

Honoring our Heroes



Audience members and awarding officials including retired Warrant Officer Jack Stoffa (left), retired Col. Stephen G. Abel (fourth from right), Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs and retired Sgt. Joseph Nyzio (right) applaud the newest New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal recipients. Awardees pictured are (beginning second from left) Sgt. Joseph Gonzalez, Spc. Carole Datzko, Master Sgt. Rickie Bushinger, Sgt. Edison Ortega and Staff Sgt. Walter Peterson. The ceremony, which was part of the NJDMAVA Veterans Outreach Program, took place at the Paramus Park Mall on March 14. The 'One Mall a Month' schedule Outreach Program

is an effort by the Department to inform veterans or their family members about the wide variety of state and federal veterans benefits.

- The Kiosk will be appearing at the following locations:
- N.J. Elks Convention, May 31 - June 1
 - American Legion Convention, June 6
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention, June 13
 - Bridgewater Commons Mall, July 11-13
 - Newport Centre Mall, Aug. 8-10
 - Livingston Mall, Sept. 12-14

DCVA's Message

"To be of most service to my brother I must meet him on the most equal and even ground."

Dear Veteran,

When American author Henry David Thoreau wrote those words in the early 1800's he could not have envisioned the generosity that veterans have shown to fellow veterans of New Jersey.

Sometimes I even have trouble comprehending the vastness of support you provide to your brother veterans. I look at the sheer hours volunteered, the thousands of dollars worth of goods provided at no cost and money donated every year by veteran service organizations and wonder if this will continue.

I know it will as veterans share a common bond that sets you apart from the rest of the population. This bond is strengthening with every conflict that our nation's men and women are called to serve.

It is those donated hours, goods and money that enhances the quality of life for the residents of our memorial homes or eases the transition for those homeless veterans working to achieve a better life at Veterans Haven.

This outpouring of support in both time and money has extended well past the veterans circle. Community and business groups like the New Jersey State Elks with their Army of Hope and the scholarship program supported by the New Jersey League of Community Bankers, are just two examples of how support for veterans present and past, has grown in the Garden State.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs can not say 'thank you' enough for all you have done.

Another area where the business leaders are supporting this department and our mission is with the outreach program. Mall property managers have opened their doors to the traveling information kiosk, allowing Veteran Service Officers three-days to provide information to veterans or their family members on benefits and programs.

Many of the shopping malls where the outreach kiosk has visited in past months have now offered the valuable center court space for ceremonies to present New Jersey state service medals. This is a wonderful opportunity to honor these veterans and have the public join in the ceremony.

When I speak of honoring service to this nation, the dedication of the new administration and maintenance complex at the Brig. Gen. William C. Dole Veterans Memorial Cemetery is a perfect example.

Now when anyone visits the busiest state cemetery in the country they will know this hallowed ground is the final resting place of Medal of Honor recipient 1st Lt. Francis X. Burke. The spirit and story of this ordinary hero will now be told on the walls of the new complex.

I wish you a healthy and safe summer; and look forward to continued success with all our partners in support of the veterans of this great state.



Retired Col. Stephen G. Abel presents Linda Rieth a check on behalf of the American Legion for the New Jersey State Family Readiness Council. The Council provides grants to New Jersey National Guard families who are experiencing financial hardship due to the deployment of a spouse.



Jon S. Corzine
Governor

Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth
The Adjutant General

Brig. Gen. Maria Falca-Dodson
Deputy Adjutant General

Retired Col. Stephen G. Abel
Deputy Commissioner for
Veterans Affairs

Lt. Col. James Garcia
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Message from the Governor

Dear Friends,

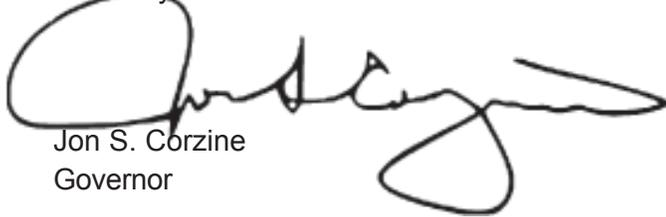
On this Memorial Day, I am honored to thank our military veterans for their service here at home and around the world. Our military protects our interests here on the homeland as well as overseas, and for that I am immensely grateful.

All Americans should take advantage of this opportunity to honor our veterans of WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, as well as the War on Terror. The efforts of all of these heroes have provided Americans with the security needed to thrive and become the bastion of freedom we are today. We are all thankful for their sacrifice for our country, and it is our responsibility to provide them with quality care when they are in need.

In that context, I'm proud that our Administration is taking a holistic approach to supporting our veterans. We've created a Yellow Ribbon Commission to make recommendations about how to improve services for recently returning vets, invested in expanded assistance for service people who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and strengthened the safety-net for veterans in need of shelter, transitional, or supportive housing – and all of these steps reflect our continuing commitment to care for our bravest men and women the same way they care for us.

