



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:

Long Island Air Force Association—LIAFA

Email us at: LIAFA202@gmail.com

Newsletter editor: Steven Latus

CALENDAR OF LIAFA EVENTS 2024

Vietnam Medal Ceremonies

Sat, May 11, 2024

American Airpower Museum
1230 New Highway
Farmingdale
11:30 a.m.

Fri, Jul 12, 2024

During Shootout for Soldiers
John J. Burns Park
4990 Merrick Rd.
Massapequa Park
11:30 a.m.

Women's Military Service Medal Ceremonies

Sat, Sep 14, 2024

Cradle of Aviation
Charles Lindbergh Blvd.
Garden City
11:30 a.m.

83rd Anniversary Annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony— Dropping of the Roses

Sat, Dec 7, 2024

American Airpower Museum
1230 New Highway
Farmingdale
10:30 a.m.

President's Message

The Long Island Air Force Association has instituted a new program for Long Island **women veterans and those currently serving**, with the second ceremony having been held on September 30, 2023.

The requirements are:

- Female veteran **or** currently serving in any branch of the military as per DD Form 214 for veterans, or ID or other documentation for those currently serving.
- 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).

You will find an award application towards the end of this newsletter. You can also download one from our website at LIAFA.org.

Please look to the LIAFA Facebook page and/or our website at LIAFA.org for future notices regarding any upcoming events.



Image courtesy of the Military Officers Association of Sarasota, Inc.

Recent Events

42nd Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal Ceremony

Thirty Vietnam veterans were presented with Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medals and Certificates of Appreciation on Saturday, October 28, at the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Uniondale (the mailing address is in Garden City). Distinguished guests included NYS Senator **Kevin Thomas**, Cradle of Aviation Museum Executive Director **Andrew Parton**, Senior Advisor to the Director, Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemoration **Col. (Ret.) Jose Ramos**, GEICO Management Executive **Col. (Ret.) Paul Salas**, and Nassau County Veterans Service Agency Director **Ralph Esposito**. Special thanks to our supporters—Shootout for Soldiers, Long Island State Veterans Home, Long Island ABATE, Museum of American Armor, 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.

Following are some pictures from the ceremony.

Editor's Note: For those who have been keeping count, you may have noticed that the last Vietnam medal ceremony on July 13, 2023, was listed in the prior newsletter as the 39th. I have been advised that this October 28 ceremony is, in fact, the 42nd.



*Half of the audience, facing left from the stage. The tables for LIAFA and VVA 82 are in the back on the left.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*Col. (Ret.) Bill Stratemeier addressing the audience. Half of the medal recipients are seated to his right.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*Half of the medal recipients seated in the foreground; U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Band seated at rear left.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*Grandchildren of one of the medal recipients doing their bit.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*A medal recipient with family and friends.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*

Veterans Annual Winter Stand Down

The annual Winter Stand Down took place on Tuesday, November 21 at the Freeport Armory. It was a drive-through-only event (with some arriving by foot) and the only items distributed were clothes, boots, toiletries, gift cards and nonperishable foods. 625 veterans came to the event and received a bag of items. All excess food was delivered to the Vet Mart run by the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency.

Participating organizations were the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, General Needs, Disabled American Veterans, Covanta, Long Island Cares, Island Harvest, PSEG Long Island, Nassau County Veterans Service Agency, Beacon House, Heroes Among Us, Vietnam War Veterans Association, New York Islanders, P.C. Richard & Son, National Grid, Jovia Credit Union and the Incorporated Village of Freeport.



*Some of the volunteers for the Annual Winter Stand Down.
Photo credit: National Grid*

82nd Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony (Dropping of the Roses)

The ceremony was held at the American Airpower Museum in Farmingdale on Thursday, December 7. Special recognition was given to fifteen World War II veterans in the form of proclamations presented by Nassau County Veterans Service Agency Director **Ralph Esposito** and Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency Director **Marcelle Leis**.

Other distinguished guests included American Airpower Museum President **Jeff Clyman**, Skytyper Pilot **Tom Daly**, Senior VP, Membership & Chapters, NDIA **Col. (Ret.) Rachel McCaffrey**, Commander, Navy Operational Support Center **Lt. Cdr. Scott Sackreiter**, President and Co-Founder of Mission Margraten Plus **Roger Kilfoil**, Vice President and Co-Founder of Mission Margraten Plus **Stephanie Folwell** and Rabbinic Chaplain **Joni Brenner**.

