



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

## Combat Wounded Veteran Receives Free Truck Retro-Fit to Accommodate the Loss of Both Legs

WILLIAM LARKIN June 22, 2018



Senator Bill Larkin (R-C-I, 39<sup>th</sup> District) this morning co-hosted a special event featuring the Military Order of the Purple Heart's (MOPH) annual Purple Heart Truck Run.

Senator Larkin joined chapter 1782 of The Military Order of the Purple Heart for a ceremony to welcome the 2018 Purple Heart Truck Run to The National Purple Heart Hall Of Honor as it continues its 7,800 mile odyssey across America. U.S. Army Sergeant (Ret.) Justin Burdette, a double amputee combat veteran who will receive the 2018 truck, was on hand for the

ceremony.

After a demonstration of the truck and introduction of the drivers, participants were invited to sign the truck. Near the conclusion of the ceremony MOPH National Commander Neil Van Ess presented Senator Larkin with “The George Washington Medallion of Merit” on the occasion of his retirement from the New York State Senate and his unwavering service to our veterans, specifically the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

“It was a pleasure to host the Purple Heart Truck Run here at the Hall of Honor,” said Senator Bill Larkin. “Receiving the George Washington Medallion of Merit was a special moment for me considering how much work we have done together to further the mission of the Hall of Honor, honoring America’s Purple Heart recipients and Gold Star families. To receive an award bearing the name of George Washington is an honor and will be something I plan to pass down to my children, grand-children and great-grandchildren.”

Senator Larkin led two national campaigns to ensure that our nation does not forget the service men and women who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal for being killed or wounded in combat. Those campaigns include the effort to establish The Purple Heart Forever Stamp and the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor.

There are an estimated 1.8 million Purple Heart recipients that were either killed in action or were wounded in combat or by an act of international terrorism. Those combat wounded service members who have transitioned back into civilian life have made great sacrifices to ensure our freedoms, but they often go unrecognized. The road to recovery and reintegration into their communities can be a long and difficult struggle for both the wounded warriors and their families.

The focus of the 2018 “Purple Heart Truck Run” will be “Mobility is Freedom.” Sponsored jointly by the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) and Wounded Warriors Family Support (WWFS), the Purple Heart Run features a mobility-equipped, 2011 Ford F-150 truck, adapted to accommodate combat-wounded veterans who are paralyzed or have lost legs and/or arms. Our belief is that, given the right vehicle for mobility, a combat-wounded veteran will have the freedom to live a productive and quality life with his or her family.

Driven exclusively by amputee Veterans, the Purple Heart Run will make its way from coast-to-coast on a 7,800 mile odyssey, rallying communities across America to thank our Nation’s military veterans and support this great mission. The Purple Heart Run will begin in Springfield, VA on June 17, 2018, traverse the nation to California and end in Spokane, Washington on 30 June 2018 at the MOPH National Convention.

The truck will be given to U.S. Army Sergeant (Ret.) Justin Burdette, a Purple Heart recipient, who was chosen from a nation-wide search of eligible and deserving nominees.

On June 9, 2013, Patriot Burdette was three months into his third deployment to Afghanistan when his platoon received incoming mortar and rocket fire while on a dismounted patrol in Wardak province. Justin was hit with a 107 mm rocket, and the blast caused him to lose both legs below the knees. For his injuries, he was awarded the Purple Heart medal.

Senator Larkin will be joined by MOPH National Commander Neil Van Ess, Richard Drago – Commander of local MOPH Chapter 1782, Richie Lay – Chairman of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, Inc., local Purple Heart recipients and Gold Star families and other leaders and members from our veteran’s community.

For a comment or follow up questions from MOPH National Commander Neil Van Ess and U.S. Army Sergeant Justin Burdette please contact:

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