Again, thank you for protecting our freedom. It is only through the continued concern and commitment of individuals such as yourselves that we may hope to provide a better quality of life to all residents of New Jersey as well as our nation.

Sincerely,



Jon S. Corzine
Governor



Governor Jon S. Corzine welcomes home Sgt. Luisa Sanchez, 250th Personnel Services Detachment - one of New Jersey's newest veterans during a Welcome Home Ceremony held at the National Guard Armory in Lawrenceville on March 9. The Ceremony celebrated the return of Soldiers from the 50th Personnel Services Battalion, 250th Personnel Services Detachment and the Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team (Task Force Phoenix). The Soldiers successfully completed year-long deployments to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.

Leaders learn about current issues

Photo and story by Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA/PA

The news was good, funding for veterans programs is up both on the state and federal level, but the more than four dozen leaders of veteran's service organizations were reminded to keep the discussion of benefits going in Trenton and Washington, DC.

"You are the big stick for the department," said retired Col. Stephen G. Abel, Deputy Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, host of the semi-annual Veterans Senior Leadership Call on April 28.

The upcoming state budget, Governor Jon S. Corzine has proposed an additional \$2.1 million for Department programs. The largest single increase is \$1 million to assist the nation's newest veterans returning to the state after serving in the Global War on Terrorism.

A Yellow Ribbon panel is being formed by Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, to determine the best ways to use the funding to assist veterans. The panel will include representatives from various services, recent veterans, family members and health care professionals to name a few of the diverse group that will be involved in the planning process.

An additional \$500,000 allocation for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) counseling and outreach increases the total appropriation to \$1.3 million. This level of funding helps to insure that the needs of veterans and their family members are properly and expeditiously accommodated.

The PTSD issue and concerns over Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) has the federal Veterans Administration pushing forward to serve those veterans in need according to Dr. Michelle Stenfanelli of the Department of Veterans Affairs, N.J. Healthcare System. So far 74 TBI case have been identified. To insure proper care, case managers will be limited to 25 patients.

Meanwhile on the paperwork side of the federal VA, progress is being made to reduce the inventory of claims said Dwayne Honeycut, acting director of the regional VA office in Newark.

"A year ago there were 5,600 pending claims now it is 4,300," noted Honeycut as he spoke about the average num-



Dwayne Honeycut, acting director of the regional Veterans Affairs office in Newark spoke at the Leadership Call.

ber of claims waiting to be processed. The regional VA office would like to get the decision process down to the 160-day range, right now it takes 180 days to make a determination on a claim.

The balance of the Governor's funding increase, \$600,000, will go to the New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe program at Fort Dix. This program targets high-school dropouts, and offers them a chance to complete their high school education in an atmosphere that stresses self-discipline, self-esteem and community service.

"Our kids need mentors and being a mentor is a way you can help," said retired Col. Ken Prossick, Director, New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Program, while addressing the assembled veteran leaders.

"We reclaim young high school dropout's lives," added

Prossick as he talked about how 92 percent of the cadets graduated with a GED in the last year.

Besides the need for mentors, the Youth ChalleNGe Program is looking to attract prospective cadets from Hunterdon, Sussex, Morris and Cape May counties. Prossick asked the veterans to get the word out about the program that teaches leadership and life skills with a strong commitment to community service.

During the open forum at the end of the Veteran Senior Leadership Call the question was posed by John LeGates of the Vietnam Veterans of American asking if the current regulations to award state medals could be changed to honor former New Jersey residents.

"They deserve the recognition and at times recognition can go a long way in healing your PTSD," said LeGates.

Currently you need to be a resident 50 percent of your life to qualify for burial at the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

"Should we have the legislature enact that kind of rule when it comes to the Distinguished Service Medal and other service medals," asked Abel to the crowd, who responded quickly with yes.

The department will draft legislation and look at the costs involved in providing medals to former New Jersey residents.

NURSING STAFF HONORED

By Brig. Gen. (retired) Frank R. Carlini, DVHS



Jennifer Hayles (left, top photo), Human Services Technician, Vineland Veterans Memorial Home, chats with resident Mirella Prescott. Resident John R. Eickmeyer (right, bottom photo) has his wheel chair adjusted by Vineland Human Services Technician Sandra N. Crosbie. Photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.



On May 6, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Division of Veterans Healthcare Services (DVHS), joined the American Nurses Association (ANA) in celebrating National Registered Nurses (RN) Recognition Day, as part of National Nurses Week, held May 6-12.

The purpose of RN Recognition Day is to raise awareness of the value of nursing and help educate the public about the role nurses play in meeting the health care needs of the American people.

