

Salute to Veterans 2022

Walden says thank you for your service

On a warm November afternoon, Walden residents gathered at a hillside overlooking the Wallkill River to say thank you.

The annual Veterans Day and Brick Dedication Ceremony, Sunday, was an opportunity to honor all who served in the armed forces of the United States - past and present, living and deceased. Master of Ceremonies Bobby Montanaro said it was a time to thank everyone for their service in war and in peacetime and everyone who gave "a blank check to everyone standing in this crowd."

Montanaro, a sergeant in the Walden Police Department and a retired U.S. Marine Sergeant, noted that American Veterans represent all races and ethnic groups.

"Some are famous," he said, "most are ordinary, just like me."

Montanaro paid special tribute to four veterans at the ceremony.

Dave Penney, normally a fixture at Veterans's Day and Memorial Day ceremonies was unable to be there Sunday because of his health. Penney earned a Bronze Star while serving in Vietnam and has been active in Walden's Veteran activities for more than 25 years.

"I wish he could be here today and I wish him good health in the future, He's the commander of our VFW here in Walden Post 2946 and he's my uncle," Montanaro said. "So thank you Uncle Dave."

Vernon "Butch" Spencer had the distinction of serving in two branches



Veterans and active service members gathered for a photo afterwards.

of the armed forces, beginning with the Marine Corps, and eventually retiring as a First Sgt. from the Army. He volunteered his time and service to create the Veteran's Memorial Park, pouring concrete and laying many of the bricks placed to honor veterans.

"He's a man of many good deeds," Montanaro said.

Walden Village Trustree Brian Sebring, an Air Force Veteran, was there. Montanaro said Sebring spent untold hours making sure the community is safe and well looked after.

"He's a true friend of the community and he's been a member of this committee for a very long time," he said. "Thank you Brian."

Jack Greene was a longtime

American Legion member prior to his death in 2019. He served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean conflict and will be "greatly missed."

The ceremony also featured music by the Valley Central Pep Band, under the direction of Daniel Walker, and an appearance by the Valley Central Jr. ROTC color guard and several scout groups.

Former Mayor and Current Village Trustree Becky Pearson and Nathaniel Wine dedicated the newest bricks in the garden at Veterans Memorial Park. They were purchased by family members to honor those who served in the U.S. Military.

The newest members are: Franklin S. Bishop, Kenneth Blake, John B. Cameron, Milton Eager, William "Bill"

Earl, Ronald Feller, James Finn, James M. Finn, Joseph W. Finn Sr, Joseph W. Finn Jr., James . Hall Jr., Peter W. Hall Sr, Harold C. Linnemann, Bernard Lubitz Sr, Edwin Lugo, Brendan McNamee, John H. Olsen Jr., John H. Olsen Sr, Helen Stohr Piddock, James M. Smith, Edward C. Stoehr, John "Jack" Thompson, Peggy Van Duyne, Donald Boyd Wetherington, Terry Williams and Arthur W. Yerks.

A Brock was also dedicated to recognize the United States Space Force, the newest branch of the military. It was established December 2, 2019.



Town of Montgomery Deputy Supervisor Ron Feller, an Air Force veteran, salutes while the Valley Central Pep Band plays the Air Force portion of its military medley.



Elected officials and scouts lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.



Kathy Passeneau and Bill Sestrom observe the ceremony.

Play For Your Freedom helps Veterans on and off the field

By KERRY BUTRICK DOWLING

When David Lionheart of Newburgh met up with his friends ten years ago for a recreational game of football, he had no idea he would be changing his life and the lives of others. What started as a way to support an organization close to his friend's heart has grown exponentially and helps thousands of veterans in the Hudson Valley and across the country. Lionheart's non-profit organization, Play For Your Freedom, will be celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

"When I picked up my friend for the game he had a wounded veteran organization hat on and I didn't see him in that way. There are some things you couldn't see with a glance," said Lionheart, Chairman of the Board and CEO of Play For Your Freedom. Lionheart went to work shortly after making handmade jerseys and working with others to get support for veterans in need. It was then that Play For Your Freedom was born on a dirt field in Newburgh.

