



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Veterans' homelessness eradicated in Westchester

TERRENCE MURPHY October 2, 2015

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**



State Senator Terrence Murphy today joined Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino to announce that the population of homeless veterans in the county was at “functional zero” meaning there are no known homeless veterans living on the streets in Westchester. Since the Westchester Patriot Housing Initiative was launched in August of 2013 with the goal of ending homelessness among veterans by the end of 2015, permanent housing has been secured for 329 previously homeless veterans. Permanent housing is also being worked on for the eight veterans who are currently living in temporary shelters.

"Westchester County residents should take great pride in today's announcement," Senator Murphy said. "We are the land of the free because of the brave men and women who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice on a daily basis. As a community, county and state we have a responsibility to ensure our veterans receive the best care and services. I applaud County Executive Astorino and his entire team on today's announcement and look forward to our continued work together on this important issue."

"I can't think of any achievement that I am more proud of than this one," said Astorino. "Our veterans have always been there for us, and we need to be there for them if the need ever arises and we are doing just that."

Astorino credited the extraordinary cooperation between the county, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, local governments, non-profit housing and service providers, and private sector partners including local landlords who agree to give veterans priority in the renting of available units.

"To have housed 329 homeless vets is a proud moment for our county. We are at functional zero in veteran homelessness and we will remain vigilant to keep it that way," said Ron Tocci, Director of Veterans Services.

Astorino added that anyone aware of a veteran recently homeless and living on the street should contact the 24-hour VA hotline at 1-877-4AIDVET (1-877-424-3838).

Karl Bertrand, Co-Chair of the Westchester County Continuum of Care Partnership for the Homeless and the Patriot Housing Initiative said Westchester's effort has been lauded by leaders from HUD and the VA for its aggressive, comprehensive and innovative efforts.

"The Rapid Results Institute and the 100,000 Homes Campaign said they often called Westchester County a 'rock star' because of the phenomenal results we achieved during our

first two 100-Day Challenges. In 2014 they had Westchester present Patriot Housing as a national model in a technical assistance webinar for the 235 communities participating in the 100,000 Homes Campaign,” said Bertrand. “We’re proud of that accolade but more proud of what it means for our homeless vets – permanent housing and jobs.”

Air Force Veteran Douglas Ferguson attended the press conference and is a success story of the program. Having found a home through Patriot Housing Mr. Ferguson was able to enroll in the culinary arts program at Westchester Community College. He now works for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on the Montrose Campus preparing excellent meals for fellow veterans and staff alike.