Each of the Veterans Memorial Homes planned special activities in appreciation of their nursing staff, which include recognition ceremonies, refreshments, and mementos. In addition to honoring RNs, the Veterans Homes also recognized licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants during this important week.

Combined, the three Veterans Homes have more than 600 direct healthcare givers who work 24/7 to provide world class care to the residents. They truly represent the heart and soul of our Veterans Homes.

In honor of the dedication, commitment and tireless effort of the nearly 2.9 million registered nurses nationwide to promote and maintain the health of this nation, the ANA and DVHS are proud to recognize registered nurses everywhere on this particular day for the quality care they provide.

These permanent dates enhance planning and position National Nurses Week as an established recognition event. In 1998, May 8 was designated as National Student Nurses Day, to be celebrated annually. In 2003, National School Nurse Day is celebrated on the Wednesday within National Nurses Week (May 6-12) each year.

So when visiting a Veterans Home, please take a moment to thank the nursing staff for the wonderful job they do every day.

Volunteers donate \$1.3 million to memorial homes

By Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA/PA; photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA

The numbers are impressive with more than 73,000 hours donated by volunteers to the trio of Veterans Memorial Homes (VMH) from March 2006 to March 2007.

What is more impressive is the effects those volunteers have on the quality of life for the residents of the homes.

"They provide our residents with all these things of value, but more so, they supply them with the things that money can't buy," said Sue Pettigrano, Paramus VMH Director of Volunteer Services when she spoke at the Paramus volunteer luncheon.

"They show up every day loaded with compassion, empathy and giving hearts. These are the folks who take the loneliness out of being alone; they are faithful in an unfaithful world," added Pettigrano.

When the hours donated is multiplied by \$18.04 per hour as an estimated value for the time, it tallies to \$1,322,205 provided by veterans' organizations, businesses, clergy, community groups and individuals in 12 months.

Volunteers range in age from Boy and Girl Scouts to the eldest members of veteran service organizations and church groups. Their support could have started just last year or been 30 years in the making, like the service that Dottie Cullen and Friends have provided to the Vineland home.

"They sponsor many special events during the year, like Christmas parties and Valentine parties, a party for each month," said Lois Ballurio, Vineland VMH Director of Volunteer Services. "Our residents enjoy her parties and the special volunteers that help her."

In Menlo Park the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapters have taken on the daunting and time consuming task of keeping the residents looking sharp.

"They run our clothing room and sort through an enormous amount of clothing donations every week," said Ed Wiserhorn, Menlo Park VMH Director of Volunteer Services. "It is a huge job."

A team volunteers comes in every Thursday and sorts through the clothes by size and condition. "The mission here is that no one should look ragged," said Karen Stroever, Jersey Blue Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

"When you consider these are people who have very little control over their daily lives to come down and say no I don't want a plaid shirt, I want a striped shirt, it makes a big differ-



Back in action again. Gerry Griggs practices his form on the newly renovated Vineland Veterans Memorial Home bowling alley while (l-r) Herman Berry, Robert Szwak, Rusty Coulbourn, Nancy Dilks and Senior Therapy Assistant Chris McCracken watch. The repair of the bowling alley earned the project of the year for 2006 with Steve Kearns spending more than a year working with many different organizations and individuals, who donated money and repair time to get the lanes repaired for the residents.

ence in the their quality of life," added Stroever.

Besides their work in clothing the Menlo Park residents, the DAR has held a monthly golf tournament for last nine years at two hand-made golf putting greens placed in the town square of the home.

Each month about 50 residents play, a total of 135 participated last year and they range from fully ambulatory to some that are blind, to those who cannot speak and even those in wheelchairs where DAR volunteers help residents play. Three chapters sponsor the golf with \$100 to \$150 in cash awards monthly along with other prizes that included 200 New York Yankees baseball caps donated by the ball club last year.

"We consider it patriotic work and we take it very, very seriously," noted Stroever.

Not all volunteers provide time; some bring large amounts of goods and cash to support the residents. The Paramus home has benefited from the generosity of American Legion Post 170, whose members donated \$75,000 for the multi-purpose room, \$20,000 for Carando tubs and sponsors the cost of the monthly service for the residents' computer lab.

Then there are the numerous parties and events that residents are invited to in the community that are not even part of the hours counted.

The theme at the Paramus volunteer luncheon summed it up best when the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs staff said "Hats off to You to our dedicated volunteers."

REMEMBRANCE DAY MEDAL CEREMONY DRAWS CROWD

Photos by Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA/PA

Retired Col. Stephen G. Abel, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, presents the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, the state's top military award, and the New Jersey Vietnam Service Medal to retired Marine Corps Capt. Karl E. Dahlberg during a medal ceremony conducted at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Holmdel. The May 7 ceremony was part of the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial Remembrance Day with 50 service members or their families receiving awards. The memorial is located on the grounds of the PNC Arts Center at Garden State Parkway exit 116. Information about the memorial is available at www.njvvmf.org. For more information on the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, Vietnam or Korea Service medals visit www.nj.gov/military/veterans/index.html and click the link for each medal to apply.



