



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## SENATOR KLEIN, WITH OTHER LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS, HOST 22ND ANNUAL “VALENTINE’S FOR VETERANS”

JEFFREY D. KLEIN February 22, 2017

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### *KLEIN HANDS OUT HUNDREDS OF VALENTINE’S DAY CARDS AND GIFTS BAGS TO BRONX VETERANS*

**BRONX, NY** - State Senator **Jeff Klein**, in partnership with Assemblyman **Mark Gjonaj**, Assemblyman **Michael Benedetto**, and Councilman **Andrew Cohen**, hosted the 22nd annual “Valentine’s for Veterans” celebration at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center on Friday.

The elected officials, joined by special guest **Miss USA Deshauna Barber**, who's currently an Army Reservist in the U.S. military, and students from local schools handed out hundreds of handmade Valentine's Day cards and gift bags. During the event Senator Klein even presented Miss USA with a special proclamation, thanking her for her military service.

"For 22 years now I've hosted the wonderful 'Valentine's for Vets' event, which honors our brave local veterans who've made many sacrifices to defend our freedom. This annual event is an opportunity to give back to and thank these true American heroes. I'm thankful to my fellow local elected officials, SUNY Maritime Color Guard, Miss USA Deshauna Barber and of course, our local school children whose spectacular performances and handmade gifts truly make this is an unforgettable day for our veterans," **said Senator Jeff Klein.**

"I think it's so important to be able to recognize our veterans. The reality is that freedom is not free, and it's so important to know that we have to take care of people that take care of us. Thank you to our veterans here," **said Miss USA Deshauna Barber.**

"A gesture as small as a Valentine's Day card hand delivered can mean the world to the men and women who served this country. It is always an honor to continue this tradition of actively recognizing our American veterans and showing our gratitude towards their sacrifice and service," **said Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj.**

"It was wonderful to see Miss USA and local students come to honor our Veterans. Valentines for Vets is a great event and Senator Klein should be congratulated," **said Assemblyman Michael Benedetto.**

"It's a privilege to join with other elected officials and community members for this special Valentine's Day tribute to our veterans at the V.A. Medical Center. I am deeply appreciative of the members of our military who protect our freedom through their service. Those who come to our V.A. hospitals for treatment deserve our support today, and every day. Thanks

are also due to Senator Jeff Klein for organizing this event, as well as the staff of the hospital, Miss U.S.A. Deshauna Barber, the SUNY Maritime Color Guard, and the many school children who dedicated their time and talents to make this a very festive occasion,” **said Councilman Andrew Cohen**

The special ceremony opened with a moving rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance by the SUNY Maritime Color Guard. Stirring performances by choir students from P.S. 105 and P.S. 83, as well as a step dance routine by children from the Icahn Charter School closed out the program. During the event Senator Klein even presented Miss USA Deshauna Barber with a special proclamation.

“It’s a privilege that we get to do this for the veterans so that the students can see those folks who’ve made sacrifices. The students understand and they get excited to come here. Our goal is bring the veterans joy with the songs that we sing,” **said Wayne Jefferson, music teacher at P.S. 105**

Following the ceremony, Senator Klein, other local elected officials, Miss USA Deshauna Barber and the students distributed the handmade cards and gift bags to the veterans. The heartfelt handouts were prepared by students from 11 schools across The Bronx and Westchester. Items inside the gift bags included playing cards, pens, pencils, puzzle books, handkerchiefs, and combs.

The annual “Valentine’s for Veterans” event is held during the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, a weeklong celebration commemorating the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Services and are now cared for by the Department of Veterans Affairs in hospitals, outpatient clinics, and nursing homes across the U.S. The National Salute aims to spread awareness and appreciation for veterans by encouraging citizens to visit hospitalized veterans in their communities.