders. The film will be followed by a Q&A/panel discussion including SSGT (Ret.) **Paul Martinez** (Army Ranger) and Police Officer **Shawn Feeney** (SSGT, Marine Corps). To register, please call (516) 573-7620 or send an email to NCPDWellness@gmail.com.

Warrior Help A Hero Showdown

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15 AT 6:30 PM TO 10 PM (EST.) at the Northwell Health Ice Center, 200 Merrick Ave., East Meadow (in Eisenhower Park). Games: Long Island Warriors vs. FDNY at 6:45 PM; Long Island Warriors vs. NJ Warriors 8:30 PM. **The flyer says that tickets are \$10 (maybe that's the price at the door), but the online link below says that they're \$12.51.** All proceeds will benefit the Matthews family. Jay Matthews is a married 35-year-old Long Island native who is an active Army Reserve member, a Selden volunteer firefighter and an FDNY firefighter. Jay's and his wife Brittney's young son, Jack, born mid-2023, was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer (BCOR Sarcoma) at eighteen months old; he passed away this past August. The family has incurred significant medical, home improvement and other bills caring for Jack and childcare for his older sister, McKenna. Go here for tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-help-a-hero-showdown-tickets-1716100736499>.

Red Bow Initiative

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, STARTING AT 12 NOON at the Marine Corps League Sunrise Detachment HALL, 99 New York Ave. in Massapequa. This event is a cooperative event with many organizations. They will be decorating 500 Christmas trees, making bags for the backs of wheelchairs for the VA, and star ornaments. All talents and skills are needed. Please bring scissors and, if you can, a sewing machine. Please RSVP by calling (516) 849-4384.

Salute to Our Veterans Presented by America's Vet Dogs

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 3 PM TO 7 PM at Mulcahy's Pub & Concert Hall, 3232 Railroad Ave. in Wantagh. Live music featuring Southbound in a night benefiting America's Vet Dogs and honoring our veterans and their service dogs. There will be line dancing, raffles, auctions, dogs and more!

Veterans Celebration Lucnheon

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 12 NOON TO 2 PM at the Islip Arts Council Gallery at the South Shore Mall, 1701 Sunrise Highway in Bay Shore (next to Dick's Sporting Goods). The event is hosted by the Rotary Club of Islip and the Islip Arts Council.

Veterans Annual Winter Stand Down

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 9 AM to 1 PM at the Freeport Armory, 63 Babylon Turnpike, Freeport. It will again be a drive-through-only event; the items distributed will be clothes, winter jackets, toiletries, and nonperishable foods. Information on housing and peer counseling will also be available. Free entry. Each veteran is required to display proper veteran identification; the veteran must be present to receive donations. Event sponsors are American Legion, VFW, DAV, General Needs, P.C. Richard & Son, Long Island Cares, Island Harvest, Beacon House, Vietnam War Veterans Association, New York Islanders, PSEG, Reworld and the Village of Freeport. For more information, call the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency at (516) 572-6565.

Celebration of Life Honoring Louis Bonacasa

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, STARTING AT 11 AM at Axis Church, 2839 Route 112 in Medford. Bagels, coffee and tea will be served downstairs following the service.

31-year-old Bonacasa, from East Patchogue, was a U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant serving his fourth and final overseas tour, this time in Afghanistan, with the 105th Security Forces Squadron of the Air National Guard. On December 15, 2015, while conducting outside-the-wire human intelligence operations near Bagram Airfield, a suicide bomber positioned his explosive-laden motorcycle 15 feet from Bonacasa and his patrol. Bonacasa and fellow 105th Squadron member, Tech Sergeant Joseph Lemm, reacted quickly, each using a tactical security fighting position right before the suicide bomber detonated his explosive. Bonacasa, Lemm and four others in the patrol were killed, but Bonacasa's and Lemm's actions saved the lives of two of their fellow team members and an Afghan Defender. Bonacasa and Lemm were each subsequently awarded Bronze Star medals with Combat Vs and were posthumously made honorary special agents with the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

Laying of Remembrance Wreaths at Long Island National Cemetery

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13 at Long Island National Cemetery, 2040 Wellwood Ave. in Farmingdale. *Wreath placement will take place immediately after the ceremony, which will begin at 12 noon.* The cemetery is seeking volunteers to help lay Remembrance Wreaths on the gravesites under the *Wreaths Across America* program. For more information, please call the cemetery at (631) 454-4949.

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Announcements and Programs

Navy Seeks Interviews with Former Grumman Employees at Calverton

The U.S. Navy is requesting interviews with former employees, or their surviving family members, who worked at the Grumman-operated Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant in Calverton between 1954 and 1996. These interviews will aid in the Navy's environmental remediation at the site, which covers approximately 6000 acres.

Since Grumman vacated the premises in 1996, the site has been a subject of controversy over chemical contamination, with dangerous chemicals such as perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and 1,4-dioxane that have leaked into the Peconic River and threaten the groundwater in the area.

The Navy said it is particularly interested in employees' knowledge of:

- Past operations and activities
- Waste management practices
- Building utilization
- Grounds maintenance
- Aircraft fabrication practices on site
- Any other relevant information, both on- and off-property.

Any former employee at Grumman's Calverton facility interested in participating in an interview or in learning more is asked to send an email to NAVFAC_ML_PAO_ALL@us.navy.mil or call 800-906-9339.

Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary and all information shared during the interviews will be kept confidential.

Free Discount Drug Program for Veterans

VeteranRx offers up to 80 percent off on brand-name and generic prescription drugs for veterans and their families. The program includes more than 35,000 pharmacies around the country, including all major chains. No medical service connection to the VA is necessary. There are no enrollment forms, no age or income requirements, no waiting periods, no eligibility requirements, no exclusions, covers pre-existing conditions, no claim forms to file, no annual or lifetime limits. This program has no service connection requirements. Ask your pharmacist to run both your insurance and the savings card and use the one that saves you the most money. Sometimes the free savings card will offer better prices than your insurance copay. Any veteran and family member of a U.S. Veteran with or without prescription coverage can use this free card. It even covers pet medications. Go to <https://www.veteranrx.com/> for more info.

