

PRESS RELEASE
November 11, 2016

**ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS
CELEBRATE VETERANS DAY**

**Board Honors Veterans
During Ceremony at the Hall of Records**



The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders presented Commendations, plaques, and medals to ten Veterans in recognition of their service. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held its 2016 Veterans Celebration at the Hall of Records on Wednesday, November 9, 2016, to recognize the patriotism and sacrifices of New Jersey veterans, past and present. The celebration included a program during which ten veterans were honored for their service and presented with framed Commendations, plaques and medals. The ceremony was followed by a catered reception.

This year's honorees were: **Melvin L. Klein; Dwayne Q. Mitchell; Jeffrey J. Dunn; Charles E. Mitchell, Sr.; Kyle P. Bowman; Derek Hernandez; Brett B. D'Alessandro; Ethan D. Oguss; Harvey L. Craig; and William E.L. Smith, Jr.**

Freeholder President Britnee N. Timberlake began the program with opening remarks, stating: "Allow me the honor to be the first to say thank you, truly thank you for your sacrifices. My name is Britnee Timberlake, and I am the Freeholder President of this wonderful Board of Chosen Freeholders. We started honoring those who served because we realized you've given so much of yourselves and your families, as well."

Participating members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders sponsored Veteran honorees of their choosing. The honorees that were recognized represented three different branches of service: The United States Navy, The United States Army, and The United States Marine Corps.

Amongst the honorees who served in the United States Navy were Melvin L. Klein and Charles E. Mitchell, Sr.



Freeholder Patricia Sebold (right) presents her honoree, Melvin L. Klein (left) with the Board's plaque and medal PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Melvin L. Klein, who was honored by Freeholder Patricia Sebold, served on the aircraft carrier USS Shangri-La during the atom bomb testing in the South Pacific at Bikini Island from May 1946 to August 1946 and was discharged in September of 1946 from the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Today, he is one of the few left who personally witnessed the atomic testing that changed the world. Mr. Klein went on to graduate from Slippery Rock Teachers College (now Slippery Rock University), in 1949 and started a career in education as a mathematics teacher. He would go on to become a coach, athletic director, and Principal in Glen Ridge. He has also served in higher education as an administrator and professor at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, and presently at St. Peter's University in Jersey City, New Jersey. Mr. Klein has been married to his wife Jean for 66 years and has 3 daughters, all of whom have achieved great success in the business world.



Freeholder Rufus Johnson (left) presents his honoree Charles E. Mitchell, Sr., (right) with the Board's medal and plaque PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Charles E. Mitchell, Sr., served aboard the USS Dominant MSO 431 during the final periods of the Vietnam War from September 9, 1974, until he was honorably discharged on January 1, 1976. His ship was an integral part of the Mediterranean Task Force in the Korean and early stages of the Vietnam War. During his tour, the USS Dominant participated in a number of War Simulations in the Gulf of Mexico and North Atlantic with other NATO Countries. He was discharged as an enlisted Fireman Apprentice (E-2) in the ship's Main Propulsion Engine Room and was awarded The National Defense Medal. Freeholder Rufus Johnson honored Charles E. Mitchell, Sr., for his service.

The honored veterans who served in the United States Army were Jeffrey J. Dunn, Kyle B. Bowman, Derek Hernandez, Harvey L. Craig, and William E.L. Smith, Jr.



Freeholder Leonard Luciano (Right) presents the plaque and medal to Jeffrey J. Dunn (center), who is accompanied by Commander Ralph Veltre, Veteran of the United States Marine Corps. (VFW Post 2619) PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Jeffrey J. Dunn served in both the United States Army (1999 to 2006), and the New Jersey National Guard (2006 to 2007). During his time in the service, he was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as a cook assigned to two field artillery battalions. He had the honor of competing in the All-Army Culinary Arts Competition before deploying to Iraq in 2003 and again in 2005. In 2011, he was hired as the Associate Director of Veterans Services after working as a graduate assistant in the same office. In 2013, he completed his Masters of Business Administration Degree with a concentration in Finance. He is now the Associate Director of Veterans Services for Fairleigh Dickinson University.



Freeholder Wayne Richardson (left) presents the Board's medal and plaque to his honoree, Kyle P. Bowman (right) PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Kyle B. Bowman served in the United States Army from 1988 to 2011. He served on active duty from 1988 to 1992 and in the New Jersey National Guard from 1992 to 2011. He has served in 2 Combat Deployments: Operation Desert Shield/Storm from December 1990 to May 1991 and Operation Iraqi Freedom from June 2008 to June 2009. He also served in Operation Warrior Trainer, training soldiers from several United States Army Reserve units, soldiers from National Guard units, sailors from the United States Navy Reserve units, airmen from the United States Air Force Reserve, and airmen from the Air Force Guard units. In his 23 years of service, he has received many awards, including: The Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, The Global War on Terror Award, the Kuwait Liberation Medal, and The Iraq Liberation Medal, to name a few.



