



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Presents NY's Highest Military Honor to Local Serviceman Wounded in Battle

CATHARINE YOUNG August 13, 2009

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ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean) today awarded New York State's highest military honor - the Conspicuous Service Cross - to Brandon Rethmel of Olean during a special ceremony at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Rethmel, 22, is a Specialist with U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division and was severely wounded only 14 days after being stationed in Afghanistan.

"It is my privilege to make this special trip to honor Brandon and to say – on behalf of our state – thank you," said Sen. Young. "Brandon is a true hero and we must always remember the sacrifices that the men and women of the armed services make on our behalf. This medal is one small way that we as a state can show our appreciation and tell him that his efforts will never be forgotten"

Specialist Rethmel was deployed to Afghanistan on June 8th - it was his first deployment overseas. On June 21st, his base was attacked with a barrage of rockets by enemy forces. He was critically injured during the skirmish and lost a leg below his knee cap. One arm was also severely mangled and he suffered additional wounds to his abdomen.

“The amazing thing about Brandon is the spirit he not only exemplified in the desert, overseas fighting in Afghanistan, but also the spirit he has demonstrated since this horrible situation occurred to him,” said Sen. Young. “It is my honor and privilege to pay tribute to Brandon for his sacrifices and courageous actions– on behalf of our state – thank you.”

Specialist Rethmel joined the Army in September of 2006 and started his initial training at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson in Colorado and volunteered for his unit’s honor guard detail. While stationed in Afghanistan, he served as a Motor Transport Driver.

During his military career he has received two Army Achievement Medals, a Sharpshooter Badge and an assortment of other awards. He was also awarded the Purple Heart for his wounds received during the Afghanistan battle.

Specialist Rethmel attended Olean High School where he met his wife, Sylvia. The couple has a two year old daughter Mariah. Brandon’s parents and family members also attended the Washington Medal award ceremony.

Senator Young said Specialist Rethmel is expected to be in therapy at Walter Reed for the better part of a year and will be fitted with a prosthetic leg.

The Conspicuous Service Cross is awarded only to New York State residents whose service was honorable and who have received other military decorations or citations, were a prisoner of war, served at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, directly participated in the D-Day invasion of Normandy or have been declared killed or missing in action by the Department of Defense.

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