FROM THE FRONT LINES

VSO News from across the state

World War II widow gets benefits

Bill McDonnell, Camden County Veteran Service officer (VSO) recently wrote about one of his rewarding accomplishments in 2006:

"I assisted an 84-year-old woman last year in getting her second husband, a World War II veteran, buried at sea by the Coast Guard. When she came to thank me for the burial at sea she, as an after thought, said that her first husband, Andrew, was killed in the Battle of the Bulge and she wondered if there were any benefits remaining.

She brought in some World War II letters including a letter from President Roosevelt with apologies about the death of her husband in combat. I sent the letters to VA. A few months later the woman called me, crying, saying she had a big check in the mail and there must be a mistake. I told her it was not a mistake and that this was in tribute to her sacrifice, losing her husband in World War II. I told her that she would now receive about \$1,200 a year, tax-free for the rest of her life. She was in tears. I also completed her application for health benefits.

In fact, I even went to visit the World War II battle victim at his grave in Beverly Cemetery. I wanted him to know that I took good care of his wife, just as I would want a VSO to help my family if something happened to me. I was thinking, 'Don't worry Andrew . . . you died much too young . . . but your lovely widow is well taken care of now. Andrew, may you rest in peace.'

The VSO job allows you to have a tremendous impact on veterans and their families. You help them get benefits they never knew about. It is like having a magic wand. You open up doors to them. These benefits will be with them as long as they live. This job is a unique opportunity to make an impact on all veterans and their families. We should all feel blessed to be doing this work."

The Passaic VSO has busy first quarter

According to Titus Osuagwu of the Passaic VSO, that office assisted with 74 monetary awards, culminating in \$1,653,031 in federal benefits being provided to veterans.

This was a very active first quarter of the year, culminating with Len Johnson, who had been on sick leave, returning to work early in April.

Navy Vet gets upgraded to 100 percent

Port Murray Veterans Service Office assisted a World War II Navy veteran to obtain a 100 percent permanent service connected compensation as well as \$26,790 in retrograde payments. The veteran had been trying since 2005 to have his claim upgraded.

He will also no longer be required to pay property taxes, as his township adopted a resolution granting the veteran tax exemption. The also made retroactive restitutionan ordering the township tax collector to issue him a \$11,449 refund.

Francis Xavier Burke: An ordinary hero

By Mary A. Reilly, NJDMAVA Intern

President Harry S. Truman congratulates 1st Lt. Francis Xavier Burke after presenting him the Medal of Honor at a ceremony in the White House December 1945. Photo courtesy the Burke family.



Editor's Note: *The administrative building at the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery is being dedicated in Francis Xavier Burke's honor. Burke, a former New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier, is the only Medal of Honor recipient buried at Doyle Cemetery.*

Nuremberg

In 1945, when 1st Lt. Francis Xavier Burke all-but-single-handedly took on multiple units of German soldiers on the streets of Nuremberg, Germany, his story was not front page news.

Instead President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death was still front-page news around the world, along with British troops discovering the horrors of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and Soviet troops advancing on Berlin.

But none of that mattered on the morning of April 17. As fellow Third Division infantryman Michael Daly recalls, many of the German soldiers remaining in the city were not retreat-

ing without a fight. Daly, who also received the Medal of Honor (MOH), described the situation: "The rubble was very extensive in the inner city. A lot of large buildings had been completely knocked down. You had to dislodge the enemy in a piecemeal way, because they used the rubble as cover. You had to get in pretty close to be effective."

Getting in close was not a problem for Frank Burke. As his MOH citation notes, the 1st Battalion transportation officer had been assigned the relatively safe task of choosing a motor pool site for the troops in the area. But once he discovered 10 German soldiers preparing a counterattack, he commandeered a light machinegun and killed or repelled members of this unit and the gun crew that had come to their aid. Four hours and seven more engagements later, Burke had killed or wounded 14 Germans, and had played a pivotal role in the deaths of 29 more. Burke returned to the U.S. four months later, and received the medal in December.

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The family

Frank Burke was born in Hell's Kitchen, a New York City neighborhood that, back in the 1920s, was being overrun by Prohibition-era, booze-trading gangs.

The young boy's father and Irish-born mother decided to move to Jersey City, where Mayor Frank Hague governed by his own set of rules. Soon he was driving milk trucks for his dad or working at a local factory instead of attending school during the day. Dickenson High School night classes eventually made graduation possible, but it could have been different.