Freeholder Cynthia Toro (left) presents the plaque and medal to her honoree Derek Hernandez (right) PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Derek Hernandez joined the United States Army - Reserve and National Guard and worked in different Military specialties, including: 63J Quartermaster Repairer, 19K Tanker 19D Cav Scout, and Combat Lifesaver. He served in The Iraqi Freedom Campaign, and in September 2009, after serving 8 years, he was honorably discharged. Mr. Hernandez has worked as a 911 emergency dispatcher, emergency room technician, EMS in Jersey City and Bloomfield and as a Career Federal Firefighter for the D.O.D. In 2012, he was hired as a Career Firefighter/EMT to the Bloomfield Fire Department and currently serves as NJ Level 2 Fire Instructor at the Morris County Law and Public Safety Institute in Parsippany.



Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake (center) presents her honorees Harvey L. Craig (left) and Judith Smith, the wife of the late William E. L. Smith, Jr., (right) PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Harvey L. Craig has served in the United States Army all over the continental United States and overseas in countries such as Korea, Germany, and Croatia, to name a few. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he served in the Balkans in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and has held leadership positions including: squad leader, detachment sergeant, and financial management technician. During his tenure at Finance Corps, he was responsible for the pay of thousands of soldiers and their families. After serving for 20 years, he retired in September 2005, earning a multitude of Army decorations, including: The Meritorious Service Ribbon with oak leaf clusters, Army Commendation Ribbon with two oak leaf clusters, and Army Achievement Ribbon with three oak leaf clusters.

William E.L. Smith, Jr., served in the United States Army from 1972 to 1995, where he achieved the rank of Major. While on active duty, he served as a Financial Officer. Upon retiring from the Army, he became a professor of Military Science at Seton Hall University and taught Junior ROTC at both Irvington High School and Governor Livingston High School. He handled the interview and hiring process of the U.S. Army Senior Military Instructors and Junior ROTC Instructors in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan area. On August 5, 2013, he retired after 19 years of teaching. Mr. Smith passed away on October 16, 2016, from a form of Parkinson's Disease and is survived by his wife, Judith Smith, and children, Kayla McCoy and her husband Matthew, Kenneth Smith and Sarah Jude Smith. He is also survived by his grandchildren: Mackenzie Smith, Kenneth Smith, William Scott Giuliano, and Philip Edwin McCoy.

In addition to the United States Army and the United States Navy, honorees Dwayne Q. Mitchell, Brett B. D'Alessandro, and Ethan D. Oguss were recognized for their service in The United States Marine Corps.



Freeholder Lebbby Jones (left) presents the plaque and medal to her honoree Dwayne Q. Mitchell (right) PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

Dwayne Q. Mitchell enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in November of 1983. He served as Field Radio Operator (Infantry), in the 2nd Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He was transferred to the 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa, Japan, in August 1986. During his Tour of Duty with the 3rd Marine Division, he was meritoriously promoted to the rank of Corporal for his outstanding service and work effort and was honorably discharged in 1987. Dwayne Q. Mitchell is a highly decorated officer and has been recognized by several organizations for his outstanding achievements, some of which include: The New Jersey State PBA Valor Award, Essex County 200 Club Extraordinary Valor Award, and the Chamber of Commerce Heroism Award, to name a few. He is the father of 2 daughters, Shanna and Kia Mitchell, and serves the community with honor.



Freeholder Vice President Brendan Gill (center) presents the Board's plaques and medals to his honorees, Ethan D. Oguss (right) and Brett B. D'Alessandro (left) PHOTO BY GLEN

Brett B. D'Alessandro enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in August of 2010. He served in a reserve unit located in Providence, Rhode Island, where he was activated to go to Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan. He served as Bulk Fuel Specialist and Squad Leader, providing leadership and training to Marines to ensure that they remained proficient in professional military requirements and proper fitness guidelines. He managed the operation and maintenance of tactical logistics equipment, such as the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles, Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacements and the Logistics Vehicle System Replacements. He trained as a Machine Gunner, with CLB6 TS Company, in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he

had the opportunity to train on a new robotic weapon system called the CROW system. During his Tour of Duty with CLB6, he was meritoriously promoted to the rank of Corporal for his outstanding service and work effort. He was promoted again to Sergeant in April 2015. He subsequently completed his service commitment and was honorably discharged in 2016. Later, he founded Backpacks for Life to serve the homeless veterans in his community.

Ethan D. Oguss enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on January 3, 2001. He completed a deployment to Al Anbar, Iraq, in defense of Operation Iraqi Freedom III and served in an infantry line company. He was a team leader responsible for a team of U.S. Marines and Iraqi infantry that patrolled cities and towns along the Euphrates River. In June 2007, he was honorably discharged as a Sergeant (E-5). He and his fellow Marines from Company K, 3rd Battalion 25th Marines run an annual fundraiser in honor of the 49 Marines and Navy Corpsmen lost during their deployment to Al Anbar, Iraq, in 2005.

For Additional Information:

**Medinah E. Muhammad, Public Information Officer
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
(973)-621-4452**

mmuhammad@freeholders.essexcountynj.org

**Board of Chosen Freeholders, County of Essex
Hall of Records - Room 558, 465 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd.
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Tel: (973) 621-4486 Fax: (973) 621-5695**