Veteran Functions at Eisenhower Park

All veterans organizations that wish to hold an event, ceremony or other function at the park must contact the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency to get a permit. This requirement protects the organization as well as the park since the NCVSA holds an insurance policy covering any accidents or injuries that may occur during such events. Please call Ralph Esposito at (516) 572-6512 or Paul Vista at (516) 572-6521.

Veterans Traffic Court (Nassau County)

The Nassau County Traffic and Parking Violations Agency (NCTPVA) holds monthly traffic court sessions on the third Thursday afternoon of each month, dedicated to assisting veterans and active-duty military members with resolving violations. NCTPVA will work with the District Court to bundle all traffic violations together. This program is a one-time-only opportunity so don't waste it on minor

violations. For more information, please call the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency at (516) 572-6565. Also see the following link: www.nassaucountyny.gov/4917/Veterans-Traffic-Court.

Veterans Treatment Court (Nassau County)

U.S. military veterans charged with minor nonviolent offenses may qualify for reduced charges or penalties by participating in a court-supervised treatment program. To apply, a pre-screening questionnaire must be completed and forwarded to the district attorney's office. You must then contact the Veterans Treatment Court Project Director to set a clinical evaluation for the purpose of determining treatment needs. If you are found to be eligible, you will be contacted by the D.A.'s office and a plea offer will be proposed. For more information, please visit their website at www.nassaucountyny.gov/4919/Veterans-Treatment-Court. ***Volunteers are also being sought to be mentors; training will be provided. Please call Rosemary Walker at (516) 493-4145.***

Nassau County Veterans Service Agency Transportation Program

This program provides free transportation for scheduled VA medical appointments. The veteran will be picked up at his or her residence and driven in a Nassau County Veterans Service Agency vehicle to a designated VA facility.

Locations that are serviced for transportation are:

- VA Clinic, East Meadow
- VA Clinic, Valley Stream
- VA Vet Center, Hicksville
- VA Main Hospital, Northport

All appointments for transportation are required to be reserved two weeks prior to your scheduled VA appointment. Please call Jessica DeLisi (VSA Transportation Coordinator) at (516) 572-6526 to schedule transportation.

The Nassau County Veterans Service Agency is looking for volunteers to transport veterans to and from the aforementioned VA facilities. Please donate any time you have to give on Monday–Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. You pick whatever times and dates work for you. Nassau County will provide the vehicles; a valid New York State driver's license is required. To volunteer, please call Jessica DeLisi at (516) 572-6526. The need is urgent so please help if you can!

VetMart Food Pantry

The VetMart food pantry at the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency is located at 2201 Hempstead Turnpike, Building Q, East Meadow. Building Q is located on the property of the Nassau University Medical Center (NUMC), around the back of the property.

Veterans may register at the food pantry for eligibility with a Veterans ID Card or DD214 Military Discharge Form. (*Note: Other forms of veteran identification may be accepted, but eligibility will be at the discretion of the agency*). Once registered with the proper veteran documentation, the veteran may come to the food pantry once per week for food distributions; toiletries and other supplies are

issued monthly. The Veterans Food Pantry is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM (*closed Weekends and Holidays*). For more information/questions about the food pantry or directions to the facility, veterans may call (516) 572-6565. **VetMart will be closed on November 4, Election Day.**

Nassau County VSA Outreach Events Available

These events are open to all veterans groups based in Nassau County. They include:

- Intake of veteran's contact information and digital storage of veteran's DD Form 214
- Access to veteran's VA digital folder (with processed VA Power of Attorney)
- Access to local experts to expedite VA disability benefit claims
- Option to file future VA claims remotely
- Presentations on the PACT Act and Aid and Attendance benefits
- Assistance in applying for VA Healthcare enrollment

Call the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency at (516) 572-6565 to schedule an event for your veterans group.

Volunteer Drivers Wanted for Veterans—Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

DAV is also looking for volunteer drivers to help veterans get to VA medical appointments. A valid New York State driver's license is required. For more information, please send an email to Robert.Erdody@va.gov or call (631) 235-8220. For a volunteer application, please send an email to Jennifer.Pohl2@va.gov or call (631) 261-4400, extension 7182.

VHUC Veterans Transportation Program

From Sal Polito's "Veteran's Column" in the February 12-18 issue of the *Massapequa Herald*:

Through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the VHA-UBER Health Connect (VUHC) program offers another way for eligible veterans to access transportation to VA-authorized appointments. To qualify, veterans must meet the following criteria:

- Be service connected for 30% or more
- Be traveling to/from treatment for a service -connected condition
- Receive a VA pension or disability
- Have an income that does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate

Sal Polito is a member of American Legion Massapequa Post 1066 and is also an employee of the Town of Oyster Bay Veterans Service Agency.

Nassau County Transportation Program by GoGo

The Nassau County Office for the Aging, together with the New York State Office for the Aging, are piloting this program in Nassau County to serve senior veterans. Trips may be to medical appointments, including to the Northport VA Medical Center.

How to use GoGo:

1. Call the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency at (516) 572-6526 to register.
2. Applications will be processed within 48 hours.
3. Office for the Aging will call you with approval.
4. Once you are notified of approval, call GoGo Grandparent at (855) 464-6872 to set up your ride.

Be the One App Now Available

For veterans in crisis, a new app for both Apple and Android devices offers guidance and community resources. The *Be the One* app was developed by Columbia University's Lighthouse Project and tailored to The American Legion's *Be the One* suicide prevention mission. It's available on both Apple's App Store and Google Play and uses the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), that gives anyone anywhere a simple series of questions to ask to determine if a veteran is at risk of suicide, and the severity and immediacy of that risk.

The app can be installed and run on the iPhone, the iPad and Android phones. One of the app's key features is privacy. Your name, address and phone number are not requested or recorded; only your ZIP code is disclosed so that local resources can be shown.

Attention: Military Star Card Holders

If you have received your new card, please activate it now. If you are a cardholder and have *not* received your new card, please call (877) 891-7827 or send an email to militarystar@aafes.com for assistance. The old "Liberty" cards were deactivated on May 1.

The Military Star card is a line of credit and its benefits are exclusively available to military personnel and their families, DoD civilians, Purple Heart recipients and Disabled Veterans. Veterans who received an Honorable or General under Honorable Conditions Discharge have online shopping privileges only.

To get more details on the Military Star card and/or to apply for the card, please visit the following website: https://www.myecp.com/htmlpages/cp_milstarcard.