The first year's teams were comprised of 16 players and together they raised over \$2,000.

"Right out of the gate there was a strong sense of community," he shared. The second year there were 72 players and they raised over \$7,000. In January 2016, Play For Your Freedom acquired an office space in the Newburgh Armory Unity Center through a donation which offered the non-profit

a space to thrive and a facility to call home.

At the heart of the organization is more than just a football game, Play For Your Freedom provides veterans with a place to feel safe and includes wellness workshops, drug rehabilitation counseling, fitness and socialization through a peer-to-peer system. "The goal was to make it a place where all veterans feel comfortable and it's a safe space to do so," explained Lionheart.

Lionheart grew up in humble beginnings in Newburgh and has faced his own life challenges along the way. By all accounts, his desire to give others the tools needed to face the day are the fire that keeps him moving. "I want them to know that they deserve to have a happy and healthy life. Everyone deserves that. I want them to believe it's possible," he shared.

Eventually, Lionheart was receiving phone calls from all over the country and he began traveling to help veterans in need of the services offered by Play For Your Freedom. "We weren't saying no to anybody," he explained. In addition, he began calling hospitals that support veterans to offer his services which brought Play For Your Freedom directly where it was needed most. In pre-pandemic times, Lionheart shared the organization was booking approximately six to eight workshops a month and working with close to 1,200 veterans.

"Isolation is a killer. I would tell the veterans it's just important to be in the room. Everyone has a place and



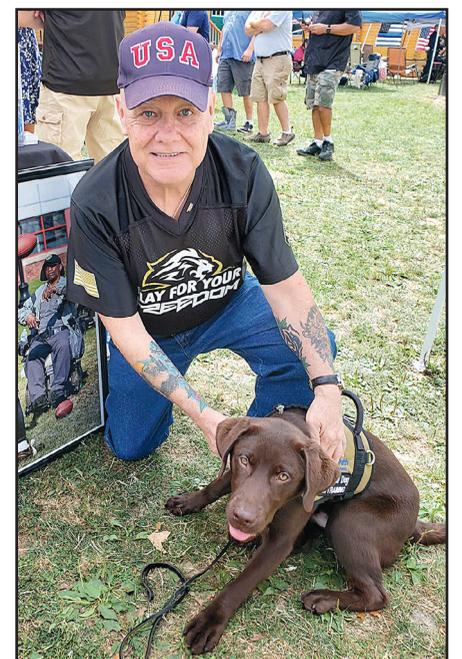
Pictured left is Army Veteran and David Lionheart's friend who inspired the project receiving the first ever Warrior Game Ball from Lionheart (right), signed by all the players on the day Play For Your Freedom was born.

a purpose. We would encourage them to bring their friends to the next event whenever possible," said Lionheart.

As Play For Your Freedom grew so did the number of volunteers and supporters, Lionheart said the organization would not be a success without the supportive environment created by those around him. "Our team is what's special. We all create a welcoming environment with smiling faces. We all have the ability to connect with others and everyone brings their personal experiences. Everyone is good at something. I think the big message that needs to get out there is that our veterans are real people with real issues. People often say thank you for your service, but I want them to also ask- how are you doing," explained Lionheart.

In 2021, Lionheart's documentary film project, PTSD: The Walking Wounded, was released on iTunes and Amazon to a national audience. The documentary examines the reality of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), by following real American heroes as they explore their real life stories and the struggles they've faced since reintegration into civilian life.

"It's a raw conversation that needs to be had. Without them there is no film- they shared the real talk. I'm so incredibly proud of them. I hope this documentary will be a real tool for others to help our veterans," said Lionheart. Lionheart hopes to have a



Service Dog Ranger and volunteer Mike M.



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PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PLAY FOR YOUR FREEDOM.

Play For Your Freedom's first Wellness Workshop on January 28, 2016 at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center.

showing of the documentary in Orange County in the future.

