

## PRESS RELEASE

### ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE VETERANS DAY

**Board Honors Charles J. Tahaney, Houston Stevens, Thel R. McClain, Jr.,  
Napoleon Harris, Russell W. Zimmerman, Sheilah A. Coley, Philip W. Timberlake and  
Thomas J. Gartland  
During Ceremony at the Hall of Records**



2015 Veterans Celebration: front row (l. to r.) Freeholder Cynthia Toro, Russell Zimmerman, Freeholder Wayne Richardson, Sheilah Coley, Thomas Gartland, Charles Tahaney and Freeholder Patricia Sebold; back row (l. to r.) Houston Stevens, Freeholder Rufus Johnson, Thel McClain, Jr., Freeholder Leby Jones, Freeholder Vice President Brendan Gill, Philip Timberlake and Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake. PHOTO BY GLEN

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its 2015 Veterans Celebration at the Hall of Records on Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, to recognize the patriotism and sacrifices of Essex County veterans, past and present. The celebration included a program during which eight Essex County veterans were honored for their service and presented with framed Commendations, plaques and service medals. In addition, each honoree received a citation from Senator Teresa Ruiz of the 29<sup>th</sup> Legislative District for the recognition. The ceremony was followed by a catered reception.

This year’s honorees were: **Charles J. Tahaney** of Livingston; **Houston Stevens** of Newark; **Thel R. McClain, Jr.**, of Irvington; **Napoleon Harris** of Newark; **Russell W. Zimmerman** of Bloomfield; **Sheilah A. Coley** of East Orange; **Philip W. Timberlake** of East Orange; and **Thomas J. Gartland** of Caldwell.

Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake opened with the program with welcoming remarks where she thanked all United States Military Veterans in honor of their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good of all. She asked the audience in commemoration of Veterans Day, to take the time to “thank” a veteran. In conclusion, she congratulated all of the honorees and ended with a poem entitled, *“Take a Moment to Thank a Veteran”*.

Participating members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders sponsored a Veteran honoree of their choosing. The following branches of service were proudly represented; the United States Air Force, the United States Army and the United States Navy.



Charles J. Tahaney receives his plaque, medal and commendation from Freeholder Patricia Sebold during the 2015 Veterans Celebration. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Charles J. Tahaney** grew up in Livingston, New Jersey where he graduated from the public school system. He went on to receive a BS in English and a minor in Education from St. Peter's College in Jersey City and later an MBA from Seton Hall University in South Orange.

Mr. Tahaney's military experience began in 1963 as a freshman at St. Peter's College, where he participated in the Reserve Officers Training Corps Program. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Reserve.

In September 1963, he reported to Fort Benning, Georgia as a member of Infantry Officers Basic Course #3, where he spent 3 months learning the etiquette of being an Army Officer and the latest tactics being utilized in Vietnam. Upon completion of the course, he received orders to report to Fort Lewis in Washington State, where he was assigned to an Advanced Infantry Training Company. His job was to train troops headed to Vietnam in survival skills. In July 1968, he received his orders for Vietnam with a short two-week excursion to Panama for Jungle Survival School.

Mr. Tahaney arrived at Camranh Bay in the Republic of Vietnam in August 1968. He was subsequently flown up country to Plieku, Camp Enari, home of the fourth Infantry Division and joined B Company 2/8 Mechanized Infantry as a new Platoon Officer.

After being wounded in February 1969, he was flown to an Army Hospital in Japan and after 13 days in the hospital, he was assigned to a rehabilitation platoon. The day after his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was sent back to Vietnam and eventually joined his old unit. His last two months in Vietnam was spent as assistant S-3 Officer from the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion. His job was to command the night shift at headquarters, monitor the activities of all the companies and compile the daily body count report for review by the Battalion Commander. In August of 1969 he was honorably discharged.

Mr. Tahaney began his professional career after the service as the Assistant Township Manager in Livingston in 1969, followed by a position as Administrator of Montville Township in 1979, finally returning to Livingston in 1985 as Township Manager and staying there until his retirement in 2005.

Upon retirement, Mr. Tahaney joined the Livingston First Aid Squad; he is a Trustee of the Livingston Library and a member of the Livingston Golf Committee. He is married to his wife Eileen Okeefe Tahaney and they have two children: a son, Matthew (Elizabeth); a daughter, Erin Tahaney Norris (John); and 5 year-old twin grandsons, Charles Joseph and Michael James.



Houston Stevens (left) is pictured with Freeholder Rufus Johnson (right) as he presented the service medal and plaque during the ceremony. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Houston Stevens** was born on October 29, 1941, in Opelika, Alabama and grew up on the west side of Chicago in the state of Illinois, where he attended Medill Elementary and Richard T. Crane Technical High School.

He served in the United States Army from April 11, 1959, until he was honorably discharged on November 5, 1965. During that period, he completed three tours of duty in Korea spanning the Cuban Missile Crisis and the early stages of the Vietnam War. He was discharged with a non-commissioned officer status of Staff Sergeant (E-6) in the Army Engineer Supply Corps.

Upon discharge from the Army, Mr. Stevens dedicated his life to family, community and labor activism. He currently serves as President of the Ivy Hill Neighborhood Association; President Emeritus of the Ivy Hill Little League; Member of the Giblin Association Board of Governors; District Leader for Essex County Democratic Committee and Newark West District 36.

Mr. Stevens has provided leadership in voter registration and “get out to vote” efforts, as well as community efforts to improve public safety. He has led efforts to renovate Ivy Hill Park, provided support for neighborhood schools, sponsored community-based cultural events and public forums and established youth recreation programs. Furthermore, he has served as an advocate with state, county and municipal officials on behalf of the Ivy Hill community.

A few of his notable projects include: establishment of an After School Youth Development Program at Mt. Vernon School; \$2.5 million in renovations for Ivy Hill Park; establishment of Ivy Hill Little League Baseball; and establishment of the Annual Ivy Hill International Food and Music Festival. He surmises the collaborative efforts of his neighbors have been essential to the success of his work to make Ivy Hill a better place to live.

Mr. Stevens is married to his wife Miriam Stevens with whom he has two step-children Sandra and Michelle; and he has two children of his own Adam and Margaret.



**Thel R. McClain, Jr.**, was born in Smithfield, North Carolina and is the third of twelve children. He joined the United States Army in 1976 and attended Field Artillery School where he became a Cannon Fire Direction Specialist. In 1979, he attended the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy in Fort Bragg, North Carolina where, in less than three years, he became a Sergeant.

Mr. McClain graduated in 1977 from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Air Borne Division Paratrooper School in Fort Benning, Georgia; and attended the USA Signal School where he became an Avionic Communications Equipment Repairer in 1981.



Freeholder Lebbby Jones (left) presents the plaque and medal to Thel R. McClain, Jr.  
PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

He went on to graduate in the top 10% of his class from Officer Candidate School in July 1989 and further attained the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, serving as Platoon Leader for "A" Company located in the 250<sup>th</sup> Combat Service Support Battalion in Jersey City, New Jersey.

He further advanced to the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and served 3 years as a Detachment Commander for "A" Company located in the 250<sup>th</sup> Service Support Battalion in Jersey City until his retirement in 1997, after 21 years of service.

Mr. McClain earned numerous awards and medals during his military career, most

notably, M16 Expert, Good Conduct Medal, Army Achievement Medal and Desert Storm Support Medal. He continues to serve his country as a member of the Department of Homeland Security.



Freeholder Cynthia Toro presents the service medal and plaque to her honoree; Russell Zimmerman of Bloomfield. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Russell W. Zimmerman** was born in Newark, New Jersey and grew up in Nutley, New Jersey where he graduated from Nutley High School.

His military experience began on February 14, 1967, when he joined the United States Navy. He ranked as an Aviation Machinist Mate 3 (Egress) and was discharged on November 24, 1970.

Mr. Zimmerman's first duty station was with the Fleet Tactical Support Squadron Fifty (VRC-50) in Naval Air Station, Atsugi, Japan.

He volunteered to be reassigned to VRC-50's detachment at Naval Air Station, Cubi Point, Republic of the Philippines (that's where the action was). VRC-50 operated 10 C-2A aircraft in direct support of Seventh Fleet carriers operating in the Tonkin Gulf, Philippine Sea, and South China Sea.

His second duty station was with Fighter Squadron 84 (VF-84) Naval Air Station NAS Oceana, Virginia. He operated a F4J Phantom fighter aircraft aboard the USS Franklin Delano Roosevelt CVA 42, which was assigned to Carrier Air Wing Six operating in the Mediterranean Sea. During VF 84's deployment aboard the FDR, he was assigned to

flight deck operations to assist the F4J fighter pilots with environmental/egress issues during aircraft launch and recovery. His duties included trouble shooting and repairing ejection seats and canopy ejection, liquid oxygen, air conditioning, cockpit heat, pressurization, and ventilation systems.

Mr. Zimmerman received the following awards while in the US Navy: National Defense Service Medal, Navy Unit Commendation, Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea).

He is currently employed as a Manager with the Essex County Division of Training and Employment and has worked for Essex County for the last 18 years. He is a resident of Bloomfield where he has lived for more than 40 years and is married to his wife Nancy Zimmerman and they have two daughters; Kelly and Allison.



