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A Special Section of Times Hudson Valley Media • Wallkill Valley Times • Mid Hudson Times • Southern Ulster Times

22 Until None offers help for Veterans

Homeless veterans cold weather gear drive

By NICOLE ZANCHELLI

The American motto is longstanding: support the troops. However, "support the troops" has taken on a different, perhaps more dreary, meaning.

On Nov. 16, the New York chapter of 22 Until None will be hosting a "Homeless Veterans Cold Weather Gear Drive" from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the American Legion Post 193, located at 84 Grand St. in Highland.

"22 Until None is here to help and not just another organization," said 22 Until None New York chapter leader Jerry Wimberly.

22 Until None is a veteran-based program, with 22 chapters throughout the U.S. The name is a call to action, for 22 veterans commit suicide every day.

"With this epidemic running through our ranks of veterans, we need to take a stand as a team," read the organization's website.

They offer emergency financial

assistance, help with Veteran Affairs (VA) benefits, assistance with transitioning, advocacy, wellness services and camaraderie.

"I direct them in a way where they aren't going to be another statistic," Wimberly said.

The challenges faced by those in the military do not end where they are stationed. A large amount of veterans experience PTSD and traumatic brain injury. The transition from military life to civilian life is rocky, to say the least, and proves to be one of the toughest challenges faced by veterans.

"Adjusting is probably one of the hardest parts," said Amanda Gordon, a Reservist from 2010 to 2017. "It was really jarring being in the airport in America in uniform trying to buy a water bottle and there are so many choices. In my deployed location, you only had one choice, it was just the water bottle from the machine."

The adjust from military life to civilian life can often be an isolating journey.



"You were always surrounded by people who were sharing the same experiences as you. Then, once you get out, you don't really have that camaraderie anymore," Gordon said.

In turn, these challenges have left veterans vulnerable to homelessness and suicide. According to a 2017 report by the New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, there were 1,248 homeless veterans in New York in 2016.

22 Until None reports that one in five veterans commit suicide. In Gordon's experience, the people who usually commit suicide are those who have gotten out of the service.

"We all like to think that everyone who joins the military is a hero, but I think we are all trying to get by," Gordon said. "Almost everyone that I was in training with did it because they had a family to look after or they want to pay for college. It was that or being on the streets."

What appears to be the antidote to isolation among veterans is human connection. Wimberly constantly looks for more resources and contacts, including

the Veteran Services in Kingston.

"The more contacts I have on a local aspect, I'll be able to help the brothers and sisters who feel isolated or feel like there's no help out there," Wimberly said.

For individuals without connections with VA, simply listening is a powerful tool to help veterans who are struggling.

"If you know somebody who was in the military, reach out and just try to get an understanding of what their struggles are, what their day-to-day is. Like anybody else in a crisis, just be supportive and listen," Gordon said.

To combat homelessness among veterans, programs like "Homes of the Homefront" provides veterans with the opportunity to move into an Operation Homefront (OH) home, and work with OH caseworkers and other financial counselors to plan for home ownership. Since the program began in 2012, more than 650 veterans have entered the Homes on the Homefront program.

But Wimberly believes more work can be done.

"I drive by and see these big complexes, I wish we could transform those buildings into a veteran safe haven. That way it gets them off the streets," Wimberly said. "I've seen so many buildings that are abandoned and I'm like 'that could be turned into a shelter for vets, or for a shelter for anybody period,' especially now with the winter time coming."

For this drive, the NY chapter of 22 Until None is asking for coats, wool hats, hand/foot warmers, blankets and socks. All donated items are given to local homeless veterans, and all other donations will go to "National Office."

For more information contact Jerry Wimberly at jrrwimberly27@gmail.com.

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Kaitlin Baker – Navy Veteran, Pine Bush

By SHARON MACGREGOR

While in her senior year in high school, Kaitlin Baker remembers enjoying a military history class. “I am not sure that class fueled my reason for enlisting in the Navy, but I did enlist at 17.”

Baker explains, “I enlisted as an aviation machinist mate. This means I specialized in maintaining the engines and fuel systems on EA-6B Prowlers (which are no longer used by the Navy) and EA-18G Growlers.”

Prowlers, were the Navy’s twin engine aircraft, known for their ability to fly virtually undetected by jamming enemy radars from the time of the Viet Nam war until recently. The EA-18G Growlers built on the important technology of its predecessor in being able to jam enemy radar while adding firepower, speed, and range.