One day, "He had a disagreement with a co-worker," remembers Frank's son Michael, "They were going to settle it at lunch." Mike's father knocked him out—with such skill, apparently, that he was offered the chance to box professionally by a witness. But Frank's father, a boxer himself some years before, nixed the idea.

Still, a hereditary personal discipline, and an uncle's war stories got Frank thinking about the military.

Burke's first stint in the Guard lasted from 1936 to 1941, when his unit was activated. The 1st Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, 15th Infantry Regiment served in North Africa, landed at Anzio, and advanced through France toward Germany. Three of the Burke boys were stationed in Europe at once.

Once the war was over, no one would have thought it unusual if the young lieutenant had opted out of longer term service. But Frank had another idea, his brother Jack recalls: "When I graduated high school, Frank said 'C'mon, Jack, let's join the National Guard.'"

All told, Frank Burke served for 25 years.

The protector

But his country wasn't the only thing Frank Burke committed himself to protect, and even though he didn't say much to his daughters about the war—in a sense, he didn't have to. Events showed his daughter Maureen, for one, what he was made of on several occasions.

There was the time she slipped through her swim tube in the ocean off Asbury Park and awakened to the sight of dollar bills drying on a Berkeley—Carteret hotel room radiator. It was then she realized that her dad had jumped in, fully clothed, to save her.

Frank Burke's neighbors reaped the benefits of his commitment to protect as well. While listening to Mets games on the front stoop, he foiled at least one robbery attempt and deterred others through his vigilance.

This protectiveness, Michael Daly suggests, may have stemmed from wartime experiences. "When the war was winding down, you felt strongly the necessity of doing everything you could to protect the people who were still alive...there

was so much shared danger, you feel great affection for the people you're with."

An ordinary hero

Frank was more inclined to talk to his wife and Mike about his experiences.

But these generally weren't a matter of detailed public record. Sure, he marched in the parades, spoke to Dickenson High students about the importance of education, and appeared on radio a time or two, but no one could accuse Frank Burke of seeking the spotlight...

New Jersey Assemblyman Louis Manzo, a childhood friend of Mike Burke, didn't know of his friend's dad's accomplishments until high school. When he did, "I was astonished." "You knew he had served, but that humbleness speaks volumes of the family as well as Maj. Burke."

A man of principle, independence and humor

But Frank Burke wasn't reluctant to let people know what he thought about other challenges either he or the nation, faced. "Frank was a very honest person—straightforward with his feelings. You knew where you stood with Frank," states his brother Jack.

He brought this independence of mind to his business affairs. Instead of joining the ranks of someone else's company, he and his wife ran their own insurance agency for decades—in fact, he was still active in the business to the day he died. But, above all, he urged his own children not to be intimidated by the example that he set: "He always said, 'What I did, forget about it—be your own man,'" acknowledges his son Mike."

When Frank wasn't working; serving as a lector at St. Aloysius, or enjoying the serving as the King of a bowling league, he thoroughly enjoyed the comforts of home. Watching Combat's Vic Morrow was a family affair. They all loved to watch Combat. Burke stressed that war was horrible, and was conflicted about killing, but extremely patriotic—he'd do everything he could for his country.

And then there was the weekly sing-along with Dad. Frank was a great fan of the ukulele, which he used to accompany renditions of Irish standards and the Third Division song during Sunday evening family gatherings in Jersey City and Bricktown. Reviews of Burke's musical performances were mixed. Some felt he was great; Jack asserts that "he was terrible, but we didn't care, it was great times."

"He was a man who never acted for the sake of what it looked like to others...heroics were a part of his daily life...he would have given his life to protect his family," concludes Maureen.



Satellite office opens

Marine Cpl. Jason King cuts the ribbon for the Port Murray VSO grand opening of its satellite office in the Hunterdon County Division of Senior Services, Flemington, one day per week (Wednesdays) on May 2. Photo by David Walther, State VSO Supervisor.



Cut the cake

With an assist from Donna Hickman (left), Senior Therapist Assistant, Vineland Veterans Memorial Home residents Helen Neiman-Yates and Eugene F. Mann cut their wedding cake after getting married at the chapel on May 2. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.



Legion supports Memorial

American Legion Post 414 of Lawrence Township presented a \$500 check to the World War II Memorial recently at the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Pictured left to right are Post 414 Service Officer David Snedeker, retired Col. Stephen Abel, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs accepts the check from Dianna Kuck, treasurer; Nicholas Loveless, historian and Charles Brothers, post commander. Photo by Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA/PA.