Mark Beckett performed during the musical interlude in the program. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

The event was favored with musical entertainment by vocalist Mark A. Beckett of East Orange, who performed two moving musical renditions, as well as *"The Star Spangled Banner"*.



Freeholder Wayne Richardson presents the service medal and plaque to his honoree; Sheilah Coley of East Orange. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Sheilah A. Coley** was raised in North Carolina and Brooklyn, New York and is a resident of East Orange, New Jersey. Currently, she attends Fairleigh Dickinson University working on her Master's in Public Administration with a certification in Homeland Security.

Ms. Coley applied to the United States Air Force Delayed Entry Program in May, 1980. While in the military, she served her country during the Grenada and Lebanon Conflict.

Upon completion of basic training, she transferred to Shephard Air Force Base for Air Force Specialty Codes (AFCS) training as a Medical Service Specialist. While at Shepard AFB, she was chosen as a student leader and volunteered to be part of the Air Medevac Team. This was an elite team of individuals deployed to the front lines to recover wounded soldiers. She was also part of a volunteer group of Medics who provided medical service to the local Indian Reservation.

While stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base (Strategic Air Command), Ms. Coley was a member of the Honor Guard and played on the Air Force traveling softball team. She rose to the rank of Airman First Class during her tenure at the Strategic Air Command and believes her calling in life is to serve and will go the extra mile in every opportunity that she is given.

Ms. Coley is an active member of the American Legion Guyton-Callahan Post 152 in Newark, New Jersey and in her spare time is an avid reader.



Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake of East Orange (right) presented the Board's plaque to her honoree; her father Philip W. Timberlake. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Philip W. Timberlake** was born in 1957 to Mary Timberlake and John Harvey Jones. In 1970, he moved to Jersey City, New Jersey where he attended St. Anthony's High School. While there, he excelled in basketball and was voted the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the 1976 State Championship Team. He graduated in 1976.

He attended Upsala College in East Orange, New Jersey from 1977 to 1980 and twice was selected as best defensive player and led Upsala to 3 consecutive post season tournaments to include Division III Runner-Up National Title Game.

Mr. Timberlake enlisted in the US Army from the East Orange, New Jersey recruiting station. He entered the US Army for Active Duty in April of 1983 as an Infantryman and retired from Active duty on November 1, 2013. He served 30 years on active duty.

His active duty tours include: serving during the Cold War in the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Federal Republic of Wiesbaden Germany (FRG) 1983- 1987, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Light Schoefield Barracks Hawaii 1987-1988, Instructor at Fort Bliss Texas, El Paso, and Squad Leader 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Combat tour 1990 to 1991 Gulf War- Dessert Storm /Dessert Shield, Teagu, Korea 1993-1995.

The following awards and decorations were bestowed upon him during his tenure: US Army Master parachutist badge, US Army Air Assault badge, Combat Infantrymen badge, the Expert Infantrymen badge, Meritorious Service Ribbon, 7 Army Commendation Ribbons, 8 Army Achievement Ribbons, 20 years good conduct ribbon and expeditionary ribbon.

Mr. Timberlake married Cathy Walsh-Timberlake and they have two children; Chad and Britnee.





Freeholder Vice President Brendan Gill (right) presented the Board's plaque to his honoree; Thomas J. Gartland. of Caldwell. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

**Thomas J. Gartland** was born on November 18, 1939, and is one of three children born to Joseph and Margaret Gartland. He was raised and educated in Caldwell, New Jersey and graduated from James Caldwell High School.

Following high school, Mr. Gartland joined the United States Army and was stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey for basic training and advanced infantry training and then transferred to Tacoma, Washington for the remainder of his duty. He served with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division as a rifleman until he was honorably discharged.

After his military service, he returned home to Caldwell and sold Yellow Page advertising for New Jersey Bell. Determined to pursue a career as a real estate broker, he maintained Gartland Realtors in Fairfield, New Jersey for 40 years and has recently transitioned to work for Lattimer Realty in Caldwell. He was also past president of the West Essex Board of Realtors and was honored as "Realtor of the Year in 1990.

Mr. Gartland has served on the County Committee since 1965 and was elected to the Caldwell Council for a 3 year term in 1971. In addition, he worked for the County of Essex as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor at the Essex County Jail in Caldwell for 28 years.

A strong believer in volunteering, Mr. Gartland is currently a member of the Essex County Mental Health Board and the Grover Cleveland Birthplace Memorial Association.

He is married to his lovely wife Susan Hapworth and together they are the proud parents of two children, Tommy and Christy and the proud grandparents of five.

The 2015 Veterans Day Celebration was an uplifting event that also included remarks from the Deputy County Administrator Alan Abramowitz and opening and closing prayers by Essex County Health Officer Dr. Michael Festa.

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**For Additional Information:**

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