After the roses were blessed, the colors were retired, and the indoor ceremony ended, eighty-three roses (eighty-two red roses and one white rose for 9/11) were presented to the pilots of the Skytypers, who then took off to drop the roses over the Statue of Liberty at 12:55 p.m. to mark the exact time of the Pearl Harbor attack.

Many thanks, as always, to our sponsors: Shootout for Soldiers, Long Island State Veterans Home, Long Island ABATE and NDIA (National Defense Industrial Association).

Special thanks are also due to the American Airpower Museum, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Band, vocalist for the 11th New York Regiment USV-A Col. Louis DiLeo, Sergeant at Arms Paul Massi (USMC veteran), New York Skytypers, Navy Operational Support Center, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 82, Patriot Guard Riders, American Legion Riders Post 1244, Rolling Thunder Chapter 6, U.S. Military Vets Motorcycle Club, Civil Air Patrol Lt. Quentin Roosevelt Cadet Squadron NY-288, Blue Star Mothers, Costco of Melville, Applebee's Restaurant and the Town of Babylon.

Following are some pictures from the event:



*View from the audience.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*Presenting the roses prior to bringing them to the plane.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*A great crowd, despite it being a workday (Thursday) morning.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*Preparing the plane to fly the roses to the Statue of Liberty.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*



*Some of the VVA Chapter 82 members, a fixture at the LIAFA Vietnam medal ceremonies.
Photo credit: Ken Nevor*

Announcements and Programs

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 p.m. 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.
- The CLJA, included as a provision under the PACT Act, separately allows individuals exposed to toxic water at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, to sue the U.S. government for damages/benefits. There is a sunset provision in the CLJA, which means that **a CLJA claim must be filed no later than August 9, 2024.**

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

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 NCFE-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 NCFE-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.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Donation Programs

If you're looking to donate clothing, books, small appliances or pretty much anything else, and also want to help veterans, go to clothingdonations.org or call (631) 582-0242 to schedule a pick-up. Please put the donation outside before 7 a.m. on the scheduled pickup date, clearly marked *Vietnam Veterans of America*, so that the driver can see it from the street. VVA has found that the most profitable way to sell household discards is through bulk-purchase agreements with private retailers on a bid basis. A portion of the proceeds goes to our local Nassau County VVA Chapter 82.

VVA also has a separate program for car donations. Go to vietnamveteranscardonation.org or call (800) 435-7838 to schedule a donation—FREE towing is provided!

Nassau County Veterans Support Grant Program

The Nassau County Veterans Support Grant Program funds are potentially a one-time \$10,000 payment granted to eligible 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(19) veterans' posts or organizations located in Nassau County that experienced economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an online application at ndc.smapply.io/prog/nassau_county_veterans_support_grant_program/. Applicants needing assistance can leave a voicemail at (646) 825-9617 or send an email to ncveterans@ndconline.org and someone will contact you within 48 hours.

NOTE: Per the updated online application, **future applications are on hold until further notice!**

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.***

Volunteer Drivers Wanted for Veterans

The Nassau County Veterans Service Agency is looking for volunteers to transport veterans to and from the Northport VA, East Meadow VA Clinic, Valley Stream VA Clinic and Hicksville Vet Center. Please donate any time you have to give, Monday–Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. 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 DeLisa at (516) 572-6526. The need is urgent so please help if you can!***

Food Donations Requested

The Vet Mart food pantry at the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency needs your food donations. Please bring your canned and other nonperishable goods to them at 2201 Hempstead Tpke., Building Q, East Meadow. Please call Linda Zorn at (516) 572-5187 for more information and to find out which kinds of food are most needed on any given day. No amount is too small!

The Vet Mart hours of operation are Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–12 noon.

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 p.m. and Cablevision channel 20 on Fridays at 6:30 p.m. It is also on at various times on North Hempstead's North Shore TV on Verizon, 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 contact 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, and Freeport. For more information, please call Michael Haynes at (631) 582-3663, extension 202 or email him at mhaynes@licares.org.

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

Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project

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 Street in Hempstead at 5:15 p.m. on Mondays and 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays; Levittown Public Library, 1 Bluegrass Lane in Levittown at 2 p.m. on Thursdays (biweekly). There are also spouse/partner meetings at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and women-only meetings at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, both at Mental Health Association, 16 Main Street in Hempstead. No pre-registration is necessary. For more information, please contact Audrey Lewis at (516) 489-2322, ext. 1260 or send her an email at alewis@mhanc.org. Also check out their website: veteranshealthalliance.org.

