



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Continues to Deliver for Veteran Support Programs

BRIAN DWYER June 18, 2018

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State Senator Patty Ritchie has once again secured \$185,000 in the state budget for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support program that helps veterans and active duty service members struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other combat-related needs.

“We have many courageous veterans and active-duty troops in our region who were, and are, selfless and gave their all to the service of our country,” Senator Ritchie, who represents the region Fort Drum calls home, said. “Now, it’s our turn to help those who are struggling to get

the help they need and enjoy their lives and the freedom they helped provide.”

The funding—which Senator Ritchie has delivered for six straight years—is designated for two local programs, River Hospital’s Community Wellness Program in Alexandria Bay and the VETS Peer-to-Peer Outreach Center in Watertown.

From September of 2017 to December of 2017, the Watertown Vets Peer-to-Peer Outreach center, which oversees the local PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program, was contacted for assistance by more than 2,000 times by area veterans, active-duty military members and family members. There is also a women’s peer group currently being organized. It is set to begin in January with weekly meetings.

“On behalf of the VETS Peer-to-Peer Outreach Center, we thank Senator Ritchie for her constant support of the veterans suffering from combat-related illnesses that we help in our region,” said VETS Peer-to-Peer Outreach Center Veteran Peer Advocate Tim Crytser. “With the funding she has obtained for us, our program has been able to help many veterans avoid jail and emergency rooms, and eventually stand back up again and thrive.”

The River Community Wellness Program at River Hospital offers troops outpatient mental health services, including counseling and group therapy.

“The River Hospital Board and Administration are very grateful for the continued support from Senator Patty Ritchie for our Post Traumatic Stress program for active duty Soldiers and Veterans,” River Hospital CEO Ben Moore said. These funds have sustained and enhanced our program offerings to our active duty Soldiers and our Veterans. We are humbled and honored by the strong commitment of Senator Ritchie in our efforts to help those who have given so much to all of us.”

In addition to the local funding, Senator Ritchie was also able to help to increase the overall statewide funding for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support program by \$645,000. The program is provided through a network of 23 counties across New York State and funding for it has now surpassed \$3.7 million.

PFC Joseph P. Dwyer was an Army medic from New York who enlisted following the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. While in, Iraq his unit was engaged in gun battles almost every day for three weeks. Upon his return, he struggled with his mental health and eventually took his own life.