Baker was stationed in Atsugi, Japan for two years and deployed twice on the aircraft carrier, USS George Washington. Her service brought her to many places across Asia including Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Guam, and the Philippines.



Kaitlin Baker

Among the challenges Baker faced while away from home were of course homesickness, but also not having enough women in the higher ranks to serve as mentors. “However,” she said, “the numbers are shifting as more females enlist.”

She served an additional two years of active duty in Whidbey Island, Washington with continued challenges

including physically demanding work which at times required struggling with heavy lifting among other activities.

Upon completing four years of active duty, ending as an E4 (petty officer 3rd class), Baker was officially considered a veteran. “I then completed one year in the drilling reserves,” she shared, “and for the past five years I have been a reservist on active duty orders or full-time support.”

Baker may look familiar to some from

the time she spent as a Naval recruiter in Pine Bush.

“Now, I live in the Pine Bush area and am an E6 (petty officer 1st class) and have a total of ten years of service. My new title is Navy Counselor as opposed to aviation machinist mate,” she smiles, “but it is the camaraderie and being a part of something bigger than myself that really makes being a veteran a source of pride for me.”



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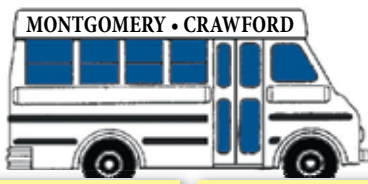
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Service News

Sergeant Ian Gularte from Middletown, and assigned to the Headquarters and Support Company, 42nd Infantry Division retired from the New York Army National Guard last month after some 23 years of military service. Gularte first entered the military in February 1996.

Recent re-enlistments in the New York Army National Guard

Corporal Kevin Rodriguez, a member of the National Guard from Middletown reenlisted to continue service with the 1156th Engineer Company Verticle.

Specialist Nicole Lopez from Newburgh reenlisted to continue service with the 1569th Transportation Company.

Sergeant Jonathan Hodges from New Windsor, reenlisted to continue service with the Company B, Recruiting and Retention.

Staff Sergeant Marisol Chaparro from New Windsor, reenlisted to continue service with the Headquarters, 53rd Troop Command.

Sergeant Reinaldo Velez from Pine Bush . reenlisted to continue service with the 719th Transportation Company.

Sergeant First Class Geoffrey Morse

from Newburgh, reenlisted to continue service with the Company C, 1-69th Infantry.

Recent promotions in the New York Army National Guard

Tanner Scheible from Newburgh, and assigned to the Headquarters, 106th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) received a promotion to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Jimmy Tran from Montgomery and assigned to the Intelligence and Sustainment Company, 42nd Infantry Division received a promotion to the rank of Second Lieutenant.

Sergeant First Class Douglas Gierman from Newburgh reenlisted to continue service with the Headquarters, 106th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

Saul Lopez Suarez from Middletown and assigned to the 1156th Engineer Company received a promotion to the rank of Specialist.

Roberto Ramos from Middletown, and assigned to the Company C, 1-69th Infantry received a promotion to the rank of Private First Class.

John Gamalski from Middletown,



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Soldiers in the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team receive new rank insignia during promotion ceremonies held this past July at Fort Drum, N.Y. Some 295 Citizen Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard received similar promotions in the month of September 2019.

and assigned to the Medical Command received a promotion to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Maritza Gaytan from Middletown and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 104th Military Police Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Private.

Ryan Jaeger from Bloomingburg and assigned to the 1156th Engineer Company received a promotion to the rank of Private First Class.

Lendy Aquino from Walden and assigned to the 133rd Quartermaster Support Company received a promotion to the rank of Private.

Miguel Quintero from Newburgh and assigned to the 1569th Transportation Company received a promotion to the rank of Specialist.

Lelia Walcott from Newburgh and

assigned to the Company A, 1-224th Aviation Security and Support Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Private.

Princessranasia Crawley from Newburgh and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 102nd Military Police Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Sergeant.

Aiden Farrell from Bloomingburg, and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Second Lieutenant.

Mikayla Fullerton from Middletown, and assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 104th Military Police Battalion received a promotion to the rank of Private.