In addition to the documentary, Play For Your Freedom recently announced that the organization has purchased

three service dogs from Clear Path For Veterans to give to veterans thanks to a donation received from local supporters. The first service dog, Ranger, will be going to a female

veteran in Orange County. Lionheart said all of the proud moments with Play For Your Freedom over the last decade being financially in a place to adopt three service dogs is one of the

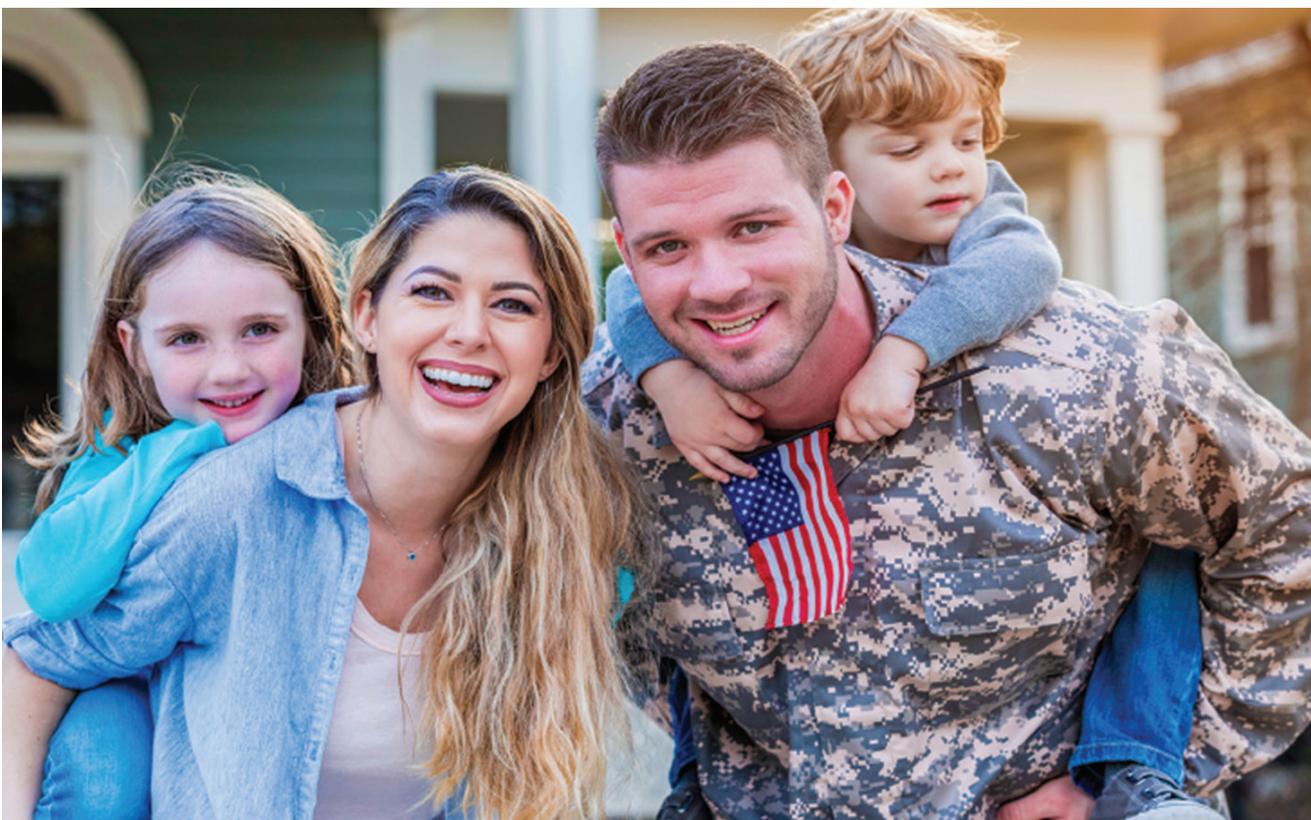
organization's proudest moments.

"Service dogs are just incredible. These dogs are trained to see things that we as humans should see, but often don't see. For me, it's more than just the organization making the purchase. This female veteran's life will be changed I guarantee it. This is a huge step for the organization," explained an emotional Lionheart.

