

VETERANS ACTIVITIES

SUPPORTING AND HONORING OUR VETERANS



Ontario District American Patriot Remembrance Ceremony: A Reverent and Heartwarming Ceremony Honoring Fallen Hero's by Sheila McCallum and Tim Welpe

Four year ago, members of the Ontario District began efforts to institute a special ceremony in which they could recognize those who have made the supreme sacrifice for our country. The six Lodges in the Ontario District are Syracuse Lodge #31, Oswego Lodge #271, Auburn Lodge #474, Fulton Lodge #830, Liverpool Lodge #2348 and Camillus Lodge #2367. These Lodges cover a three county area that includes Oswego, Cayuga and Onondaga counties. The District formed a small committee that was charged with the responsibility of gathering ideas and piecing together a District effort to recognize our fallen heroes. The committee consisted of Past State President Daniel Capella, Dave Longley, Fritz Allen, Kevin Merriman and John Rinaldo. Through a collaborative effort, the committee developed the foundation for the Ontario District "American Patriot Remembrance Ceremony". Past State President Daniela Capalla authored a ceremonial script that has been used at the ceremony. The script has a distinct role for the designated Exalted Ruler, Esquire, Chaplain, Leading Knight, Loyal Knight and Lecturing Knight. A unique aspect of the ceremony is that each of the designated officers is a Past Exalted Ruler and Veterans. The ceremony includes musical selections, an Oration, a quest speaker, the playing of Taps and new to this year's ceremony, a Flag Folding.

This past year, the Ontario District held its fourth "American Patriot Remembrance Ceremony". The ceremony was hosted by Oswego Lodge #271. This year, two fallen heroes and their families were honored; SSgt. Francis Phillips, US Army and Senior Airman Dennis Malone, US Air Force. Prior to the ceremony, the family members of those being honored were escorted to their seats by Ushers Robert McCallum, PDDGER of Liverpool Lodge #2348, Charles Diefenbacher, Past State Vice President of Fulton Lodge #830 and John Pelmeur, Past Exalted Ruler from Oswego Lodge #271. The program began with opening remarks from Thomas Milam, PER, Oswego #271, an invocation by Wayne Gleason, PDDGER, Oswego Lodge #271, the Pledge of Allegiance by Joseph DeSantis, and the National Anthem, which was song by the mother and son team of Denise and Kevin O'Connor. Kevin Merriam, Past State Trustee, concluded the opening with a presentation on the purpose of the ceremony.

The ceremony itself was brief yet reverent and truly conveyed the appreciation of Elks who are members of the six District Lodges. Ceremonial Officers for this year's ceremony were: Exalted Ruler-Fred Bullard, PER, Oswego #271, Leading Knight - Kevin Merriam, PST, Syracuse #31, Loyal Knight - Raymond Caprin, PER, Fulton #830, Lecturing Knight - Earl Caporin, PER, Camillus #2367, Esquire - Donald Fittipaldi, PDDGER, Camillus #2367 and Chaplain - Wayne Gleason, PDDGER, Oswego #271. Following the ceremonial tribute by the Officers, PDDGER Donald Fittipaldi read the poem "Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep". The poem was written by Mary Frye. Denise and Kevin O'Connor performed a musical selection, During the Oration, Esteemed Leading Knight Kevin Merriam called the names of those honored. A candle was lit by Esquire Donald Fittipaldi as the names were announced. A last candle was lit in honor of all that have ever served our country. Quest speaker, LTC Robert R. Pritchard, Retired US Army, then provided an inspiring speech that focused on the grieving and respect for those lost serving our country. New to the ceremony this year was a Flag Folding. Fritz Allen, PDDGER, Cpl. USMC and Harry Hewitt, E3Seaman, USN conducted the Flag Folding. At the completion of the Flag Folding, the flags were simultaneously presented to members of the Phillips and Malone families. Families and friends of the fallen American Patriots were asked to accept condolences and sincerest gratitude for the sacrifices that were made. They were presented an American Patriot Plaque. The plaques contained the "Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep poem" and an emblem indicating the individuals' military affiliation. The families were also promised that their loved ones will be remembered by the members of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks now and in years to come.

Following the presentations of the Flags and Plaques, SSgt. Phillips father Francis III briefly spoke about his son, sharing a story that relayed the reminder that we have today, not tomorrow, and thanked the Ontario District for honoring his son. Senior Airman Malone's father Richard also provided a thank you on behalf of his family. The ceremony concluded with Benediction by Chaplain Wayne Gleason and the playing of Taps that was performed by Emily and Corey King.

Since initiating the ceremony four years ago, the District has honored fourteen members of the Armed Forces from the counties located in the Ontario District that have made the supreme sacrifice in defense of all that our American Flag represents. The supreme sacrifice is the greatest gift an individual can give. Those honored have included:

Lt. Nathan Williams	Petty Officer 1 st Class Joshua Smith
Sgt. Christopher Simpson	Specialist Kyle Rookey
Cpl. Kyle Schneider	SSG Stephen Reynolds
LCpl. Keith Ochsner	Sgt. 1 st Class Daniel Metcalfe

PFC Patrick Devoe
Cpl. Robert Callahan
Sgt. Jerry Bell

Specialist Kenneth Haines
Senior Airman Dennis Malone
SSgt. Francis Phillips

The ceremony was attended by approximately 100 individuals. State Dignitaries attending included Past State President Daniel Capella and his wife Barbara, Past State President Tim Kelly, Past State President Richard Wunder and his wife Julie, Major Project Chair Irene Pashley and her husband Jan, State Veterans Chair Herb Flint and State ESE Editor Tim Welpe. Following the ceremony, those attending were invited to a complimentary luncheon that was prepared by the Lodge Auxiliary.

Members of the Phillips and Malone families are pictured with the Ontario District members that had a role in the "American Patriot Remembrance Ceremony" at the conclusion of the ceremonial presentation.



Beacon Elks Lodge #1493 and the Mid Hudson District Elks #6180 welcomed home the Castle Point Veterans Hospital Wheelchair Veterans from the Veterans National Wheelchair Games which took place in Dallas Texas. The Mid Hudson District provided lunch to the athletes, coaches, nurses and families. Pictured far left District Deputy and VAVS Carl Oken and at far right Beacon Lodge Trustee Atilano Rivera.



Cohoes-Waterford Elks #1317 Veterans and staff from the Veterans House in Albany and Cohoes-Waterford Elk Veterans who served breakfast pause for a group photo. Exalted Ruler John Lord (Standing 3rd from right in Row 1) and Regina Hogan, Lodge and North East District Veterans Service Chairperson (Sitting 2nd from left) are also featured.



During a recent District Deputy and State Vice President visitation, Massena mayor Tim Currier presented **Massena Lodge #1702** with a special Proclamation thanking the Lodge members for their commitment to the Massena community and to the Massena Veterans. Exalted Ruler James Root is pictured receiving the Proclamation from Mayor Currier.

Liverpool Lodge #2348 recently hosted over 20 veterans and hospital staff for its annual fishing derby and BBQ luncheon. A great time had by all as our men and women veterans fished off our pier on the Seneca River. After fishing they were treated to sausage with peppers and onions, kielbasa with sauerkraut, hamburgers, hotdogs, beans, macaroni salad, fruit salad and salt potatoes. Although everyone was stuffed most had room for cake. Upon leaving for their trip back to the Syracuse Veterans Administration Hospital and Outreach Center they were all given a Patriotic T-Shirt.