



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## Paul "Rizzo" Russo

FRED AKSHAR May 20, 2016

| ISSUE: **VETERANS HALL OF FAME**



Sgt. Paul Russo truly exemplifies a lifetime of service to fellow veterans in his community long after his active service has ended.

Mr. Russo first served in the United States Air Force from 1982 to 1986 as an Aircraft Armament Specialist at Bitburg AFB in Germany, first working on F-15 Eagles and loading missiles and other munitions while stationed at Bitburg AFB in Germany. Russo was chosen to represent his base in a NATO LOADEO Competition in Bentwaters AFB England in 1985. Russo finished his first enlistment at Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, South Carolina

working weapons systems and maintenance on F-16 Fighting Falcons until 1986.

In 1986 Russo received his Bachelor Degree in Human Resource Management from St. Leo University.

Russo later joined the Army National Guard as a Sergeant with two, 3-year enlistments as a heavy equipment operator, with deployments ranging from delivering ice storm relief in Malone, New York, to building schools and roads in Guatemala and Honduras.

As a civilian, Mr. Russo worked for 25 years at the New York State Department of Labor as a local veteran employment representative, with the mission of finding employment for veterans. In 2006, he received the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year Award through the New York State American Legion for his dedication to bettering the lives of the brave men who fought for our country.

Mr. Russo has been an active part of the Lt. Warren Eaton Post 189 in Norwich for the past 25 years serving as past 3rd, 2nd and 1st Vice Commander, Adjutant, and Post Commander 2000 to 2002. Russo served as Chenango County American Legion Commander from 2013-2014, President of the American Legion Memorial Corporation Board for ten years and as a board member of the Hospice & Palliative Care of Chenango County representing the Hospice We Honor Veterans Program in Chenango County for the past four years.

He is also a founding member of the Norwich American Legion Riders, serving as President for the past 12 years, growing the chapter from five Riders to more than 50 active Riders. Russo was ALR Vice Director NYS Riders for Districts 5&6, 2011-2012.

While in the RIDERS Russo earned the nickname "Rizzo," and under Russo's leadership, the Norwich Legion Riders have raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Landstuhl Hospital Care Project, a non-profit organization that provides comfort and relief items for military

members who become sick, injured or wounded during their service in the Middle East. Because of his commitment and enthusiasm, Mr. Russo was awarded the National American Legion Rider of Honor in 2015.

“Veterans come off the battlefield and they don’t have anything,” said Mr. Russo. “We do this because they need the help, and we need to make a difference.”

The Riders have raised an average of \$5,000/year for the past 10 years for the Landstuhl Project. Because of his work, Russo was awarded the National American Legion Rider of Honor in 2015.

“I helped start the Riders because it was something new,” said Rizzo. “I have a passion for riding motorcycles and I wanted to be in an association that had a vision mission and purpose.”