

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

WILLIAM R. SPENCER, M.D.
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR
EIGHTEENTH DISTRICT
15 PARK CIRCLE, SUITE 209
CENTERPORT, NY 11721



CONTACT: **JENNIFER MISH**
LEGISLATIVE AIDE
OFFICE: (631) 854-4500
FAX: (631) 854-4503
Jennifer.mish@suffolkcountyny.gov

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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From left to right: Morris Koffer, Jewish War Veteran; Carol Rocco, Coordinator of Veterans Affairs for the Town of Huntington; Bernard Easterby, 93 year old WWII Veteran; Huntington Town Councilwoman Susan A. Berland; Edith Koffer; Suffolk County Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D.; Beatrice Buonpane, wife of Honoree Mario Buonpane; Honoree Jim Mahoney; and New York State Assemblyman Andrew Raia.

3rd Annual Veterans Appreciation Breakfast Honors Two Locals for a Lifetime of Service to Our Country

East Northport, NY - 200 Suffolk County Veterans gathered with local officials on Monday, May 2nd for the 2016 Veterans Appreciation Breakfast. The annual event, coordinated by Suffolk County Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. and donated by the owners of The Larkfield in East Northport, is a small token of thanks to our veterans for all that they have done to keep our country free and safe. Honorees recognized for their service and tremendous advocacy and volunteerism were, Jim Mahoney and the late Mario Buonpane.

“Today we bring together heroes from the armed services and express our deep and sincere appreciation for all that our veterans have done and continue to do for each of us. You have put your lives on the line to protect the freedoms we share and our way of life, for that we are eternally grateful.” said Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. as he opened up the ceremony. “Today’s honorees, Jim Mahoney and Mario Buonpane, are the epitome of what it means to be a veteran. In their own right, each has worked endlessly to ensure that all veterans are remembered, honored, respected and receive services and benefits they rightfully earned by serving our country.”

Jim Mahoney is a life-long resident of Northport who served in the Army during the Korean War. Active in the Northport American Legion Post 694, Jim served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for 25 years and served a term as Commander. Jim chaired the Boys/Girls State Committee and was instrumental in growing the program to sponsor more young people than any other NY American Legion. He was the Memorial Day Parade Chairman for more than 20 years and led the efforts to recognize the sacrifices of our veterans at the Memorial Day and Pearl Harbor Day Observances. He chaired the Veterans Day race for more than 20 years with the proceeds from that event going directly to hospitalized veterans for special needs. Through his leadership, the Legion has supported the local food pantry, sports teams, scout troops and college scholarships.

Drafted into the Army in 1953, Mario Buonpane was stationed in Germany during the Korean War and worked with the Corporal missile, the first guided missile with nuclear-warhead capability. After the service, he utilized the G.I. Bill and studied electrical engineering while working three jobs. Ultimately, he secured employment with Grumman, spending 25 years there and working on projects like the Apollo Lunar Module. Mario was a member of the Northport American Legion Post 694 for more than 50 years, and served a term as commander in 1985. He also chaired the Post's Veterans Affairs Golf Tournament Committee and with that group, he worked to restore the Northport VA Golf Course from an overgrown wasteland to a course that is enjoyed by many today. In 1987, Mario joined the Town of Huntington's Veterans Advisory Board as a charter member. In 1993, he became the chairman and worked diligently as a liaison between the town and local veteran organizations to advocate for all the veterans of Huntington.

Attendees of the breakfast were asked to sign a Suffolk County Flag which will be displayed at the William H. Rogers Building in Hauppauge on Veterans Day.

Other distinguished guests included: Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone; Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory; Legislator Steve Stern, chairman of the Suffolk County Veterans Committee; Legislators Monica Martinez, Thomas Barraga, and Robert Trotta; Tom Ronayne, Suffolk County Veterans Service Agency Director; New York State Assemblyman Andrew Raia; Mark Stauffer, Chief Commanding Officer of the Eaton's Neck Coast Guard Station; Town of Huntington Councilwoman Susan A. Berland; and Carol Rocco, Coordinator for Town of Huntington Veterans Affairs.

Suffolk County is home to the largest veteran population in New York State and has one of the highest veteran populations in the country. Accordingly, the county has prioritized the need for support and opportunities for our service men and women. Contact the Suffolk County Veterans Agency at (631) 853-VETS or log on to <http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/veterans/home.aspx> for more information and assistance.



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