Commissary Reopening

For those of you who may not already know, the Mitchel Field Commissary reopened for business on March 4 after undergoing necessary repairs. The address is West Road, Building 84, Garden City.

You are eligible to shop in a commissary if you are an active-duty service member, a member of the Guard or Reserve, a military retiree, or a veteran *with a Veteran Health Identification Card that shows at least one of the following:*

- Service-connected
- Medal of Honor
- Purple Heart recipient status
- Former prisoner of war (POW)

If you're a family member, one of these must describe you:

- Surviving spouse of a service member (if you haven't remarried), or
- Primary family caregiver of an eligible Veteran (recognized under the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers), or
- Dependent or survivor of an eligible service member, or
- Dependent of an eligible member of the Reserves

Lifetime Liberty Pass for New York State Residents

Since April 1, 2024, eligibility for the Lifetime Liberty Pass has expanded to encompass the following (***for New York State residents only***):

1. All veterans, regardless of whether they have a VA disability compensation rating and who were discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable.
2. Gold Star parents, Gold Star spouses and Gold Star children.

This pass provides free admission to all New York State parks. Additionally, pass-holders are also entitled to free admission to the two Town of Hempstead golf courses in Merrick (9 holes) and Lido Beach (18 holes).

To apply for the Lifetime Liberty Pass, please go to the following website:

<https://www.parks.ny.gov/admission/lifetime-liberty-pass.aspx>.

Also, since April 1, 2024, a veteran who has the veteran distinguishing mark on their New York State driver's license or nondriver's ID card will be able to use that license to gain free admission at New York State parks that have a *staffed* admission gate. Parks that have only an *unstaffed* admission kiosk, however, will require the use of the Lifetime Liberty Pass.

E-ZPass Disabled Veterans Non-Revenue Program

The New York State Thruway Authority offers free, unlimited travel anywhere on the Thruway to certain qualifying disabled veterans. A disabled veteran who obtains a fee-exempt vehicle registration from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) may enroll in the Authority's Disabled Veteran Non-Revenue E-ZPass Program. Eligibility is *not* determined by percent disabled designations, specialty license plates or other similar criteria.

You must find out whether you are eligible for a fee-exempt registration before applying for the program by completing Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [Form 21-4502](#) (automobile and adaptive equipment) and send to your assigned VA Regional Office, either in NYC or Buffalo. The VA will rate your claim, and if approved, you will be notified. Please call the Toll-Free VA number for questions about filling out Form 21-4502 at (800) 827-1000 (hearing-impaired TDD line (800) 829-4833).

The vehicle must be in the name of the disabled veteran applying for the program. Your Tag may be used if you need to travel in another vehicle, but you must be present in that vehicle, and the vehicle must be a passenger (2-axle, 4-tire) vehicle. Veterans who are approved for the program are asked to

send in a renewal application and updated fee exempt registration every two years based on the expiration date of the fee-exempt registration.

If you travel on roadways and tolling facilities offering E-ZPass other than the NYS Thruway or outside of New York State, you must establish a revenue account by completing the [E-ZPass Application for Disabled Veteran Revenue Plan](#) (TA-W5080) in order to use your Tag. *(This revenue account form is only for disabled veterans who have been approved for the non-revenue program and would like to set up a revenue account in order to travel outside of the NYS Thruway system.)*

For more information, visit <https://www.thruway.ny.gov/ezpass/veterans.html>.

DD214s and Other Military Service Records Are Available Online

The following VA website is for veterans to gain access to their DD214 and other military service records online: <https://vetrecs.archives.gov/VeteranRequest/home.html#BasicInformation>.

PACT Act and Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA) Deadlines

The information below is from an article by Elizabeth Hartman of the law firm Bergmann & Moore LLC in the October 2023 issue of *The American Legion Magazine*:

- **There is no deadline to file a PACT Act claim** through the VA. You can always contact an accredited American Legion service officer to file a claim. The “deadline” that is shown on several law firms’ websites references filing an *Intent to File* (ITF). If you had filed an ITF by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on August 14, 2023, that ensured that your benefits (if ultimately approved) would have dated back to the implementation date of the PACT Act—August 10, 2022—in essence, giving you a bonus year of benefits and a year from the date of the ITF to finalize your claim. There is no deadline for filing the PACT Act claim itself. Your claim will simply be considered from the date you filed rather than from the implementation date.

If you have any questions before filing a claim, Elizabeth Hartman can be contacted at (252) 497-7255. She is the Bergmann & Moore CLJA liaison with The American Legion.

More PACT Act Information

The VA has announced that all veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving are eligible to enroll in VA Healthcare. This means that all Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror or any other combat zones after 9/11 are eligible to enroll directly in VA Healthcare without first having to apply for benefits. For more information on the PACT Act, presumptive conditions and locations, visit www.va.gov and search on *PACT Act*, or call the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency at (516) 572-6565 or the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency at (631) 853-8387.

Here is a list of “presumptive conditions,” which are conditions that the VA automatically presumes were caused by your service:

These cancers are now presumptive:

- Brain cancer
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Head cancer of any type
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Neck cancer of any type
- Pancreatic cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type

These illnesses are now presumptive:

- Asthma that was diagnosed after service
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Granulomatous disease
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis

If you don't have any of these presumptive conditions, you can still qualify for VA benefits, but you'll need added documentation to prove your case.

Nassau County Firefighters Operation Wounded Warrior (NCFE-OWW)

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization **not** affiliated with the Wounded Warrior Project or any other Operation Wounded Warrior organization, the NCFE-OWW is committed to helping those who put their lives in harm's way to protect the rights granted to us, the citizens of the United States of America. Their mission is to boost the morale of service members wounded in the line of duty. The NCFE-OWW works closely with military representatives of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Washington DC, the Womack Army Medical Center in Fort Liberty, NC and the Naval Hospital in Camp Lejeune, NC. Together, they ensure that useful clothing, personal entertainment electronics, and get-well cards are properly channeled to recovering service personnel. Donations are brought down to Bethesda Naval Hospital and other Wounded Warrior centers via Fire Truck Caravan. Firefighters from throughout the Greater New York area join their 'parade' from New York to military hospitals in the south. Volunteers are also welcome to join their ranks, even if you are not a firefighter! The NCFE-OWW is comprised of firefighter and EMS volunteers throughout Nassau County who conduct numerous fundraising events throughout the year to help meet their goal of providing material and moral support to the wounded men and women of our Armed Forces. Each year's efforts culminate with a personal

visit of NCFF-OWW representatives to each of the military hospitals in the area to meet with our brave wounded warriors and express their gratitude for the sacrifices that they have endured for our country. In addition to collecting items and visiting our wounded service personnel, the NCFF-OWW organizes, on behalf of the Nassau County fire service, welcome-home receptions for local service members who have recovered from serious injuries. Donations are accepted and greatly appreciated. Please visit their website at www.ncff-oww.org for more information.

