Ray Melens

JOSEPH E. ROBACH   May 20, 2013

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Award: Honoring Our Veterans

Year: 2013

Ray Melens, a native of Rochester, graduated from Greece Arcadia High School in 1968. Following in his father's and stepfather's footsteps, who both served in the United States Armed Forces, Ray enlisted in the Marine Corps and was sent to South Vietnam. Seriously injured during his tour of duty, Ray received an honorable discharge. For his service, Ray earned a National Defense Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Unit citations and the New York State Medal for Merit.

After his service in the Marine Corps, Ray began dedicating his life to helping and honoring fellow veterans. Ray joined the Vietnam Veterans of America and was soon appointed as their Community Services Chairperson, then elected to the Rochester Chapter's Board of Directors, where he served in several capacities. After being appointed the Marching Unit Commander, Ray saw the need to form an Honor Guard for funerals and various ceremonies throughout the community. Ray's Honor Guard became nationally recognized for their efforts and repatriation services.

Since retiring in 2005, he has been actively helping other veterans, especially those returning home now from the War on Terror, to readjust to civilian life. Ray also spends much of his time giving tours of the Greater Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial for local students and other visiting groups, as well as assisting with the maintenance and upkeep of the memorial. Further, he is well known as a speaker in area schools about the Vietnam War and what it means to be a veteran. Ray is married to his wife Gail, has two daughters and is the proud grandfather of eight. Ray has dedicated his life to serving our nation and veterans, and is most deserving of his selection into the Senate's Veterans Hall of Fame from the 56th District.