

NEWS RELEASE

County of Warren, New Jersey



Freeholders Announce Next Veterans Ceremony While Honoring WWII Vet

(WHITE TWP., NJ – October 23, 2019) – Warren County’s next Veterans Recognition

Ceremony will be held May 16, 2020, the Board of Chosen Freeholders announced as they honored a World War II veteran and awarded him the medal that they present each spring to the County’s wartime veterans.

The freeholders used to occasion of proclaiming that the County will mark National Veterans Awareness Week from November 10-16 to set the date for their 17th recognition ceremony, to be held at the Warren County War Memorial in Belvidere. They then got a jump on next year’s ceremony by honoring 93-year-old Army veteran Dominick “Don” DeBacco, who became the 2,198th person to be recognized since the County launched the program in late 2003.

“Mr. DeBacco, it’s a real honor to have you here tonight, to be able to present you your service medal, your pin and your certificate,” Freeholder Director Jason J. Sarnoski told the veteran. “Thank you for your service, thank you on behalf of this country and Warren County,” Sarnoski added.

DeBacco thanked the Freeholders, but said he was just doing his duty. It was a pleasure to do it for his country, he said.

Born in Gladstone, NJ in February 1926, DeBacco was about five years old when his family moved to Washington Borough, where he lived until moving in with his daughter and son-in-law earlier this year.

DeBacco noted recently that he heard about Warren County’s Veterans Recognition Program a long time ago, but thought “I didn’t do anything better than anyone else.” His daughter Candy Kloefer nominated him this past summer, and after a review of the application by the Veterans Recognition



World War II Army veteran Dominick “Don” DeBacco after the freeholders presented him with the Warren County Distinguished Military Service medal.

Program Committee, the freeholders decided to present him with his Distinguished Military Service medal, certificate and commemorative lapel pin at a freeholder meeting to kick off the next round of seeking veterans to honor.

Veterans with connections to Warren County who served during the recognized wartime eras are eligible, so long as they were honorably discharged and either are current County residents or lived in



Freeholder Director Jason J. Sarnoski, veteran Don DeBacco, Milly Rice, Adjutant, and Richard Larson, Commander, of Carl D. Archer Post 528, Freeholder James R. Kern, III and Freeholder Richard D. Gardner at the presentation of a proclamation for National Veterans Awareness Week, which will be November 10-16.

the County when entering the military. Posthumous recognition is available as well for deceased veterans.

The National Veterans Awareness Week proclamation was accepted by Richard Larson, Commander, and Milly Rice, Adjutant, of The American Legion, Carl D. Archer Post 528 of White Township. Both Larson and Rice are members of the Warren County War Memorial Corp., which works with the freeholders to conduct the

Veterans Recognition Program, and they assisted Sarnoski and Freeholders Richard D. Gardner and James R. Kern, III in the presentation to DeBacco.

Kern expressed gratitude to members of the Carl D. Archer post for the work they do every day – not just during Veteran’s Awareness Week – and said he thought passing those values on to the next generation was vital. With an all-volunteer military, we need to recognize the sacrifices our veterans make for the sake of our country, Kern said.

Gardner joined in thanking the Carl D. Archer post for bringing a heightened awareness to the selfless sacrifices of our veterans, their valor, and what their families go through. “It is really the military that protects our Constitutional Republic, and therefore, the great democracy that we have that, really, no other nation in the world has,” Gardner said. He noted the importance of helping to raise awareness of how critical it is to have a strong military, and pointed out that many veterans in Warren County have given a lot to their country, including DeBacco.

In 1944, the 18-year-old DeBacco quit school during his senior year and enlisted in the Army, entering active service on April 24, 1944 at Fort Dix, New Jersey. After basic training, Private First

Class DeBacco headed across the Atlantic Ocean on a troop ship to Southampton, England, where he joined the 11th Armored Division of Gen. George Patton's Third Army as a gunner in a Sherman tank. He went into action in Northern France, noting, "All I knew was I had a job to do and I wanted to do it."

At one point, the U.S. Army's light tanks encountered heavier German tanks and the tank DeBacco was in was hit along with many of the others. DeBacco was wounded by shrapnel while 16 other Americans were killed, he said, noting his wounds were treated at a field hospital and he kept right on going. The 11th Armored Division pushed on, crossing the Rhine several times, and on May 8 became the first unit of the Third Army to meet up with the Soviet Red Army, our allies in battling the Germans.

PFC DeBacco assisted in the liberation of the Mauthausen concentration camp in May 1945, recalling that the scene "was terrible."

After Germany's surrender, PFC DeBacco said his unit was supposed to come home immediately, but instead was attached to another division, and it was six months more before he returned home.

After the war, he resumed his education, became a welder, and a teacher, as he taught industrial arts at Warren County schools.

He married his wife Shirley in 1948 and they had three children, Candy, with whom he now lives, and

Susan, who both attended their freeholder meeting with their father; and a son, Donald, who died in a workplace accident some years ago. Shirley passed away about four years ago, and DeBacco continued to live on his own until earlier this year.

Applications for the recognition program are available on the county government website at www.co.warren.nj.us/veterans.html or by call the Warren County Public Information Department at 908-475-6580. Applications will be accepted until about three weeks before the ceremony, and are reviewed for approval by the members of the Warren County War Memorial Corp.



The freeholders congratulate Don DeBacco after he became the 2,198th person to be honored in the Warren County Veterans Recognition Program that began in late 2003. Freeholder Director Jason J. Sarnoski used the occasion to announce the County's next major ceremony will take place May 16, 2020, at the Warren County War Memorial in Belvidere. Applications are now being accepted for recognition of the County's wartime veterans.

NATIONAL VETERANS AWARENESS WEEK
NOVEMBER 10-16, 2019

WHEREAS, over the past 125 years, tens of millions of Americans have served in the Armed Forces of the United States while hundreds of thousands of Americans have given their lives while serving; and

WHEREAS, the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who served in the Armed Forces have been vital in maintaining the freedoms and way of life enjoyed by the people of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the advent of the all-volunteer Armed Forces has resulted in a sharp decline in the number of individuals and families with any personal connection to the Armed Forces and a decrease in the awareness by young people of the nature and importance of the accomplishments of those who have served in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the system of civilian control of the Armed Forces makes it essential that the future leaders of the Nation understand the history of military action and the contributions and sacrifices of those who conduct such actions; and

WHEREAS, the veterans of The American Legion, Carl D. Archer Post 528 of White Township have voiced strong support this resolution to emphasize the need to develop educational programs regarding the contributions of veterans to the country.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders designates the week of November 10 through November 16, 2019, as “National Veterans Awareness Week” for the purpose of emphasizing educational efforts directed at elementary and secondary school students concerning the contributions and sacrifices of veterans, and encourages the people of the United States to observe National Veterans Awareness Week with appropriate educational activities.

Jason J. Sarnoski, Director

Richard D. Gardner, Deputy Director

James R. Kern, III, Freeholder

Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders