



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Antoine M. Thompson

Thompson Hosts 2009 Memorial Day Ceremony & Reception "Paying tribute to those that have risked their lives to protect our country"

ANTOINE M THOMPSON May 22, 2009

Buffalo, NY- Today, May 22, 2009, NYS Senator Antoine M. Thompson (D-Parts of Erie & Niagara Counties), hosted his 3rd Annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Recognition Reception. The ceremony took place at 65 Court Street in Buffalo from 12:00 noon to 1:30 pm.

This year's ceremony honored several military veterans; Joseph Pirrone, Geraldine Ford, Honorable Judge Robert Russell, George Torres and Patrick Welch, Ph.D. They were joined by their family and friends.

Joseph Pirrone was in the Army Air Corps. in World War II, he was drafted in August 1942 and discharged on December 9, 1945. During his time with the service, he was stationed in many places around the world including Scotland, England, France and Germany. Mr. Pirrone received many awards such as: Good Conduct Medal, Presidential Unit Emblem, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII, Marksman Badge with Carbine and Rifle Bars and three Bronze Service Stars. In 1967, he became an Erie County Deputy Sheriff and worked there for twenty four years until his retirement.

Geraldine Ford served as a Sergeant in the United States Army from 1995-1998 where she was stationed in Korea and received the Expert Sharpshooters & Marksmanship Award. Ms. Ford continues to give back to her community as the Coordinator of the Empire Zone for the City of Buffalo. She is responsible for assisting businesses in their relocation to Empire Zone's which offer many tax incentives for employers that can be passed on to both the community and employees.

Judge Robert Russell presides over the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court which began in January 2008. It was the first court in the nation that was specialized and adapted to meet the specific needs of veterans. Judge Russell also presides over Buffalo's Drug Treatment Court and Mental Health Treatment Court.

George Torres was a Private 1st Class in the United States Army from 1999-2006 where he was a heavy equipment operator engineer. He continues to give back to his community where he is a minority business owner of Restoration Cuts on Breckenridge where he employs four people.

Patrick Welch, Ph.D. is a retired United States Marine Corps. Sergeant. He was retired due to wounds received in action during the Vietnam War. Dr. Welch has received many awards and accolades for his years of service. His personal military awards include a Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Good Conduct Award, Vietnam Service and New York State Conspicuous Service Cross, Legion of Honor Award, Distinguished Service Award and Vietnam Campaign and National Defense awards. Patrick Welch is also an active participant of many veterans organizations. He currently provides counseling to the 100,000 veterans residing in Erie County through Veterans Services.

"The meaning of Memorial Day is particularly pressing today when the United States is engaged in not one but two wars, said Senator Thompson. "On this and every Memorial Day,

we must solemnly and properly honor those heroes who have fought and died in defense of America's freedom."

The ceremony included presentation and retiring of the colors which was performed by McKinley High School Jr. ROTC. The National Anthem and musical selection was sung by the Buffalo Academy for Visual & Performing Arts Vocal Jazz Ensemble.

Special thanks to the Office of General Services, Buffalo Academy for Visual & Performing Arts Vocal Jazz Ensemble, McKinley High School Jr. ROTC, Tops Markets on Niagara Street and Jefferson Avenue and Young's Bakery for their help and participation in our ceremony and reception.