CN Guidance and Counseling Services

All services by this nonprofit organization are free for veterans or loved ones of veterans. Services are available in the community or via telehealth and include outreach and engagement, peer support and linkages to community resources. They also provide referrals and warm handoffs to programs within CN Guidance based on eligibility, including therapy, medication management, medication-assisted treatment for substance abuse, case management and primary care physician. For more information, please call (516) 246-0614 or (516) 246-0621 or send an email to vetservices@centralnassau.org.

Veterans News UVO Long Island is looking for volunteers to act as crew members for its weekly show on public access TV (training will be provided.) The show airs on Cablevision channel 115 on Mondays at 6:30 PM and Cablevision channel 20 on Fridays at 6:30 PM. It is also on at various times on Verizon FIOS channel 36, on Lynbrook and Malverne public access channels, on public access MNN TV Network in Manhattan or any time on YouTube by entering *Veterans News UVO*. The crew meets at the North Shore TV Studio at 1111 Marcus Ave., Suite LL27 in Lake Success on the last Tuesday of the month to tape the program. For more information, please email Ed Aulman at mardiv1@optonline.net, or call him at (516) 921-0595.

Veterans Legal Assistance Program

Receive a FREE consultation with attorneys who specialize in elder law, taxes, wills and estates, family law, VA benefits and claims, disability, discharge upgrades, employment, housing, bankruptcy, debtor/creditor matters, Medicare/Medicaid, landlord/tenant disputes, immigration, and criminal law. For more information, email the Hofstra Legal Assistance Project at VLAP@hofstra.edu or call (516) 463-7302.

General Needs Ltd.

Located in East Northport, this is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that distributes NEW clothing as well as personal items such as toiletries to homeless veterans. If you would like to donate, volunteer, sponsor a distribution or if your business or organization would like to assist General Needs (or if you would just like more information), please call them at (631) 266-1672 or email them at Info@GeneralNeeds.org. You can also visit their website at www.GeneralNeeds.org or go to their Facebook page to see any upcoming events.

Veterans Project by Long Island Cares

This project encompasses several veterans' service programs such as a mobile pantry, job search assistance and Military Appreciation Tuesdays hosted at pantries located in Huntington Station,

Bethpage, Hampton Bays, Lindenhurst, Valley Stream and Freeport. For more information, please call (631) 582-3663, extension 142.

Their website is www.licares.org/what-we-do/feed-long-island/veterans-project.

Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project (Suffolk County)

A joint initiative of the Suffolk County United Veterans and the Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency, it serves veterans, service members and their families with post-service transitional issues such as PTSD and TBI (traumatic brain injury); a diagnosis is NOT required for attendance. All groups are confidential and anonymous. They also provide services to student veterans at numerous Long Island college campuses and monthly community outreach in various locations. For more information, please call (631) 853-8345 or send an email to vetspeertopeer@suffolkcountyny.gov. They also have a Facebook page.

Nassau County Joseph P. Dwyer Vet2Vet Peer Networking Groups

Vet2Vet consists of small groups of veterans who meet weekly to share knowledge, provide mutual support and share resources. Confidential and open to all veterans regardless of discharge status. Free to attend; no pre-registration is required. Meetings are at: Mental Health Association, 16 Main St. in Hempstead at 5:15 PM on Mondays and 6:30 PM on Wednesdays; Levittown Public Library, 1 Bluegrass Lane in Levittown at 2 PM on Thursdays (biweekly). There are also spouse/partner meetings at 6:30 PM on Tuesdays and women-only meetings at 6:30 PM on Wednesdays, both at Mental Health Association, 16 Main St. in Hempstead. (Park in the municipal lot across the street. Use the side parking lot and side entrance closest to the gated area.) No pre-registration is necessary. For more information, please call (516) 489-2322, extension 1213. Their website is <https://veteranshealthalliance.org/nassau-county-pfc-dwyer/>.

Suffolk County Joseph P. Dwyer Vet2Vet Peer Networking Groups

Vet2Vet consists of small groups of veterans who meet weekly to share knowledge, provide mutual support and share resources. Confidential and open to all veterans regardless of discharge status. Free to attend; no pre-registration is required. Meetings are at: Liberty Village, 600 Albany Ave. in Amityville at 6 PM on Mondays; Liberty Landing, 58 Portion Road in Lake Ronkonkoma at 4 PM on Wednesdays; **Seniors 60 and over only**—Rose Caracappa Senior Center, 739 Route 25A in Mount Sinai at 10 AM on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. There are also women-veterans-only Zoom meetings at 11:30 AM-12:30 PM on the first and third Saturday of each month (meeting ID: 932 2123 8672) and women-only MST (Military Sexual Trauma) Group Zoom meetings at 6 PM on Mondays (meeting ID: 886 6132 0754). No pre-registration is necessary. For more information, please call (631) 853-8345 or send an email to vetspeertopeer@suffolkcountyny.gov. Their website is <https://mhaw.org/dwyer/>.

Veterans Rights Project

The Veterans Rights Project is able to assist any person who has previous military experience regardless of discharge status. All services are free. Services include housing, family law, public benefits, re-entry services and discharge upgrades.

Their website is <https://legalservicesli.org/resources-self-help/veterans/>.

Contact information:

Hempstead Office: 1 Helen Keller Way, 5th Floor, phone (516) 292-8100

Islandia Office: 1757 Veterans Highway, Suite 50, phone (631) 232-2400

Riverhead Office: 400 West Main St., Suite 200, phone (631) 369-1112

Veterans Defense Program

Justice-involved veterans often do not have the funds to hire an attorney and are represented by public defenders. Public defense attorneys are rarely trained to adequately represent veterans who suffer from the invisible wounds of war or to translate the combat experience of their clients to explain resulting criminal behavior. This program provides training, support, and legal assistance to promote trauma-informed effective representation of veterans and service members. The Veteran Defense Program (VDP) is a project of the New York State Defenders Association (NYSDA), a statewide nonprofit organization working to improve the quality and scope of publicly-supported legal representation for people who cannot afford a lawyer. For information and assistance, please call Director Gary A. Horton at (585) 219-4862 or email him at ghorton@nysda.org. Their website is nysda.org/page/VDP.

