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ASSEMBLY REPORT:

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SALUTE VETERANS, TROOPS EVERYDAY

Recently, we paid homage to the men and women who have bravely served our country, protecting, defending and safeguarding our freedom during times of war and peace. In observance of Veterans Day, flags were proudly raised, ceremonies were held and special thanks were given to the individuals who have risked their lives to preserve the rights of Americans. Armistice Day, as it was originally known, was established to honor and salute veterans at the end of World War I. It has since grown into a day of remembrance of service men and women from all generations; however, we must stop to thank veterans everyday, not just in observance of Veterans Day.

This past August, the town unveiled the Town of Tonawanda Veterans Memorial as a daily reminder of the service of these valiant men and women. The names etched into the memorial are those of our local heroes. They represent all branches of service and all who served – those who died in battle, those who suffered wounds, those who came home after their service, and those who serve today. The veterans whose names are inscribed and those others whose names are not yet or may never be etched on this memorial touched history, and we are forever grateful for the role that they played in securing our freedom.

For all of our local heroes, military service was a defining moment that changed them and the course of history. While the times and places differed, the threads of courage, bravery and sacrifice ran through their makeup. The examples are many, but space will only allow us to cite a representative few:

During World War II, Peter Rizzo, an immigrant, served in the Philippines. Philip Corigliano was a prisoner of War at Stalag VII. William Dolce survived D-Day and was recently presented with the Legion of Merit - France's highest award. Marie Shaffer volunteered and served with the Coast Guard. Frank Schulz, Dominic Caruana, Russell Zamito and so many others make up the "greatest generation."

Herbert Hodge, Paul Babcock, William Hambridge, Gerald Nolan and James Rohrback served in Korea – often referred to as "the forgotten war." Ray Metzger was aboard the USS Borie when it stopped a Russian ship during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Steven Caruana, Bernie Cunningham, Bruce Mayfield, Paul Guarino and Bernard Nienhaus II all served in Vietnam. Andrew Shonitsky was part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Kosovo. James Lauden, Fred Kubus and Peter Snodgrass served in Iraq.

Ken-Ton residents who paid the ultimate price must also be remembered. Among the Vietnam casualties were Roger Montz, Robert Bojanek and Thomas Flanagan II. David Snyder and Kathleen Marie Sherry died in Desert Storm and Christopher Dill and Dwayne Covert in Iraq.

We must be reminded that all who have served – family, friends, neighbors and strangers – were ordinary people who went to extraordinary lengths to maintain life as we know it in the United States. Their actions have kept us safe and free. The same sense of

duty and time-honored tradition of service is also found in the men and women who serve today in Iraq, Afghanistan and other far away places. We hold all who are now in harm's way close to our hearts and in our prayers.

It is with a sense of pride and awe that I salute all veterans and the men and women who serve today. Thank you for your service, and God Bless America.