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The Smithtown News

THE COMMUNITY'S WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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May 29, 2025

\$1.00

Special section, inside



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The Smithtown Fire Department color guard in the line of march down Main Street during the 101st annual Memorial Day Parade Monday, May 26. The parade and service was preceded by a ceremony Saturday, May 24 to mark the Flags for Heroes display at the Smithtown Library. See stories, pages 14 and 15.

Republican Primary June 24

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- EXAMPLE BALLOT -

OFFICE	COUNTY LEGISLATOR (13TH DISTRICT) (VOTE FOR ONE)	SUPERVISOR (VOTE FOR ONE)	COUNCILMAN (VOTE FOR ANY TWO)	
	VOTE ON ROW B FOR THE OFFICIAL REPUBLICAN TEAM			
A				
Republican	Salvatore Formica	Edward R Wehrheim	Thomas J McCarthy	Lynne C Nowick
B				



ON THE WATERFRONT: In advance of a May 31 rally to push for the reconstruction of Harbor Road in Stony Brook, homeowner Joan Montbach explains the impact the washout of the Mills Pond has had on her quality of life. See story, page 11.

-David Ambro photo

Now you see it, now you don't

Affected property owners share story of Mills Pond washout, aftermath, rally

By David Ambro

When Joan Montbach was awakened from her sleep at 2 a.m. by the severe rainstorm August 19, 2024, she went down into the living room of her Main Street, Stony Brook home to look out the picture window to assess the large trees next to her home.

“The storm was horrific,” she said. “A tree has never fallen on the house, but I’m a worrier... I was disturbed enough that I came downstairs.”

At that point, the historic Mill Pond was still there, fed by a freshwater stream that runs along her western property line. She went back to bed.

When her husband, Frank Montbach, woke up shortly after 5:30 a.m. August 19, he noticed from an upstairs window the red flashing light of a fire truck at the end of his driveway blocking off access to Main Street. When Mr. Montbach went to the living room and checked the weather out the same picture window his wife had been looking out just a few hours earlier, he notice that the Mill Pond was no more, a mud flat full of fish fighting for their lives, shorebirds confused

about their environs, and the once scenic view from his home in a state of ruins.

“I woke Joan up and told her we don’t have a pond anymore,” he recalled.

Ms. Montbach said reports put the washout of Harbor Road at about 2:30 a.m., soon after she went back to bed. Mr. Montbach said that when he saw the pond emptied, he did not know exactly what had happened, but he assumed something breached or gave out, causing the pond to empty.

During an interview in the Montbachs’ living room Saturday, May 24, the view out the picture window is spectacular, a beautiful vantage point of the Avalone Nature Preserve in neighboring Head of the Harbor Village and what was once the Mill Pond, still a mud flat except for a few small puddles of water where local naturalists are trying to save a swan couple and their cygnets.

The Montbachs plan to attend a community rally Saturday, May 31, from noon to 2 p.m. to push to rebuild Harbor Road, which was washed out August 19, 2024, causing the pond to empty. They expressed disappointment Saturday that



MAKING A SPLASH: What was once the Mills Pond in Stony Brook is now a mud flat after Harbor Road (background) was washed out.

the situation has come to this and that action has not been taken in the nine months since the catastrophic August 19, 2024, storm to rebuild the road and restore the pond.

Ms. Montbach’s family has owned the centuries-old home since 1950, purchasing it from the Reboli family of the Reboli Center in Stony Brook. It had formerly been a schoolhouse, attended by acclaimed Long Island artist William Sydney Mount. She said the only other time she can recall the pond having been empty like it is now is when it was being dredged decades ago, intentionally drained of its water.

“The wildlife has totally changed. There are fewer birds, different kinds of birds,” Mr. Montbach said about the impact of the washout on his home and the area in general. “There used to be egrets all over the place. They aren’t

(Continued on page 16)



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PLATINUM

Offer salute to Smithtown Flags for Heroes

By David Ambro

There is a story behind each of the 75 flags on the lawn in front of the Smithtown Library at the corner of Route 25 and Route 25A, Flags for Heroes, which were recognized during a special ceremony Saturday, May 24.

The American flags are on the library lawn through the inaugural Flags for Heroes program sponsored by the Rotary Club of Smithtown Sunrise. On the lawn of the library during Saturday’s ceremony, Sunrise Rotary Director of Community Relations Matt Kelly read the names of each of the people for whom a flag has been installed (see list on this page). Many of them are military veterans, but others were first responders, educators, and one was flying for the oldest Catholic nun in the world, Sister Francis Dominici Piscatella, 112, who has family in Kings Park.

In dress uniform, Robert Lusak provided the opening remarks, welcoming everyone, a crowd that included family members of those for whom the flags were created or who helped with the Flags for Heroes program. Mr. Lusak is the director of the Smithtown Library, Sunrise Rotary president, a United States Army veteran, and currently serves as major of the 11th New York Regiment United States Volunteers-America, which provides military honors at the funerals of veterans.

During an interview before the ceremony, Maj. Lusak said the event is intended to thank the people who purchased the flags for the heroes whom they are named for and also to recognize the people who made a difference in someone’s life, not just in the military. “It could be a teacher or law enforcement, just to recognize someone who is important to you,” he said.

During his remarks, Maj. Lusak said Memorial Day weekend is a busy one for the 11th Regiment, attending services at Calverton National Cemetery, Long Island National Cemetery, and St. Patrick’s Cathedral Sunday with Cardinal Edward Egan for mass. “This is our way of giving back to the veterans, men and women who gave their lives so we can afford all of the fantastic things that we get to enjoy,” he said.

Maj. Lusak said the Sunrise Rotary meets at 7:45 a.m. every Thursday morning at the Millennium Diner, and he invited everyone to attend and to join. He thanked the Rotarians who made the Flags for Heroes program possible,

Who the flags are flying for

Louis DeBeneditis, United States Army
Vincent DeBeneditis, United States Army, career
Charles DeBeneditis, United States Marine Corps
Dennis Kropf, United States Navy
Donato Panico, United States Navy
Nicholas Quaranto, United States Army
Joseph Ventre, United States Army
Sister Francis Dominic Piscatella, 112, the world’s oldest nun
William Falcone, World War II First Infantry, NYPD captain
Zak Knowles, United States Army Ranger
Paws of War, Military Support Dogs
Heroes for Heroes, 9/11 Heroes
Robert Lusaka, United States Army
Brian Rathjen, United States Navy
Thomas Ronayne, Navy weapons expert, ex-veterans director
Thomas Ryan, Navy, retired Suffolk County Police officer
Cpl. Harold Scannell, United States Marine Corps
Joseph Camplong, United States Air Force bombardier
George Stare, United States Army photographer
Norman Vogeney, United States Navy
Anthony John Foti, United States Navy
Bernard Zollo, United States Army, Korean War
Theodore Pollock, United States Marine Corps
Michael Jaeger, United States Marine Corps
Derek Aro, unsung hero, son
Christopher Revere, New York City Fire Department (FDNY)
Louis “Uncle Louis” Mattera, Marine Corps, Korean War
James Kirby, Sr., United States Navy
Dr. Eric Siegel, Physician
Harry P. Brown, United States Army
Patti Carpenter, Director of Nursing
Dominica Carpenter, dearest mom
Steven Gershowitz, United States Air Force
Owen Wister, Sr., Army, World War II, 8th Regiment
Thomas Radonis, United States Navy
Michael Perrone, United States Air Force
Salvatore Garcia, Army, Afghanistan, PD Aviation Unit
Anastasios Tsakos, NYPD police officer
William Mora, NYPD police officer
Jason Rivera, NYPD police officer
Jonathan Tiller, NYPD police officer
Frederick Lohmann, United States Army
Amanda Lohmann Smith, United States Air Force
Frederick Lohmann, Jr., United States Marine Corps
Frederick Manney, IV, United States Army, Afghanistan
Frederick Manney, Jr., United States Army, Korean War
Frederick Manney, Sr., United States Army, World War II
William Maloney, United States Army
Bernard Mosesson, Master Sergeant, Navy, World War II
Thad Mularz, United States Marine Corps, World War II
Philip Piscatella, Sr. United States Army, World War II
Philip Piscatella, Jr., United States Army, Vietnam
Bob Randolph, United States Navy
George Schroeder, United States Air Force, Korean War
Edward Reddy, Sr., United States Navy, World War II
Lawrence Hermer, United States Army, Korean War
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Nick Fengarinas, United States Army
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Justin Fernandez, Suffolk County PD, School Resource Officer
Frank Amalfitao, Air Force, CEO, Veterans Beacon House
Stanley Wozniak, United States Army, Korean War
Carl Superina, Sunrise Rotary, Suffolk County football official
Robert DiFiore, United States Navy Seabees
Thomas Kelly, Air Force, New York City Transit Officer
Michael Tufarella, Hauppauge Fire Department, 9/11
Sean Larkin, Suffolk County Police Department.

and he pointed to the flags in a circle on the library lawn.

“Those 75 flags are a remembrance not of just those who served their country in the military but those who made a difference in everyone’s lives,” he said. “So, for us to be able to put those flags out and remember these people is a very admirable and great thing.”

He said the flags are

supposed to be out until Flag Day, Saturday, June 14, but that they are considering keeping them out until the Fourth of July, he said, and looked back to Supervisor Edward Wehrheim for validation. “No pressure,” he said to the supervisor, who laughed aloud.

Maj. Lusak concluded his remarks by noting that Memorial Day is Monday, May



OLD GLORY: Members of the 11th New York Regiment (above) unfurl the American flag during the Flags for Heroes ceremony at the Smithtown Library where (right) Major Robert Lusak offers opening remarks and Matt Kelly (below) reads the names of those honored with flags.



26. “I know a lot of people say ‘Happy Memorial Day,’ but, and you do know this, but I’ll say it, ‘it’s not a happy day. It’s not. It is a day that we have to reflect and think about those who gave their lives so that we can enjoy the fine things that we get to experience,” he said. “Everyone thinks it’s a day of barbecues and drinking beer and wine, but it is really more than that. It is a day for men and women who gave their lives for their country... So on Monday, think about those who gave their lives because it is really important that we remember them.”

11th Regiment Lieutenant

Hector Sepulveda, of St. James, provided an opening blessing, Smithtown High School West junior Marilena Castoro sang the National Anthem, there were taps and a three-round rifle salute. Among those to speak was Smithtown Town Supervisor Edward Wehrheim. As he delivered his remarks, there was a flyover by a Suffolk County Police Department helicopter that wooed the crowd.

Mr. Wehrheim welcomed home his fellow Vietnam War veterans and said he is honored and proud of
(Continued on page 24)