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Tony Marano: World War II Veteran

By CONNER LINSKEY

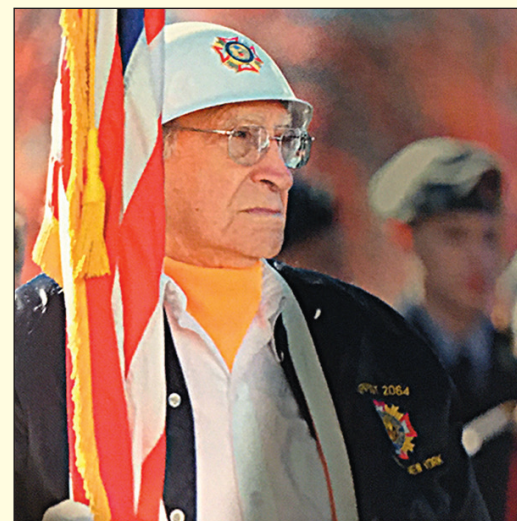


During World War II, Tony Marano served as a radioman in B-24 Liberator planes in the Pacific Ocean from 1943-1946. At one point during the war, Marano was flying over the Pacific Ocean when his plane ran out of gas. He and his fellow servicemen floated on lifeboats for a few days until they were rescued by the U.S. Navy.

Though many years have passed since the events of World War II, Marano remains proud of his time in the service. He noted that it was a great honor to serve his country and is thankful that he is still able to talk about his experiences during the war. Marano continues to show veteran pride as an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and as a chaplain. He also marches in parades, often carrying the American flag. Marano noted that traveling to Washington D.C. with the Honor Flight was a highlight in his life.

On Nov. 8, Marano celebrated his 95th birthday. He remains in good health, smiling to everyone he meets. His daughter Debbie and his grandchildren Rob, Mike and Caitlin are very proud of him.

"I am certainly proud of him," Debbie said. "He is an amazing man. I love him."



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Safe Harbors supports Veterans

By LINA WU
lwu@tcnewspapers.com

According to the most recent Census, there are around 18.2 million Veterans in the United States. The Department of Veteran Affairs serves more than nine million Veterans each year. According to the National Veterans Foundation, there are almost 1.5 million Veterans living in poverty.

Like most places, the City of Newburgh has its own population of Veterans. Although, the lifestyles and conditions of veterans are unique compared to regular citizens, they still need support.

Safe Harbors of the Hudson is one of many organizations that offers support to veterans. Safe Harbors started in 2002, after the former Hotel Newburgh was purchased for its development. In 2004, Safe Harbors received \$21 million in state, county, and federal funds to create an affordable, supportive housing complex. The organization offers housing, events, and resources to

veterans, the homeless, and more.

Every Thursday, Safe Harbors hosts a Veterans support group from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The group meets in the multipurpose room of Safe Harbors. The group offers the benefits of interactions between peers, and support through issues like mental health crises.

"Veterans have their own culture of shared experiences," said June Henley, Safe Harbors Director of Programming. Henley herself has worked in Veteran housing since 2004 and programming for veterans since 2012.

"Our programming allows them to identify with each other, to find strength in numbers and know that they are not alone. They need the opportunity to be part of a group that fully understands their experience."

In the future, Safe Harbors plans to hold open houses for Veterans with information tables featuring Veteran-oriented organizations, announcements for local Veteran events, and art-related activities and showcases.

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Return of the Fortunate

The red eye touched down in the stark grayness of first light. Gone a year, I was back in New York, needing change for a pay phone. The familiar scent of jet exhaust mixed easily with the Sunday morning chill; I wished I had a coat. No one knew I was back until I made the call and simply said, "I'm here."

On the drive from JFK it looked as if nothing had changed. Even the trees along the Belt Parkway were showing the same early bloom as when I had left. The manic flow of traffic made me wonder if anyone here cared about the place I had left just sixty hours ago. Soon, I would realize the truth: Americans were tired of Vietnam and couldn't wait to forget it. Easy enough - there would be no parades, no ships laden with cheering, waving troops like in the movies. Each of us had gone alone and had come home alone, like a salesman on a business trip. In many ways though, that home was gone...

- submitted by Mike Caifa



Mike Caifa.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Mike Caifa of the Town of Shawangunk reserved as a helicopter pilot in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. From May-July of 1970, he was a part of Operation Rockcrusher. He crossed the border into Cambodia in order to cut off the flow of North Vietnamese supplies coming from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. Following Operation Rockcrusher, Caifa continued operations in South Vietnam.

Since his military service, Caifa has spent most of his career in the automotive business. He has been married to his wife Pat for 44 years and has a daughter named Karin and a son named Michael. Caifa stressed the importance of honoring those that have served our country.

"It's important to recognize those that have served," he said. "[We need] to recognize the efforts they have given and the sacrifices they have made...The history of what the military did should always be remembered."

*God Bless America's Veterans
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