



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senator Young to Host Fundraiser for Wounded Soldier

CATHARINE YOUNG August 20, 2009

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**ALBANY** – At a press conference held today at War Vets park in Olean, Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean) and Frank Higgins, event chairman, announced plans for a special fundraiser for U.S. Army Specialist Brandon Rethmel who was critically injured when his base in Afghanistan was attacked two months ago.

Specialist Rethmel, who is from Olean, was deployed to Afghanistan on June 8<sup>th</sup> and assigned to the Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Two weeks later, his base and unit were 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 severely mangled and he suffered extensive wounds to his abdomen.

"For anyone to go through what Brandon has had to endure, there is no real way to say thank you enough," said Sen. Young. "He has sacrificed so much for his Country and this fundraiser will provide an opportunity for the community to give something back."

Although Mr. Higgins has never met Brandon, the soldier's story compelled him to action. "When Senator Young contacted me to help, I didn't hesitate," said Higgins. "For someone who has given so much for us, it is our way of saying thank you and we are hoping other people will join us."

The benefit will be held at War Vets Park on September 4<sup>th</sup> from 4-8 pm. In addition to chicken BBQ, beverages, and live music, Senator Young said a Chinese auction will held.

"The medical bills are taken care of, but Brandon's life has been dramatically altered and any little support we can get for him and his family will go a long way," said Sen. Young.

"I think this is so wonderful and we are grateful that the Senator and everyone in the community has been so willing to help us out," said Sylvia Rethmel, Brandon's wife. "I thank everyone for all their support and all that they are doing."

Specialist Rethmel and his wife Sylvia, who first met while attending Olean High School together, were married in 2006. The couple has a baby girl, Mariah, who turns two on August 28<sup>th</sup>.

"She is a little confused but she knows daddy has boo boos and kisses them for him," said Sylvia.

Last week, Senator Young traveled to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. to present Brandon with the Conspicuous Service Cross - New York State's highest military honor. Specialist Rethmel is expected to be in therapy at Walter Reed for the better part of a year.

"He has already been fitted with a prosthetic leg and all reports are that he is moving around beautifully," said Sen. Young. "His mood continues to be so positive and his wife tells me that he is very determined to get back to active duty as soon as possible."

Specialist Rethmel joined the Army in September of 2006 and started his initial training at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He was assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 and was on guard duty when the incident occurred.

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.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at Senator Young's office at 700 W. State Street in Olean. Cash donations and items donated for the Chinese auction also can be dropped off at the Senator's office. All proceeds from the fundraiser will go to the Brandon Rethmel Fund. Additional information can be found by contacting Senator Young's office at: 716-372-4901.

Checks may be made payable to the Brandon Rethmel Fund, c/o Community Bank, 201 N. Union St., Olean, NY 14760.

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