Donate a Bicycle to Beacon House to Help a Veteran

Beacon House provides housing in forty-two locations throughout Nassau and Suffolk counties. On any given day, over 255 men, women, and children from the tri-state area benefit from programs that address homelessness, physical disabilities, PTSD, TBI, mental health issues and addiction. Non-veterans, too, have access to housing, drug/alcohol addiction services and job skills/readiness development programs. Email Ed Aulman at mardiv1@optonline.net or call him at (516) 921-0595. A charitable donation receipt will be provided by Beacon House.

Walls of Honor

The Walls of Honor is a place of remembrance within Veterans Memorial Plaza at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow. Please note—these are honor walls, not memorial walls, and are open to all currently serving and to all veterans with an honorable discharge, living or deceased, and who are current or former Nassau County residents. There is a \$100 application fee for each name to be engraved. An application is toward the end of this newsletter. For more information, please call Allison Ridam Krivosheiw at (516) 236-3245 or email her at alliridam@gmail.com.

Local Website for Veterans

We-Are-Vets.us is a local Long Island website presenting a mix of information, history and memories for active-duty troops, veterans and interested civilians. Eric Spinner is the webmaster while Gary Glick, Marvin Gold, Pat Yngstrom and Bernard Fradkin make up the rest of the team. Their website is www.we-are-vets.us.

Honor Flight Long Island

Honor Flight recognizes American World War II, Korean War and Vietnam veterans by flying them to and from Washington, D.C. to see their memorials **at no cost**. The flights, deluxe tour bus service, lunch, dinner and tee shirts are **FREE** to our veterans. Flights depart from MacArthur Airport in Islip.

You must submit an application to get on their wait list, where you will be assigned to a flight on a first-come, first-served basis by order of application date. It will be approximately four to five months after applying before you are assigned to a flight. You can download and print an application to mail or you can fill out an online application. Go to <http://www.honorflightlongisland.org/general-9> to do either one. You can find out more information on this same website or you can call Jamie Bowden at (631) 702-2423 or send an email to jbowden@southamptontownny.gov.

Honor Flight Long Island is also looking for Guardian volunteers. Guardians escort the veterans on the aircraft, accompany them throughout the day and make sure our veterans have everything they need for a memorable experience. Prospective Guardians must complete an application and must pay their own way, an expense of \$400.

Prospective Guardians, please note:

- Spouses are NOT eligible to serve as Family Guardians.
- All Guardians must attend the Mandatory Guardian Orientation. A flexible schedule will be created so each Guardian can make one of the several sessions.
- Every Guardian must be between 18-66 years of age or be in peak physical condition and able to handle the rigors of the day (i.e. pushing a wheelchair, extensive walking, bad weather).
- Guardians pay \$400 for the privilege to escort these veterans to D.C.
- Guardians DO NOT need to submit the \$400 donation until it is your turn to fly.
- Guardians will be contacted by Honor Flight Long Island when they have been scheduled for an upcoming flight.

For information on filing a Guardian application, either online or by downloading the form and mailing or emailing a completed form, please visit <https://www.honorflightlongisland.org/copy-of-veteran>.

If you wish to make a donation to support Honor Flight Long Island in its mission, please go to <https://www.honorflightlongisland.org/support-our-mission> or mail a check to Honor Flight Long Island, c/o Southampton Town, 116 Hampton Road, Southampton, NY 11968. Honor Flight Long Island is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; all donations are fully tax-deductible.

RISE Study Regarding Veterans and Stress

The ReACH (Relationships, Aging, Coping & Health) Lab at Adelphi University has launched the RISE (Relational Influences on Sleep & Emotion) Study to learn more about how veterans cope with stress in their daily lives and how it affects their sleep and well-being. They are looking for veterans who are at least 65 years old and are married (or living with a partner). Participants will be compensated for their time and effort with a maximum of \$75 worth of gift cards. Participation includes an initial survey and seven brief daily surveys that will be emailed to you, along with the **option** to wear a watch-like device (after visiting their lab) to help them measure your sleep. The study runs through December 31, 2025. If you wish to learn more, please contact the lead researcher, Dr. Christina Marini, by emailing her at cmarini@adelphi.edu or calling her at (516) 877-4812.

MedEquip Medical Alert Device with Monitoring—FREE for Veterans

This device (available as a pendant or a wristband) with Stat-VA data is the only medical device of its kind that incorporates veteran health information. All you need to do is **press the button** and a responder will know who and where you are and handle the rest. You do not need to have a pre-existing condition to qualify.

- No monthly or subscription fees
- 24/7 responders
- Coast to coast connection
- HIPAA compliant
- Joint Commission Accredited
- GSA approved program
- No contract to sign
- Service can be terminated at any time.
- Fall Detection (available)

Ask your VA doctor or clinician about the **MedEquip Alert with Monitoring. The device must be ordered using GSA# GS-35F-202GA.** You can also call (844) 435-7808 or visit <https://www.medequipalert.com/veterans/> for more info.

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Did you know . . .

. . . that the co-pilot of a B-24 Liberator bomber has the distinction of being the only person during World War II to shoot down an enemy fighter plane with his pistol?

It happened on March 31, 1943. Twenty-two-year-old Second Lieutenant Owen J. Baggett, flying as co-pilot on a B-24 Liberator bomber with the 7th Bomb Group, was on a mission to destroy a key Japanese railroad bridge at Pyinmana, Burma, about halfway between Rangoon and Mandalay and near two active enemy fighter bases. Before reaching their target, the 12-bomber group was set upon by 13 Japanese Ki-43 Oscar fighters. Baggett's plane was severely damaged, taking several hits to its fuel tanks and the onboard oxygen bottles, which set it on fire. Five of the crew members managed to bail out only moments before the plane exploded in mid-air. The Japanese pilots did not stop attacking, strafing the helpless men as they descended in their parachutes. They killed two of the remaining crew and wounded Baggett in the arm. Baggett played dead, hoping to avoid further attacks. Curious, one of the Japanese pilots circled around and

slowed down to almost stall speed to get a better look at Baggett, even opening his canopy to take a better look at him. At that point, Baggett raised the .45 automatic concealed against his leg and fired four shots at the Japanese pilot. The Japanese plane stalled and plunged toward the ground.

