



Mid Westchester Lodge No. 535 two busloads of Veterans from Montrose Veterans Hospital. They were greeted by the Elks and served beef stew. Following lunch they were served cake with a picture of the American Flag on top. A DJ played music and some of the Veterans danced. The Veterans enjoyed the company of the Elks and vice versa. The Elks thanked the Vets for their service to our country. Each Veteran was presented with a gift bag containing stationary, envelopes and a book of stamps. As a special treat, four active duty marines attended the luncheon and interacted with the Veterans and Elk members.

In November, when our **Rensselaer Lodge #2073** Veterans Service Chairman, Jude Gosh, received a request for a contribution to local homeless Veterans, the budget line item had been depleted. Like so many others during these difficult economic times, the Lodge has a bare-bones budget. But that did not deter Exalted Ruler MaryJean Willis and member Diana Murphy. Through a variety of raffles, including a Lottery Scratch-Off Basket and several 50/50 drawings, over \$500 was raised and given to local homeless Veterans.



Potsdam Lodge #2074 annual Veteran's Day visit to the United Helpers Nursing Home in Canton was a great success. Thirteen Lodge members along with 25 Clarkson University ROTC Cadets and members of Cub Scout Troop #52 visited with Veterans and provided each veteran with a gift bag and decorative plaque. Veterans from the home (front row) are pictured with Clarkson ROTC Cadets, Lodge and Cub Scout members. Potsdam Lodge provided a complimentary lunch following the presentations.



Lowville Lodge #1605 Annual Veteran's Appreciation Luncheon was a great success with over 90 Lewis County veterans from World War 2, Korea, Vietnam and more

recent service attending. Following the luncheon, the World War 2 veterans assisted in raising new flags to replace weather worn ones at the front of the parking lot of Lowville Lodge. These flags are the American Flag, the POW/MIA Flag, the New York State Flag and the Lowville Elks 1605 Flag.



The **North Central and the Ontario Districts** continued their long tradition of supporting our troops and families in their community. These Districts presented a check for \$3723 to the USO of Fort Drum to support center operations and USO programs that help Fort Drum service members and their families. Grand Exalted Ruler David Carr, State President Phil Holowacz and District members from the North Central and Ontario Districts gathered at a dinner hosted by Watertown Lodge #496 to raise the funds. Following the dinner the check was presented to USO Fort Drum Center Director Karen Clark. The following day, a group of about 15 Elks from the North Central and Ontario District, along with Grand Exalted David Carr and State President Phil Holowacz toured the military base. These districts plan to continue to support USO Fort Drum annually.



Ogdensburg Lodge #772 participated in State Senator Patty Ritchie's "Stars for Troops" program. Past Exalted Ruler Gerry Reed, at left, is shown with State Senator Patty Ritchie and WWII veteran Richard Dillenbeck. Reed and Dillenbeck donated flags in support of the "Stars for Troops" program. Senator Ritchie collected over 20,000 "Stars for Troops" from Central and Northern New Yorkers who responded to her appeal to contribute worn and tired American flags as patriotic reminders of home for soldiers overseas.

Auburn Lodge #474- PER, Valorie Kolis reported that In December of 2006, I was asked to make a stained glass service star for the two women who ran the consignment shop there in the USO building, only with a gold star instead of a blue. They explained to me what that meant and said it was for a close friend of theirs who recently lost her husband in Iraq. So...after that, anytime I heard of a soldier who died in combat either in Iraq or Afghanistan, I would contact the consignment shop for how many stained glass gold service stars I needed to

make. Eventually was hooked up with the protocol office and I continue to work directly with them supplying gold service stars when needed at no charge to the families or the base. I understand that the CG presents them directly to the families prior to the monthly memorial service for the fallen soldiers.



Pictured above; left to right: Tim Kelly, PSP NYSEA Brig. General Miller, (Past) Rear Area Commander of 10th Mountain Division, Valerie Kolis, Per Auburn Lodge 474, Mrs. Milley, wife of Commanding General, Major General Milley, 10th Mountain Div Com. GER Dave Carr, Phil Holowacz, NYSEA President.

Potsdam Lodge #2074 is conducting a Candy Bar Drive through the month of February. The candy bars collected will be donated to the Fort Drum USO for distribution to soldier as they deplane at Fort Drum from overseas deployments. It is anticipated that 3500 soldiers will be returning to Fort Drum this spring. Donations of funds or candy bars can be delivered to the Potsdam Elks Lodge located at 10 Elm Street in Potsdam or sent to the Lodge at PO Box 415, Potsdam NY 13676-0415. Questions may be directed to Mary at 315-566-9058. We support our troops.

Clifton Park Lodge #2466 received an American Flag signed by soldiers of the Blue Platoon, part of the Marine 1st LAR, as a "Thank You" to the Lodge for the gifts and supplies the Lodge mailed to them in December while serving



our Country in Afghanistan. There were over 50 boxes mailed filled with essentials and goodies. This very Flag was flown over their Post on Christmas Day. Also, this particular Platoon has a special meaning to our Lodge as Justin Drescher, the son of our Exalted Ruler, Daniel Drescher and his wife, Past Auxiliary President, Susan, is currently serving in the Blue Platoon. The Lodge also prepared special gift bags for Veterans at the Stratton VA Medical Center in Albany and the Ellis Rehabilitation Center in Schenectady to thank them for their service.

Utica Lodge #33 visited the Syracuse VA Hospital.. The lodge presented the hospital with 2 Toshiba lap top computers along with game software. With a one piece band that provided entertainment and lodge held a pizza, soda and apple party for around 120 veterans. Also presented to the hospital to the veterans where hand made Thank-You for your service cards from students from the local grade school. Also a Toshiba computer and game software was presented to Rome VA Clinic Adult Care Program.