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Honoring Her Service: YWCA Northern New Jersey's Operation Sisterhood Hosts Women Veterans Appreciation Day with State Medal Ceremony

June 9, 2025 – Madison, NJ — YWCA Northern New Jersey's (YWCANNJ) Operation Sisterhood will host a Women Veterans Appreciation Day dinner and ceremony on Thursday, June 12, at 5:30 p.m. at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Florham Campus in Madison celebrating the strength, service, and leadership of women veterans and their advocates across the state.

This year, YWCA Northern New Jersey (YWCANNJ) will recognize 12 outstanding women veterans and community leaders, selected through a public nomination process. Honorees were chosen based on their alignment with YWCANNJ's mission and their significant contributions to the advancement of women veterans in New Jersey.

In a special collaboration, the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NJDMAVA) will also conduct a State Medal Ceremony during the event, honoring 12 women veterans—including two of YWCANNJ's award recipients—with official state recognition for their military service.

"At YWCA Northern New Jersey, we are committed to ensuring that women veterans receive the respect and support they deserve; not just during commemorations, but every day," said **Helen Archontou**, CEO of YWCA Northern New Jersey. "Through Operation Sisterhood, we're building a community that uplifts women who have served, helps them thrive in civilian life, and ensures their stories and needs are never overlooked."

Held annually on June 12, Women Veterans Appreciation Day commemorates the anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. While not yet a federal holiday, it is recognized in New Jersey thanks to legislation signed by the late Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver.

YWCANNJ integrated Operation Sisterhood into its programming in 2024 to provide women veterans with a strong support system as they transition to civilian life. The program offers services such as mental health care, peer mentoring, career development, and trauma-informed counseling—all designed to meet the specific needs of women who have served.

"Women veterans often feel invisible, despite their sacrifices," said **Lucy Del Gaudio**, Equity Initiatives Specialist for YWCA Northern New Jersey – Operation Sisterhood and a U.S. Army veteran. "This event is about visibility, connection, and giving these extraordinary women the recognition, they've earned and so often go without."

With over 2 million women veterans in the US today – accounting for 10% of the total veteran population, and projected to reach 18% by 2040 – events like this underscore the urgent need for more inclusive, equitable veteran support services.

YWCANNJ would like to thank the community partners and sponsors whose support makes this event possible: Horizon Blue Cross, Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, New Jersey SOS Veterans Stakeholders Group, New Jersey State of Veteran Chambers, Office of Veteran Services at Fairleigh Dickinson, and Catholic Charities.

For more information including the list of honorees and their biographies, visit: https://tinyurl.com/WomenVeteransDay.

About YWCA Northern New Jersey

For over a century, YWCA Northern New Jersey has improved the lives of thousands of women, girls, and families and is on the forefront of the fight against gender and racial discrimination. We work to build more just and inclusive communities through programs for women and girls, anti-racism training, and policy advocacy. We operate healingSPACE, Bergen County's only Sexual Violence Resource Center (hotline number: 201-487-2227) and provide year-round child care, and senior wellness programs. YWCA Northern New Jersey serves Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, and Passaic counties. To learn more, visit ywcannj.org and follow @ywcannj on social media.

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