Baggett and three other crew members, including the pilot, First Lieutenant Lloyd Jensen, managed to make a successful landing, but all were soon captured by the Burmese and turned over to the Japanese. Baggett and Jensen were flown out of Burma in an enemy bomber and imprisoned near Singapore. During his two-plus years in captivity, Baggett lost half his body weight, dropping down to 90 pounds from his prior weight of 180 pounds. Baggett and 37 other POWs were liberated at the war's end by eight OSS agents who parachuted into Singapore.

Although Japanese wartime records claim that none of their fighters were lost during this action, that is contradicted by a statement from a Japanese colonel, as relayed to Baggett by Colonel Harry Melton, commander of the 311th Fighter-Bomber Group, who, after being shot down himself in November 1943, passed through the same Singapore prison camp where Baggett was being held. That Japanese colonel had told Melton that the pilot Baggett had fired on had been thrown clear of his plane when it crashed and burned; he was found dead of a single bullet wound in his head. Colonel Melton intended to make an official report of the incident but lost his life in September 1944 when the ship on which he was being taken to Japan, the SS *Rakuyō Maru*, was attacked and sunk by an American three-submarine wolfpack consisting of the USS *Growler*, the USS *Pampanito* and the USS *Growler*. Some accounts say that the torpedoes that struck the Japanese transport were fired by the USS *Sealion*, while other accounts say it was the USS *Growler*. What the submarines did not realize at the time was that the Japanese transport was carrying over 1300 Allied POWs to Japan. Melton actually survived the sinking but was killed two days later when a Japanese destroyer machine-gunned everyone in his lifeboat.

Throughout his life, Baggett believed that he had shot down the Japanese pilot, but because that judgment was based on largely indirect and circumstantial evidence, he remained reluctant to talk much about it. Baggett retired from the Air Force as a colonel in 1973 and later worked as a defense contractor manager for Litton Industries. He died in 2006 at the age of 85.



[Owen J. Baggett, undated photo](#)
Photo credit: The Aviation Geek Club website

Taps



Wilfred G. “Glenn” Mackey of Huntington, who was a resident of the Long Island State Veterans Home, passed away on September 1 at age 95 of undisclosed causes. Glenn had just recently been honored with a Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal at the Home during a ceremony held by LIAFA on August 30.

What follows is from his daughter, Fran Gill, MD, about her father:

(Ret) Col Wilfred “Glenn” Mackey, USAF, passed peacefully last week at the Long Island State Veterans Home. He is survived by wife, Aurea, of Huntington, daughter Fran, son-in-law Clair and grandson Joshua. “Papa Glenn” was born in Eastern Kentucky before attending MIT in Cambridge, MA. He followed his father’s military footsteps and joined the young US Air Force, flying fighters overseas. He served as an A-1 Skyraider pilot rescuing downed airmen in Vietnam. He concluded his career in the Air Force test and development programs. After his retirement from the Air Force, Glenn was hired by Fairchild-Republic and Grumman, developing the A-10 attack aircraft. He also developed what would become standard aviation safety equipment like the Ground Avoidance System and the use of NVGs [Night Vision Goggles] during night flying. Passionate about the advancement of the next generation of aviators, Glenn was a mentor and leader at local Civil Air Patrol events and a member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Later in life, he transitioned to full time “Papa Glenn,” helping to raise his grandson. Our family is stronger because of his legacy and gentle support.



“Glenn” Mackey in undated photo.

Photo credit: M.A. Connell Funeral Home

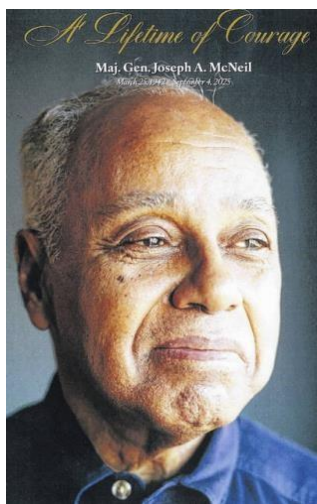
Joseph A. McNeil of Hempstead passed away at Good Shepherd Hospice in Port Jefferson on September 4 at the age of 83 of undisclosed causes.

As a freshman at North Carolina A&T State University, McNeil, along with fellow freshmen Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair Jr. and David Richmond, started the sit-ins on February 1, 1960, by occupying a segregated F.W. Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, NC. This action ignited a wave of nonviolent protests across the South and helped catalyze the civil rights movement. In 2002, the university unveiled a life-size *February One* monument, honoring the "A&T Four" and their enduring stand against injustice.

McNeil graduated from North Carolina A&T in 1963 with a degree in engineering physics. As an ROTC student, he was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force. He served as a KC-135 navigator during the Vietnam War and during Operation Desert Storm, logging more than 6600 flight hours. He eventually commanded the 22nd Air Force, which oversaw all Air Force reservists east of the Mississippi River. He retired from the Air Force as a Captain and from the Air Force Reserve in 2000 as a Major General; his honors included multiple commendations, notably the Distinguished Service Medal.

In civilian life, McNeil worked at IBM, Bankers Trust and E.F. Hutton, where he advanced diversity and inclusion initiatives. He later joined the Federal Aviation Administration as Manager of the Eastern Region Flight Standards Division and led the New York Flight Standards District Office until retiring in 2002.

He is survived by his beloved wife Ina Mae (a gifted Hunkpapa Lakota artist and educator, descended from Henry Oscar One Bull and Chief Sitting Bull); son Alan McNeil, married to Shirley; daughter Jacqueline Jackson, married to Robert; son Joseph McNeil, Jr., married to Sheridan; and son Frank McNeil, married to Dawn, fifteen grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.



Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Joseph A. McNeil in undated photo.
Photo credit: *The Robesonian*, Lumberton, NC

George Hardy of Sarasota, Florida passed away at his home on September 25 at age 100 of undisclosed causes.

