



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

John D. Smith

MICHAEL GIANARIS May 16, 2014



John D. Smith

**Award:** Honoring Our Veterans

**Year:** 2014

Mr. John D. Smith, Sr. is 86 years young and a long-time engaged and committed resident leader in the Queensbridge, Long Island City area. He is a veteran and a great-great-grand father who continues to serve as a role model for the generations that have followed him. He has been living in the New York City Housing Authority's Queensbridge development for over 60 years.

John enlisted in the United States Army during World War II, and his time in the service took him to England, France and Germany. At this point in our nation's history, black and white soldiers were separated during basic training. Black soldiers slept in tents on the hillside, while white soldiers slept in the barracks; the companies and battalions were separated by race as well. John encountered both friendship and discrimination during his time in the military, but he never forgot that he was serving his country.

When John returned from the war, he married his longtime sweetheart, Frances. As their family grew, they moved to Queensbridge Houses, where they quickly became pillars of the neighborhood. John served his community, just as he had served his country, as a member of the Riis Settlement Senior Center Board, driving the senior van to help his fellow residents get around the neighborhood. Both John and Frances have been involved in countless committees, efforts and activities to help keep Queensbridge the vibrant, dynamic neighborhood that it remains today.

To this date, on Veteran's Day each year, John organizes activities at the Senior Center to give his neighbors an opportunity to recognize and salute those who have served, are serving or have made the greatest sacrifice for our country.

With nine grandchildren, dozens of great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren John and Frances continue to lead the way for community residents of all ages.