Essay winners coined

Deputy Commissioner Stephen G. Abel, a judge in this year's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Voice of Democracy essay contest presented the first through third place winners with one of his challenge coins at a dinner in Atlantic City. The students (front row) from left to right are: third place: Joshua E. Zane, second place: Megan A Partridge and first place: Anna M. Hermesmann. Also pictured are Frank Moore, the State Commander of the VFW, Eileen Courtney, the President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary, Past State Commander and Voice of Democracy co-chairpersons Bill and Rose Grieman. Photo by Don Marshall, VFW.

Hire a Vet, you'll be glad you did.



League helps FRG

Army-Navy League commander Jack Dale (left) presents a \$5,000 check to Tina Bell (center), Vineland Family Readiness Group (FRG) President and Tracy Kloss (right), Woodbury FRG president on Feb. 24 at the National Guard Armory in Woodbury. Photo by Kryn Westhoven, NJDMAVA/PA.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Combat Veterans Information

www.va.gov/Environagents/page.cfm?pg=16

Transition Assistance Program

www.va.gov/opa/fact/transasst.asp

PTSD and Combat Veterans

www.ncptsd.org/topics/war.html

Survivors Benefits

www.vba.va.gov/survivors/index.htm

Women Veterans Information

www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Topics/Women/

YOU SERVED – YOU SAVE

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA

Have you served in a war?

Operations Iraqi or Enduring Freedom?

How about Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Northern or Southern Watch, Desert Storm or Desert Shield, Somalia or Bosnia?

If you served at least 14 days in a combat zone (see box with specific war dates), you are a citizen and resident of this state, honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from active service in a wartime period, in any branch of the U.S. Armed Services, then you are eligible for the New Jersey Property Tax Exemption of \$250.

Filing of an application with all required documentation must be done prior to Dec. 31 of the pre-tax year. Documentation includes the property deed and a copy of the veteran's DD-214. The widow may need to submit the property deed, marriage certificate, death certificate and a copy of the DD-214.

For homeowners who belong to cooperative associations, the procedure is different. The manager or superintendent must complete forms indicating the names and locations of the veterans or spouses within the co-op to the tax assessor. The deduction is then granted to the co-op, the co-op is responsible to either reduce the rent by \$250 or present a check to the veteran or spouse.

Editor's note: The Veterans Affairs Division contributed to this story.

New Jersey War Dates

World War II	Sept. 16, 1940–Dec. 31, 1946
Korean Conflict	June 23, 1950–Jan. 31, 1955
*Lebanon Crisis of 1958	July 1, 1958–Nov. 1, 1958
Vietnam	Dec. 31, 1960–May 7, 1975
Lebanon	Sep. 26, 1982–Dec. 1, 1987*
Grenada	Oct. 23, 1983–Nov. 21, 1983*
Panama	Dec. 20, 1989–Jan. 31, 1990*
Northern/Southern Watch**	Aug. 27, 1992–Mar. 17, 2003*
Persian Gulf:DS/DS	Aug. 2, 1990–Feb. 28, 1991*
Somalia	Dec. 5, 1992–March 31, 1994*
Bosnia	Nov. 20, 1995–June 20, 1998*
Oper. Enduring Freedom	Sep. 11, 2001–ongoing*
Oper. Iraqi Freedom	Mar. 19, 2003–ongoing*

*Must have served at least 14 days in combat zone. Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and Iraq Campaign Medal indicates combat zone qualification.

** As a result of Chapter 64, P.L. 2005, passed on April 7, 2005 and effective on January 1, 2006, Operations "Northern Watch" and "Southern Watch" have been added as qualified war periods for property tax benefits. Operation Northern Watch and Operation Southern Watch are the names given to the missions that monitored and controlled airspace above and below the 33rd parallel in Iraq, otherwise known as the "no-fly zones."

NJDSM recipient receives Legion of Honor

By Gary Englert, Director of the Division of Veterans Services

James J. Sheeran, one of the first New Jerseyans to receive the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, was honored by the Republic of France at a ceremony at the French Ambassador's residence, in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 31.

More than sixty of Sheeran's friends and relatives attended the ceremony and were then Ambassador Jean-David Levitte's guests for dinner at his residence.

Ambassador Levitte, recounted Sheeran's extraordinary exploits during World War II, and presented him with the medallion signifying his being named a Chevalier of the Order of the Legion of Honor. The award recognizes individuals for their contributions to the French Republic.

The Ambassador recounted the incredible saga of Jim Sheeran. His father who served in Europe during World War I, returned home with a French bride, the former Lucy Muniere. That his mother was French would play an important part in his wartime exploits.

As did many others of his generation, Sheeran enlisted in the Army. Volunteering for the Paratroops, he jumped at Normandy, France with the 101st Airborne Division - the Screaming Eagles, in the pre-dawn hours before D-Day, June 6, 1944. Separated from his unit and finding himself alone and in a swamp, Sheeran was captured by German soldiers later that same day. Paraded through the streets of Paris by the Nazis, Sheeran was placed on a railroad car, with other Allied prisoners, for transport to POW camps in Germany.