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/AboutVDP.

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. Contact Ed Aulman at mardivi@optonline.net or call him at (516) 921-0595. A charitable donation receipt will be provided by Beacon House.

Long Island Vets Help

The Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk, Inc. and the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless have partnered to produce a resource directory devoted specifically to the needs of veterans navigating civilian life on Long Island. For more information, go to their website at longislandvetshelp.org.

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. There is a \$100 application fee for each name to be engraved. For more information and for application forms, please contact Allison Ridam Krivosheiw at (516) 236-3245 or alliridam@gmail.com. If you just want to download an application form, go to www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/30304/Wall-of-Honor-Application-2020. They are accepting applications for the 2024 Walls of Honor until the end of February.

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 Washington, D.C. to see their memorials **at no cost**. 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. You can also email Jamie at jbowden@southamptontownny.gov.

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 \$150 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. If you wish to learn more, please contact the lead researcher, Dr. Christina Marini, by emailing her at emarini@adelphi.edu or calling her at (516) 877-4812.

§

Did you know . . .

The first fatal airplane crash happened in the United States on September 17, 1908, when a plane piloted by Orville Wright crashed into a field after the propeller severed a rudder control wire, breaking the propeller and sending the plane into a nosedive. Orville Wright was hospitalized with several broken ribs and a fractured thigh. The second crewmember, Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge, who was an Army observer on the flight, was killed.

The recently-crowned Miss America for 2024 is 22-year-old Air Force 2nd Lieutenant Madison Marsh. Marsh, representing the state of Colorado, is the first member of the U.S. military ever to win the national title. She is an active-duty Air Force officer and a fighter pilot, has a degree in astrophysics from the U.S. Air Force Academy, is studying at the Harvard Kennedy School for a master's degree in public policy and has a black belt in taekwondo. Marsh lost her mother to pancreatic cancer in 2018, inspiring her to start the Whitney Marsh Foundation alongside her family. She has been able to raise more than \$250,000 for pancreatic cancer research so far.



*Madison Marsh, Miss America 2024
Photo credit: newsdhaka.com*

★★★ Supporters' Corner ★★★

Cradle of Aviation Museum

Probably the first thing you will notice upon entering the front door of the museum is a blue U.S. Navy F-11A Tiger jet fighter that is suspended from the ceiling. The Tiger was the first carrier-based fighter with supersonic capability, due to the specially shaped fuselage, powerful engine and very thin wings fitted into the most compact airframe possible. The F-11 was armed with four 20 mm cannons and four Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and entered service in 1957. It was also used by the Navy's *Blue Angels* aerobatic team for more than ten years.



This aircraft was obtained from the Naval Test Center at Patuxent River, Maryland. It was restored by the Grumman Retiree Group and is now in the markings of Captain Norm Gandia, a Long Islander from Baldwin and a one-time Blue Angels pilot.

Photo credit: cradleofaviation.org

A tax-exempt nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the museum is located on Museum Row on Charles Lindbergh Boulevard in Uniondale (even though the mailing address is shown as Garden City). Its mission is to serve as an educational center preserving Long Island's contributions to aerospace, science and technology by inspiring future generations through learning. It is located on land that was once a part of Mitchel Air Force Base which, together with nearby Roosevelt Field and other airfields on the Hempstead Plains, was the site of many historic flights—so many, in fact, that by the mid-1920s the cluster of airfields was already referred to as the Cradle of Aviation, the origin of the museum's name. The museum opened in 1980 with only a handful of aircraft. A major renovation and expansion program in the late 1990s allowed the museum to re-open in a state-of-the-art facility in 2002. The building has multiple exhibit floors that encompass exhibit halls, a gift shop, a cafeteria and a planetarium. Additional expansion plans are currently under development.

Exhibit galleries at the museum include The Dream of Wings, The Hempstead Plains, World War I, The Golden Age, World War II, The Jet Age, Contemporary Aviation, and Exploring Space (which features the Grumman Lunar Module LM-13, the same type of lunar module that landed astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin on the moon on July 20, 1969).

The Cradle has hosted many of LIAFA’s Vietnam medal ceremonies over the years. Various veterans organizations also meet periodically in the third-floor conference room, among which are the United Veterans Organization of Nassau County (UVO), the Nassau County Veterans Advisory Board (hosted by the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency) and the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA).

