



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Secures \$185,000 for Ptsd Programs in Jefferson County

PATTY RITCHIE August 8, 2013

| ISSUE: **MILITARY AFFAIRS, MILITARY, TROOPS, VETERANS**

Funding Will Benefit PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program

for Veterans, River Community Wellness Program

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced she has secured \$185,000 in special funding to help veterans in Jefferson County who are struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other combat-related illnesses.

The funding will be split evenly between two local support programs offering peer-to-peer support activities; the PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program for Veterans—which was established in part through a grant secured by Senator Ritchie last year—and the recently founded River Community Wellness Program.

“The brave men and women who serve our country are such a huge part of our community here in the North Country, and that’s why it’s so critical that we have resources available to them to help them cope with the transition when they return home from serving overseas,” said Senator Ritchie.

“Programs like PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program for Veterans and the River Community Wellness Program give our troops the opportunity to interact with fellow soldiers, who may be experiencing the same emotions and challenges related to serving ones country. I am pleased to be able to offer this funding, which will go a long way towards making sure these solders—who have sacrificed so much—get the care they need.”

Last year, Senator Ritchie was instrumental in establishing the PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program for Veterans in four test counties (Suffolk, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Jefferson). The program is named for an Army soldier from New York who enlisted following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and who took his own life after returning home from Iraq.

Dwyer, an Army medic with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, was famously shown in an iconic Military Times photo carrying a 4-year-old Iraqi boy to safety during a raging battle in the early months of the war. While in Iraq, his unit was engaged in nearly daily gun battles over three weeks.

The Jefferson County branch of the program, which is located on State Street, provides "peer-to-peer" counseling between veterans who personally understand the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Established earlier this year, River Hospital's "River Community Wellness Program," located in Alexandria Bay, provides intensive outpatient mental health services to troops, including group therapy and peer to peer group counseling.

Both organizations are praising Senator Ritchie's efforts to help troops.

"We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Senator Ritchie, and are very impressed by her efforts to assist River Hospital and the River Community Wellness Program," said River Hospital CEO Ben Moore.

"This award means a lot to us. It allows us to make sure we can continue to provide the vital services of River Hospital to the community and the soldiers of Fort Drum. Again, we are very appreciative of her support for River Hospital and are thankful for what she has done for our hospital and our community."

"We are very grateful for Senator Ritchie helping to provide the extra resources to continue on with helping the veterans in the outreach center," said Charles Coulter, Veteran Outreach Coordinator for the PFC Joseph Dwyer Peer Support Program for Veterans.

"This center has been an invaluable tool for the veterans in the community and this funding will allow us to continue to keep helping them."

According to experts, PTSD is a mental health problem that can occur after someone goes through a traumatic event like war, assault, or disaster. Recent studies have shown that between 6 percent and 12.5 percent of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from PTSD, and 62 percent have received some level of mental health care after coming home