It was at this point that Sheeran's story became truly remarkable. In concert with four other paratrooper-POWs, Sheeran managed to kick open the boarded up window of the wooden cattle car in which they were riding. Believing they had already entered Germany, the five men jumped off the train. Three of the five were shot, and presumably killed, by the German soldiers "riding shotgun" on top of the railcars. Sheeran and another paratrooper, a Native-American named Bernie Rainwater, managed to escape unharmed.

Without benefit of a map or compass, Sheeran and Rainwater began heading south, through German occupied France, hoping to reach Switzerland. Along the way, they contacted members of the French resistance, instructed them on the use of American weaponry that had been air-dropped and also aided in military operations. Separated from their French comrades during one of these actions, the paratroopers continued their journey south.

The two, through sheer luck, made their way to the village where Sheeran's mother was raised, Donremy. Never having been there, and not speaking the language, Sheeran



French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte(left) honors James J. Sheeran (center) and wife Dr. Lena Chang-Sheeran (right) at a ceremony and dinner in Washington, D.C. Photo by Lisa Coppola.

realized where they were, from the Mirabelle fruit trees his mother had told him about, which were unique to that part of France.

Again intercepted by members of the resistance, Sheeran and Rainwater were taken to a village elder: an eighty-year old woman who had taught Sheeran's mother as a school girl. She instantly recognized the family resemblance in Jim's brilliant blue eyes and confirmed that this was the son of Lucy Muniere. Now united with cousins he had never met, Sheeran and Rainwater would be safeguarded by the people of Donremy until the allied advance reached the area in September.

As an aside and another part in this stranger-than-fiction story is that Donremy is the birthplace of Joan of Arc, the Patron Saint of Soldiers. The stone hut in the woods, in which Sheeran and Rainwater were often hidden, was said to be Joan of Arc's childhood home.

Repatriated by American forces on Sept. 15, Sheeran and Rainwater were immediately returned to England. As an escaped prisoner of war, Jim had the opportunity to return home but opted to rejoin his unit. Within a day, he was back in combat, having jumped on Eindhoven, Holland in Operation Market-Garden. Sheeran would remain with the "Screaming Eagles" through the siege at Bastogne, where he was wounded in combat.

Following the war, Sheeran completed college and law school, joined the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a Special Agent and then began a private law practice. In 1958, at the age of thirty-two, he was elected the youngest Mayor in West Orange's history and served two terms. In 1974, Sheeran was appointed Commissioner of Insurance and served until 1984. He currently serves as the Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of NJCURE, the state's largest reciprocal insurance consortium.

"SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED"

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS VETERANS SERVICE OFFICES

Atlantic/Cape May

Appt. pending, VSO
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1601 Atlantic Avenue,
7th Fl.

Atlantic City 08401
609-441-3060/3061
Fax: 609-441-3899

Bergen

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Luz Isip, Sec.
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201-996-8050/8051
Fax: 201-996-8009

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Bernadette Whitman,
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Moise Abraham, VSO
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Carolyn Brown, Sec.
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Fort Monmouth Clinic
8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
(Thursday)
732-532-4465

Ocean

Joseph Salzano, VSO
Phyllis Goffin, Sec.
James J. Howard
Outpatient Clinic
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Brick 08724-3550
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Newton 07860-5000
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(Wednesday)
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Fax: 215-381-3459

For information on your veterans' entitlements call toll-free
1-888-8NJ-VETS, or go online to:

www.state.nj.us/military/veterans/index.html

Assemblywoman serves Jersey Vets

Photo and story by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stephenson, DMAVA/PA

The story is compelling and all too familiar to Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein (14th District). The General Assembly Deputy Speaker stood next to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Outreach Kiosk at the Brunswick Square Mall on Jan. 10, and listened as a man who had served in the Army in the late 1950's wanted to know why he did not qualify for veteran's benefits.

"We hear quite a bit from veterans who are very upset that they served honorably, in some cases they are disabled, and because they didn't fall into those specified periods of time, they are not able to get benefits," notes Greenstein. "I personally think that we should open it up, and anybody who served, should get certain benefits."

Greenstein, whose father served in World War II, has always been involved with veterans, and her office was instrumental in making sure that her constituents were aware of the DMAVA kiosk at the mall. The kiosk is run by Veterans Service Officers and is there to help inform veterans not only about the federal benefits they may be entitled to, but of the specific benefits that the state of New Jersey offers to those who served honorably.

In addition, Greenstein has recently been involved in a project with vets and school children.

"We got the stories of more than 80 veterans on tape for the Library of Congress," she says with pride. "I worked with all the high schools in my legislative district. I was amazed



Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein and retired Col. Stephen G. Abel pose in front of the DMAVA Veterans Outreach Program kiosk.

by the success because what we did is we trained the students to do the interviewing, and then we went to the high schools to interview the veterans."