He was a member of the famous Tuskegee Airmen (AKA the Red Tails) of World War II, the youngest Red Tail fighter pilot at age 19, flying his first combat sortie over Europe. While Hardy was the last surviving Tuskegee Airman who flew in combat, there are 13 remaining Tuskegee Airmen who trained at Tuskegee but never saw combat, according to the president of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. National Office.

He joined the military at age 18 in 1943, served in three wars (World War II, Korea and Vietnam) and flew a total of 136 combat missions—21 missions in World War II as a P-51 Mustang fighter pilot, 45 missions in Korea as a B-29 bomber pilot and 70 missions in Vietnam as a C-119 gunship pilot.

While in the service, he earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and a master's degree in systems engineering-reliability from the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology.

He finally retired in 1971 as a Lieutenant Colonel. During his service, Hardy was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor, the Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters and the Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster. He and the rest of the Tuskegee Airmen would receive the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007 for their actions during World War II.

He is survived by four children: Josephine, Gerald, Paul and Deborah Hardy, all from his marriage to Beatrice Goode, which ended in divorce; two stepchildren: Kelly LeDoux Lee and Christopher Lott; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. His second wife, Katharine “Bonnie” Lott, died in 2008 after 28 years of marriage.



Lt. Col. (Ret.) George Hardy with his former P-51D Mustang in 2016.
Photo credit: USAF photo by Senior Airman Malcolm Mayfield

James A. “Jim” Lovell of Lake Forest, IL passed away at home on August 7 at the age of 97 of cardiac arrest.

He is best known for uttering the words, “Houston, we’ve had a problem” during the aborted Apollo 13 mission to the moon in April 1970, which almost ended in catastrophe when an oxygen tank in the service module exploded two days into the mission, disabling its electrical and life-support systems. Fortunately, the three-man crew (Lovell, John “Jack” Swigert and Fred Haise) was able to use the backup systems on the Apollo Lunar Module to survive, loop around the moon and return safely to Earth on April 17, 1970. The story of this mission was the topic of the 1995 Ron Howard film *Apollo 13*, starring Tom Hanks, Bill Paxton, Kevin Bacon and Gary Sinise.

Lovell graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1952, earning a degree in aeronautical engineering. Hours after graduating, he married his high school sweetheart, Marilyn Gerlach. His naval career started out in flight training and became a member of “Team Jig,” an all-night, all-weather jet fighter squadron deployed on the carrier USS *Shangri-La*. Following his tour of duty, he entered Navy Test Pilot School in 1958, where he graduated #1 in his class. He became Project Manager for the Navy’s new fighter jet, the legendary F4H Phantom. He was later selected to join NASA in 1962 as part of “Group 2” of astronauts for the Gemini and Apollo programs. Lovell spent eleven years with NASA, where he made four space flights—Gemini 7, Gemini 12, Apollo 8 (first flight to the moon—ten moon orbits only, no landing) and the aforementioned Apollo 13. Lovell retired from NASA and as a Navy Captain in 1973.

He had accumulated almost 8,000 flight hours, including 713 hours in space, the most experienced astronaut at the time. He received numerous honors and awards including the Congressional Space Medal of Honor, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Navy's Distinguished Service Medal, two Navy Distinguished Flying Crosses, NASA's Distinguished and Exceptional Service Medals, Distinguished Eagle Scout, Distinguished Graduate of the United States Naval Academy, and even an Emmy Award for Apollo 8's broadcast from the moon on Christmas Eve, 1968.

He is survived by his children Barbara Harrison, married to Ken; James Lovell III, married to Darice; Susan Lovell; Jeffrey Lovell, married to Annie; 11 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. His wife of 71 years, Marilyn Lillie, predeceased him in August 2023; he had no siblings.



James Lovell in 1964 in Milwaukee.

Wife Marilyn is on the left; Mayor Henry Maier is on the right.

Photo credit: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel files

Randall Harold “Duke” Cunningham of Hensley, Arkansas, passed away at a hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas, on August 27 at age 83 of undisclosed causes.

He was one of the most decorated Navy fighter pilots of the Vietnam War, becoming the only Navy ace, along with his RIO (Radar Intercept Officer) William P. “Irish” Driscoll, during the war by shooting down five enemy aircraft from their F-4J Phantom II fighter jet. He was awarded the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, fifteen Air Medals and a Purple Heart for his actions. He went on to become a Top Gun instructor and retired from the Navy in 1987 with the final rank of Commander (O-5) after 21 years of service.

After the war, he went on to serve eight terms in Congress as a Republican representative from California.

Sadly, his legacy is marred by his pleading guilty in 2005 to receiving illegal gifts totaling \$2.4 million from defense contractors in exchange for government contracts and other favors, and to underreporting his taxable income for 2004. He was sentenced to eight years and four months in jail and ordered to pay \$1.8 million in restitution. He completed his prison sentence in 2013 and was granted a pardon, conditioned on his payment of penalties of restitution and forfeiture totaling \$3,655,539.50, by President Trump in 2021.

He is survived by his third wife, Sharon Cunningham; his son, Todd, married to Kari; his stepson, Rolland Daley, married to Louise; his stepdaughter, Kai Daley; and other family members.



Randy Cunningham (right) and William P. Driscoll (left)
in the cockpit of their F-4J Phantom II fighter jet, May 1972.

Photo credit: San Diego Air & Space Museum

Requirements for the Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal

- currently living in Nassau, Suffolk, Brooklyn, Queens, or Staten Island;
- can attend the ceremony (awards are presented ***only*** at the ceremony; they are *not* mailed);
- served in the Vietnam theater of operations in any branch of the military as per DD Form 214.

A medal application is on the next page. You can also submit the application online from our website at LIAFA.org (please click on the *Veterans* tab).

Form DD214 and other required documentation must still be mailed; please black out your Social Security number and/or Service Number on Form DD214.