When asked what he sees for the future of Play For Your Freedom, Lionheart voiced his desire to change the mindset of others in this crazy world. "My hope is centered around being willing to hear and see each other and take a little bit more time to understand one another. I want others to take a minute to be kind and compassionate to others. We never know what someone is going through," he shared.

On October 7, 2023, Play For Your Freedom will be hosting its 10th Annual Fall Classic at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center, 321 South William Street, from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. Individuals interested in donating to the event or assisting are asked to save the date.

For more information about Play For Your Freedom including volunteer and donation opportunities please visit playforyourfreedom.org.



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New York Army National Guard Promotions

Major General Ray Shields, the Adjutant General for the State of New York, announces the promotion of members of the New York Army National Guard in recognition of their capability for additional responsibility and leadership.

Herard Joseph from Goshen, and assigned to the Division Signal Company, 42nd Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, received a promotion to the rank of master sergeant.

Edgar Caguana from Middletown, and assigned to the Battery A, 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment, received a promotion to the rank of private 1st class.

Kimberly Neiss from Newburgh, and assigned to

the Company B, 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, received a promotion to the rank of specialist.

Christian Gray from New Windsor, and assigned to the Company A, 152nd Brigade Engineer Battalion, received a promotion to the rank of specialist.

Johnathan Pine from New Paltz, and assigned to the Intelligence and Sustainment Company, 42nd Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, received a promotion to the rank of staff sergeant.

Army National Guard promotions are based on overall performance, attitude, leadership ability, and development potential.

These promotions additionally recognize the best qualified Soldiers and attract and retain the highest

caliber Citizen Soldiers for a career in the New York Army National Guard.

For more information about the New York Army National Guard, visit www.dmna.ny.gov or www.1800goguard.com.

The New York National Guard (New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs) is the state's executive agency responsible to the Governor for managing New York's Military Forces, which consists of nearly 20,000 members of the New York Army National Guard, the New York Air National Guard, the New York Naval Militia and the New York Guard.

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Town of Newburgh Town Clerk

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Price Chopper/Market 32 announces campaign to support disabled Veterans

Price Chopper/Market 32 launched its November campaign to help raise funds for the nonprofit organization, Disabled American Veterans (DAV). From Nov. 1 to Nov. 30, Price Chopper/Market 32 customers will be given the opportunity to round up their change at checkout, 100% of which will go directly to DAV. Price Chopper/Market 32 will kick start the fundraising with a \$10,000 donation.

DAV is a nonprofit charity that provides cost-free lifetime support to more than a million veterans of all generations and their families, each year. In addition to having extended nearly 163,000 free rides to medical appointments and assisted with 151,000 benefit claims last year, DAV worked to connect veterans with meaningful employment opportunities by hosting job fairs and providing resources to ensure they have the opportunity to participate in the American Dream their

sacrifices have made possible.

“Price Chopper/Market 32 is gratified to collaborate annually with teammates and customers alike to help veterans who have risked their own lives to protect our country and freedoms,” said Mona Golub, Price Chopper/Market 32’s vice president of public relations and consumer services.

DAV’s goal is to empower veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. This is accomplished by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America’s injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

To learn more about DAV and its mission, visit: www.dav.org.

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NY Army National Guard is only state Army Guard to meet recruiting goals for 2022

The New York Army National Guard was the only state Army National Guard to exceed its recruiting goals for the federal fiscal year which ended on September 30, 2022.

The National Guard Bureau, which oversees the National Guards of 54 states, territories, and District of Columbia, gave New York the goal of recruiting 1,175 Soldiers during the year.

New York brought in 1,210 new enlisted Soldiers. This works out to 103 percent of the recruiting goal.

The New York Army National Guard also gained 159 new officers during the fiscal year. This exceeded the target of 138 set by National Guard Bureau.

Nevada was the state with the next most successful recruiting effort in fiscal year 2022, recruiting 95.1 percent of the goal set by the National Guard Bureau, according to data compiled by Army National Guard recruiting



officials.

