

## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **2024 VETERAN of the YEAR**

SARATOGA SPRINGS - A ceremony honoring the Veteran of the Year for 2024 will be held at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct 22, at the Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge #161 at 1 Elks Lane, Saratoga Springs. The event is free and open to the public. Face masks are optional.

The annual award is co-sponsored by the Friends of the New York State Military Museum and the Capital District of New York Chapter of the Association of the United States Army. Presidents of the two co-sponsor organizations will present the award. Saratoga County Supervisors Chairman will present a Proclamation from Saratoga County. New York State Senator will present Proclamations from the New York State Senate. US Congressional Proclamation and flag will be presented and remarks by the Adjutant General of the State of New York will be given. Refreshments are being donated by Stewart's.

Veteran of the Year 2024 is COL(Ret) Chester R. Edwards, NY Guard, a Vietnam Mobile Riverine Force Veteran. Chet Edwards served in the U.S. Navy from 1966 – 1972. His service included combat duty in Vietnam as an Assault Support Patrol Boat Coxswain with the Mobile Riverine Force (1968 to 1969). His other assignments were on a Submarine Tender and an Ocean-Going Tugboat. Chet earned a GED, while in Vietnam, having left school at 17 to join the military. During his 6 years of US Navy service, he was awarded the Naval Achievement Medal w/Combat V (2 awards), Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation w/2 Bronze Stars & Combat "V", Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal and Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal and Ribbon (with 4 Bronze Stars), Vietnam Campaign Medal and Ribbon w/Device (1960- ), Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Medal, Color w/Palm and Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Service Commendation Medal, Civil Actions.

When he returned to civilian life, he spent 35 plus years as a corporate financial executive and financial consultant at several companies in the tri-state area. After retirement from the corporate world Chet joined the NYC DOE Teaching Fellows program and spent the last 12 years of his career as a Middle and High School Teacher and Dean of Students at the Choir Academy of Harlem, retiring in 2014.

Despite the commitments of work and raising a family, Chet has always given back to his community. He has volunteered with the American Red Cross (blood Courier), Port Chester Council for the Arts (President), Port Chesser Fire Department (Firefighter), Port Chester-Rye Volunteer Ambulance Corps (EMT And Chief), Westchester County R.E.A.C.T. (Emergency Responder).

In the aftermath of 9/11 Chet joined the New York State Guard in 2003, retiring in 2018 as a Colonel. During his service were several deployments in New York State tasked with assisting civil authorities during various storms and civil unrest. This included a 3-month deployment command of the New York Guard forces at Camp Smith managing force movement from non-NY forces into the Super Storm Sandy disaster areas. During 15 years of service in the New York Guard Chet was awarded numerous awards and decorations among which were NYS Military Commendation Medal (twice awarded), NYS Conspicuous Service Star (Federal Service), NYS Medal for Meritorious Service and NYG Operation Support Medals for Patriot East, JTF Irene & Sandy.

After retirement Chet continues giving back working as a Veteran Advocate. In this mission he serves on several committees and task forces focused on Veteran matters and suicide prevention in a number of Veteran and Civil organizations.

Chet is currently active with the Westchester Veterans Alliance, Inc. (Chairman), Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 49 (President), NYS Veterans Home at Montrose (Board Member), Hudson Valley Honor Flight, Inc. (Board Member / volunteer), ProVetus, Inc (Board Member & Peer Mentor / Mentor Coordinator for the Veterans Treatment Court in Middletown, NY ), American Legion Post 90 (Post Service Officer), Knights of Columbus Council 503 (Member), Knights of Columbus Assembly 692 (Faithful Navigator), VFW Post 1156 (Trustee) and Westchester County Sheriff's Dept. (Deputy Sheriff Sergeant)

Chet has been the keynote speaker at several Veteran events, where he shared the personal story of his time serving in Vietnam with the Mobile Riverine Force. In addition, he has been the Master of Ceremonies and worked to organize numerous Veterans events.

In 2023 Chet was inducted into the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame by State Senator Shelley Mayer.

Chet Edwards lives in Port Chester, NY with his wife of 52 years, Mary, and is the proud father of two daughters and the grandfather to two granddaughters.