



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## Sen. Fred Akshar Announces Funding for Local Veterans Peer-to-Peer Program

FRED AKSHAR August 17, 2016

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Senator Fred Akshar joined County Executive Debra Preston and local veterans advocates at the Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena to announce that Broome will be the 16th county in New York to have its own Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veterans Support Program.

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*“One of the first meetings I took last year was a round-table with a group of local veterans and it became clear that we need more support services,” said Senator Fred Akshar. “The Dwyer Program is very versatile, each region can use a bottom-up approach to identify the needs of veterans in their area and structure their program accordingly.”*

After local veterans identified the need for more peer-to-peer support for returning servicemen and women, Senator Akshar worked to secure \$120,000 in this year's State Budget to expand the Dwyer peer outreach support program to the Southern Tier.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, one in three veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from some degree of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). More shockingly, the department reports that 19 veterans commit suicide every day across the United States.

“Having several of my family members proudly serve our Country, I know firsthand how difficult it can be for them when they return home,” says Broome County Executive Debbie Preston. “This new peer-to-peer program will be a great benefit because the veterans will be able to confide in other veterans, who understand what they went through. I believe this program will help in the healing process for many of our returning heroes.”

The Dwyer program will provide a safe space for peer-to-peer counseling, outreach and educational opportunities, while aiming to help address the gap between clinical services and family support.

“As strong advocates for local Veterans, we are excited to see this new program being brought to Broome County. There are some resources for veterans currently in the area

already, such as the Veterans Center but we are happy to see an evolving approach to Veterans services” said local advocate, Barbara Beebe.

Through the program, local veterans will conduct one-on-one and group setting support meetings, offer referral services, help integrate veterans into the community and provide discussion forums.

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*“Veterans put their lives on the line and sacrifice so much it’s crucial to give them the support and tools they need at home,” said Senator Akshar.*

Broome County is working with existing veterans support programs to identify the specific needs of our local veterans and are working toward an end-of-year start date.