By October 1, 2022, the New York Army National Guard's assigned

strength was 10,707 Soldiers. This is 105 percent of its authorized strength of 10,194.

Authorized strength is the number of Soldiers needed to fill all necessary positions.

This is the fourth year in a row the New York Army National Guard has met, or exceeded, its recruiting goals, according to Lt. Col. Josh Heimroth, the commander of the New York Army National Guard's recruiting and retention battalion.

The New York Army National Guard has also been successful at retaining Soldiers who completed their original and follow-on enlistments.

The National Guard Bureau set a goal of retaining 1,300 Soldiers in federal fiscal year 2022. New York retained 1,406 Soldiers. This equates to 108% of the targeted goal.

Nationally, the Army National Guard has a strength of 329,700 Soldiers. According to the National Guard Bureau, the Guard was 6,000 members short of its recruiting goal

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for the fiscal year.

The active Army, overall, also faced a shortfall of Soldiers. The Army achieved only 75% of its 2022 recruiting goal, according to Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville.

The Army, 20,000 Soldiers short of its recruiting goal, was the only service that didn't meet its target.

Personnel experts attribute some of this to a thriving job market. Others point to the limitations of in-person engagement due to COVID restrictions.

But, according to Army officials, only about 23 percent of men and women in the prime age to join the Army can meet the physical fitness, education, and other requirements needed to join.

The New York Army Guard succeeded at enlisting new Soldiers because recruiting is important, according to Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York.

"Other than Soldier safety, we have no higher priority than unit assigned strength," Shields said.

"We placed attention on recruiting and retention and the results have been remarkable," he added.

Recruiting enough Soldiers means more than just bragging rights, Shields said.

"We cannot be successful and do what the nation and state ask of us without Soldiers in our ranks," Shields said.

Since 2020, the New York National Guard has deployed over 7,000 troops to assist in the state's COVID-19 response while sending almost 2,000 Soldiers to the Horn of Africa for security duties, Kuwait for support efforts to mission across the Middle East, and Europe to train Ukrainian Soldiers.

The Army National Guard also fought wildfires, responded to windstorms, snowstorms, and most recently sent two helicopters to Florida to assist in the recovery from Hurricane Ian.

Heimroth credited New York's well-trained and motivated full time recruiting force of 207 Soldiers for the success of the recruiting effort.

Shields concurred.

The success of New York Army National Guard recruiters during a year in which other states did not meet their number "speaks volumes on the hard work of our recruiting and retention team," Shields said.

"Their work is the very foundation of our organization; people are our highest priority," Shields said.



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Montgomery American Legion Post 521
Maybrook Troop 236 Scout Band
Local Town & Village Veterans Organizations

A Special Address from

Frank Pettine, Vietnam Veteran & Hudson Valley Honor Flight Veteran
Frank Kimler, Chairman - Hudson Valley Honor Flight

Friday, November 11, 2022 at 11 AM

Montgomery Town Hall, 110 Bracken Road, Montgomery

If you have any questions please contact mhurlburt@townofmontgomery.com or call 845-457-2600 ext. 2

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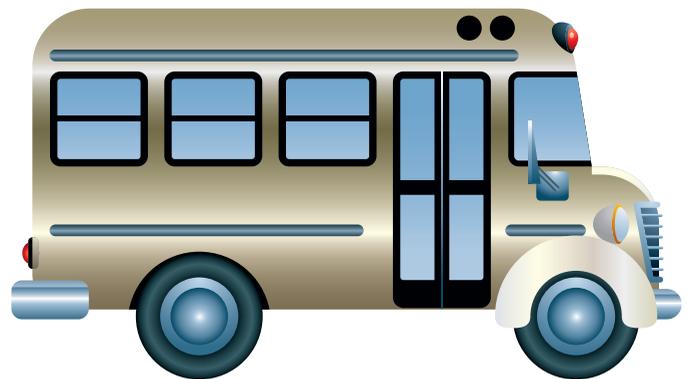
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