Because of her tireless efforts on behalf of New Jersey's veterans, Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs retired Col. Stephen G. Abel, presented Greenstein with his personal challenge coin when she visited the kiosk.

"I think that we should put other priorities aside, to make sure that they (the veterans) get what they really deserve" said Greenstein, after accepting the coin.

ELKS ARMY OF HOPE MARCHES TO NEW GOALS

By Kryn P. Westhoven, DMAVA/PA

When you see elk in the wild they are found in herds. In New Jersey the herd is found in 120 lodges with more than 41,000 members, and the only thing wild about these Elks is their enthusiasm for helping veterans.

"It has been the mission of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks to be involved with our nation's veterans and we began that mission in 1918," said Robert Jani, President of the New Jersey Elks referring to the year the National Elks built the nation's first veteran's rehabilitation hospital outside Boston.

"Our local lodges provide more than just money to our vets, we provide them with fellowship and camaraderie, and we spend time with them," added Jani as he proudly spoke

about the baseball games, bingo, movie parties and picnics that Elks Lodges provide to veterans across the state.

The New Jersey Elks saw a need to support the service members serving in the current Global War on Terrorism and the Army of Hope kicked into high gear in 2005 raising \$170,000 in four months.

"Our initial mission statement was to assist the families of those New Jersey residents who have carried the flag home for the last time," said Jim Hall, State Chair of the N.J. Elks Army of Hope Committee.

In December 2005 the Elks provided financial grants to 37 New Jersey families whose loved one gave the ultimate sacrifice to this country.



Bankers assist families with scholarships

From the New Jersey Community Bankers Education Foundation

Families of fallen heroes from Afghanistan and Iraq are eligible to apply for scholarships to pursue higher education.

The New Jersey's Community Bankers Education Foundation, Inc. works closely with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, which distributes scholarship applications.

To be considered, either the dependent or the service member must have a connection to New Jersey, having lived or been stationed in the state. Scholarship funds are considered by the Foundation's Board of Trustees for applicants that have a high school or equivalency diploma and are in pursuit of higher education, including technical or vocational training. The Foundation has been funded by New Jersey community banks to honor the service members of the Armed Forces that lost their lives in these conflicts.

The first scholarship was awarded to Casey Duffy, whose husband, New Jersey Army National Guard Spc. Christopher Duffy, was killed in Iraq in 2004. Duffy decided that going back to college to get a teaching degree was the best way for her to provide for herself and her son. The Foundation assisted in providing funds for tuition and text books expenses not fully covered by other benefit programs. Duffy is currently a junior at Georgian Court University, looking forward to becoming an elementary school teacher when she graduates next spring.

The industry has made a long-term commitment to this effort and it plans to be able to assist child dependents, in-



Pictured with Casey Duffy (center) and (l to r) N.J. League of Community Bankers (NJLCB) Chairman Robert Monteith, Foundation Chairman Robert Stillwell, NJLCB President James Silkensen and Joseph Salzano Ocean County Veteran Service Officer. Photo courtesy NJCBEF.

cluding Duffy's young son, that are many years from needing scholarship funds. Those interested should register names and ages with the Foundation, so the Foundation can forward scholarship material to family members.

For more Foundation information, go to www.njleague.com/scholarship.htm or contact James Meredith at 908.272.8500, ext. 614, or jmeredith@njleague.com.

Our initial mission statement was to assist the families of those New Jersey residents who have carried the flag home for the last time.

Jim Hall, State Chair, N.J. Elks Army of Hope Committee

With continued support from the membership and the community the Army of Hope raised \$130,000 in 2006 and the committee started looking at other ways they could help the nation's newest veterans.

"This year we are assisting those service men and women that were severely injured," noted Hall. The Elks are looking to purchase a state of the art handicapped 12-seat bus for the Medical Holding Company, known as Charlie Company at Fort Dix.

The bus will accommodate up to 12 injured Soldiers, have a drop gate and three wheel chair positions for the weekday trips to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

The countless hours and thousands of dollars donated, keep the Elks true to their pledge

of "So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them."

The Army of Hope is working with the N.J. Elks Veterans Service Committee to support activities at the three state Veterans Memorial Homes Hall stated. "We are going to get their wish lists and help them out."

If you want to help the Elks, their two annual fund raisers are coming up, with a golf tournament at the Fountain Green Golf Course at Fort Dix and the annual picnic to be held on Sept. 16 at the Lacey Elks. For more information visit www.njelks.org or contact Hall directly at Hallpdd848@aol.com.



The New Jersey World War II Memorial



The New Jersey World War II Memorial at Veterans Park (Trenton)

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