THE LONG ISLAND AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION (LIAFA)

A Department of Defense (DOD) Vietnam 50th Anniversary
Commemorative Sponsor

LIAFA proudly presents the Vietnam 50th Anniversary
Commemorative Medal to thank and honor Vietnam War
veterans and their families for their commitment and service.
(Awarded to living Long Island Vietnam Vets of all services)



COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL APPLICATION

Name _____

Phone # _____ Cell # _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Branch of Service _____ Rank/Grade _____

Vietnam service dates _____

Units assigned and location during war _____

Please send a copy of your DD-214 (block out your Social Security Number) and
this application to:

Fred Di Fabio, President
67 Pacific Dunes Ct.
Medford, NY 11763



For information call:
631-754-6383

- Visit our web page at **LIAFA.ORG** to view a video of the ceremony.
- Also check out our Facebook page: **Long Island Air Force Association - LIAFA**
- Attendance is **FREE**. Bring your family, friends and neighbors.
- You will be contacted to schedule you for one of our upcoming ceremonies upon receipt of your application.

Requirements for the Women's Military Service Medal

- currently living in Nassau, Suffolk, Brooklyn, Queens, or Staten Island;
- can attend the ceremony (awards are presented only at the ceremony; they are not mailed);
- Female veteran **or** currently serving in any branch of the military as per Form DD214 for veterans, or ID or other documentation for those currently serving.

A medal application is on the next page. You can also submit the application online from our website at LIAFA.org (please click on the *Veterans* tab).

Form DD214 and other required documentation must still be mailed; please black out your Social Security number and/or Service Number on Form DD214.



WOMAN'S RECOGNITION CEREMONY

**ARE YOU A WOMAN WHO IS A VETERAN OR
IS CURRENTLY SERVING?**

The Long Island Air Force Association proudly presents and honors woman veterans and women currently serving and their families for their commitment and service.

(Awarded to women of all Services and Eras)

APPLICATION

Name _____

Phone # _____ Cell # _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Branch of Service _____ Rank/Grade _____

Service dates _____

Please send a copy of your DD-214 **showing military service** (black out your Social Security Number) and this completed application to:

Fred Di Fabio, President
67 Pacific Dunes Court
Medford, NY 11763

For information,
call: 631-754-6383

- Check out our web page at: **LIAFA.ORG** and visit us on Facebook: **The Long Island Air Force Association - LIAFA**
- Attendance is **FREE**. Bring your family, friends and neighbors.
- You will be contacted to be scheduled for an upcoming ceremony.

**THIS AWARD HONORS LONG ISLAND WOMAN VETERANS AND WOMEN WHO ARE
CURRENTLY SERVING
(Not Awarded Posthumously)**

The Nassau County Veterans Monument Fund, Inc.

PRESENTS:

"WALLS OF HONOR"



The "Walls Of Honor"

offers places of remembrance to residents of Nassau County, NY
within *Veterans Memorial Plaza*,
Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, New York.

The Walls of Honor are exactly what they state, they are Honor Walls, not memorial walls. Stainless Steel Panels, mounted on Granite Walls, Engraved with Veterans names, ensures that the greatest contribution to our legacy of freedom is recognized for generations to come.

GIVE THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

Reserve a place of **HONOR** for yourself, family member or friend and become part of a monument to the men and women who bravely served this nation through its darkest moments or protected it during times of peace. **Any** Veteran of any U.S. involved war. **Any** Veteran who is currently serving. **Any** Veteran living or deceased. **Any** Veteran who took the oath of enlistment & has been honorably discharged is eligible to be remembered.

The *Walls of Honor* is on-going. As long as veterans apply, there will be room for their names. Once a year we welcome all to attend our **Annual Honoree Dedication Ceremony** where new honorees names are placed on the Walls of Honor.

There is a \$100.00 application fee for each name to be engraved.

Donations are always greatly appreciated.

For additional information please contact Allison Ridam Krivosheiw
cell/text: 516-236-3245 /alliridam@gmail.com

revAR 05/2024



TO REGISTER:



Type or Print all information CLEARLY

Each registration form should include ONE NAME - For additional forms contact Allison or Joan Ridam @ 516-804-5802

NOTE: BE SURE TO INCLUDE A COPY of DD-214 or SEPARATION PAPERS or ANY OTHER TYPE OF PROOF OF SERVICE

Along with Proof of Nassau County Residency

Donor's name:

Address:

Town:

State:

Zip Code:

Area code & Phone number (Please circle: Home / Cell)

HONOREE INFORMATION:

All Letters are Capital Letters. For lower case letters, circle the box (e.g. Mc, Mac)
Leave blank boxes for space between words.

1. Name of Veteran being honored:

(First, Middle, Last)

JOHN E. MCCORMICK

2. Branch of service:

* See below for abbreviations

3. Date of service: (optional)

4. If applicable: Prisoner of War - Missing in Action - Killed in Action Please include proof of status.

check box: POW ☐ MIA ☐ KIA ☐

IMPORTANT: SERVICE MEMBERS' NAMES ARE NOT ENGRAVED ALPHABETICALLY. THEY ARE ENGRAVED IN THE ORDER THEY ARE RECEIVED. THE INFORMATION YOU SUBMIT IS WHAT WILL BE ENGRAVED ON THE WALL.
DOUBLE - CHECK YOUR INFORMATION. If you wish to place multiple names on a panel, submit together a separate application for each person. In receipt of this form, the donor will be sent a certificate of acknowledgement.

*Service Branch Abbreviations:

USA - US Army / USAF - US Air Force / USN - US Navy / USMC - US Marine Corps / USCG - US Coast Guard /
USAAC - US Army Air Corps / USAAF - US Army Air Force / USMM - US Merchant Marines / USANG - US Army National Guard /
NYARNG - NY Army Reserved National Guard / ANG - Air National Guard / USNG - US National Guard / WAC - Women Army Corp /
ABN - Army Airborne / USSF - US Space Force / All service prior year 1900, e.g.: Civil War, Revolutionary War-please contact us.

Submit this completed form, payment and proof of service & residency to:

Nassau County Veterans Monument Fund, Inc

PO Box 7911

Hicksville, New York 11802-7911

For additional information please contact Allison Ridam Krivosheiv cell/text: 516-236-3245 / alliridam@gmail.com

The Nassau County Veterans Monument Fund, Inc. is a 501-(c)(3) non- profit organization. It is a private organization and not part of Nassau County government and has no affiliation with any government agency. Federal Tax # upon request.

Please make check payable to : Nassau County Veterans Monument Fund, Inc.

The Walls Of Honor are open to Nassau County Veteran residences living &/or deceased

A \$100.00 application fee for each Veteran name is all that is required to ensure that future generations know the sacrifice & courage of these brave Americans.