The Cradle depends on the generosity of foundations, corporations and dedicated individuals to maintain and expand its programs and activities. You can make a donation or buy an engraved brick to be installed in either their F-14 Tomcat Plaza or Sally Ride Circle; both are 100% tax-deductible as a charitable contribution. You can also buy or gift somebody a museum membership; various membership levels are available. They are always looking for men and women who wish to volunteer a few hours each week to act as a docent/museum guide, a member of the restoration team, a gift shop cashier, an information monitor, a Junior Jet Club attendant or a host/speaker for one of the museum’s educational programs. Annual training is available. Visit cradleofaviation.org/support/ for more info.

The museum is open Tuesday–Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission prices are as follows:

<u>Admission</u>	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Seniors (62+)</u>	<u>Children ages 2–12</u>
Museum Only	\$18	\$16	\$16
Planetarium Only	\$12	\$11	\$11
Museum & Planetarium Combo	\$25	\$23	\$23



Photo credit: aviationhistorymuseums.com

Taps



Howard Kalachman of Lynbrook passed away on November 14 at age 79 after complications from surgery. Howard was an Army Vietnam veteran who served with the 1st Air Cavalry from November 1967 to December 1968, earning a Bronze Star among other awards. He was a mortarman until he was wounded at An Khê. Howard served as a senior mentor with the Nassau County Veteran Treatment Court and had been an officer of several veterans organizations as well as the DAV representative to the United Veterans Organization of Nassau County (UVO). A graduate of Queens College, Howard was a math teacher and assistant principal with the New York City school system for over twenty years until 2006. He was also the author of the book, *"Hi Mom, I'm O.K." and Other Lies From Vietnam*, in which he chronicles his service with excerpts of letters, candid commentary, history and photos.



*Howard Kalachman receiving the Town of Hempstead Veterans Medal from then-Town Supervisor Laura Gillen on June 30, 2018.
Photo credit: Town of Hempstead*

(Continued on next page)

Taps (continued)



Richard A. Bellospirito of Oyster Bay passed away on December 3 at age 83; no cause of death was given. Richard was an Army National Guard veteran (1957–1965), a lifelong member of the Oyster Bay Italian-American Club and a past 1st vice commander of the Oyster Bay AMVETS Post 21. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Marcy, their two children, Kara Hotaling and Cindi Mantegari and his brother, Eugene.



Richard A. Bellospirito

Photo credit: Francis P. DeVine Funeral Home

(Continued on next page)

Taps (continued)



Russell Hamler of Pittsburgh, PA passed away on December 26 at age 99; a cause of death was not given. He was the last known remaining member of the famed American jungle fighting unit from World War II nicknamed *Merrill's Marauders*, the actual name of which was the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), commanded by Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill; it was composed entirely of volunteers. The unit's secret mission was to capture a Japanese-held airfield (the only all-weather strip in northern Burma) in the city of Myitkyina in Burma (now Myanmar), to cut off Japanese communications and supply lines along their long march (roughly 1000 miles) and to open an Allied supply route between India and China. They started out with 2997 soldiers in February 1944, slogged through the jungle and over steep mountains behind enemy lines, and fought five major battles and thirty minor ones (often outnumbered) before finally completing their mission in August 1944; the airfield was captured in May in coordination with elements from two Chinese infantry regiments, but the town itself held out until August 10. By the time the unit was disbanded a week later, just over 1300 members had survived, with only 130 of them considered combat-capable.

Hamler was wounded in the hip by a mortar fragment during the battle known as Nhpum Ga in April. The injury immobilized Hamler in his foxhole for more than ten days until rescuers arrived and evacuated him to a hospital in India, where he recuperated for five months and then was sent back home to Pennsylvania. He served as a military policeman until he was discharged in December 1945. He became an aircraft mechanic for Trans World Airlines and retired in 1985.

Hamler was awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He was among the handful of Marauders still living when the original members were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2022.



Russell Hamler

Photo credit: Department of Veterans Affairs



Want to receive our

WOMEN'S MILITARY SERVICE MEDAL



Are you a veteran or currently serving?

The Long Island Air Force Association proudly presents this award to honor women and their families for their commitment and service.
(Awarded to women currently serving and veterans of all services)

APPLICATION

Name _____

Phone # _____ Cell # _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Branch of Service _____ Rank/Grade _____

Service dates _____

Verification of service is required: DD-214 for veterans, ID or other documentation for women currently serving (black out your Social Security Number)

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.

Medal is not awarded posthumously

PRESENTED BY THE LONG ISLAND AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION



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 DiFabio, 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.
- 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.