



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Honors Local Hero Andrew Witruke

CATHARINE YOUNG December 28, 2010

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OLEAN - When two Marines involved in a training mission off the coast of South Carolina were forced to eject from their aircraft after an engine failure, it was Olean native and Petty Officer 3rd Class (AMT-3) Andrew Witruke and his Coast Guard crew who were on scene to make the rescue.

Senator Catharine Young (R,I, C – Olean) presented Petty Officer Witruke with a special Senate Resolution today that recognized AMT-3 Witruke for his bravery and role in the rescue mission that saved the two pilots.

"I have tremendous respect for our service men and women and their ability to perform heroically in the most trying of times. Petty Officer Witruke and his crew were extremely resilient and professional in their efforts to rescue those two Marines and get them to medical attention as quickly as possible. They demonstrated extraordinary courage and devotion to their duty and I am honored to give AMT-3 Witruke this deserved recognition," said Senator Catharine Young.

On March 10, 2010, two United States Marine Corps aviators, involved in a training mission, were forced to eject from their F/A-18D Hornet aircraft after encountering engine trouble off the Atlantic coast. The Marines were rescued by the four-member Coast Guard rescue crew, on which Andrew Witruke served.

Senator Young said both Marines safely arrived home due to the swiftness and effectiveness of the Coast Guard's response to the incident.

"Once we got word of the plane crashing, my crew and I were immediately dispatched from our base in Charleston. The Marines in trouble were about 35 miles off the coast and appeared to be fine once my crew and I arrived at the crash zone. Luckily, the weather was cooperating that day and we managed to get everyone back to base safe and sound within two hours time," said AMT-3 Witruke.

Petty Officer Witruke enlisted in the Coast Guard in January of 2005, shortly after graduating from Olean High School in 2004. He has risen through the Coast Guard's enlisted ranks, and was a Flight Mechanic on the crew of a HH-65 "Dolphin" rescue helicopter when the rescue occurred in March.

"The feeling of pulling somebody out of the water and giving them their life back is the reason we all do the work we do. This mission was successful because our crew all worked together and relied on our training. Because of that, these two Marines are alive today and that truly is a great feeling," said Petty Officer Third Class Witruke.

Joining Senator Young at today's ceremony were Andrew's wife Andrea, his four-month-old son Broc and his parents Lee and Sherry Witruke.

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