

# NEWS



Edward A. Diana  
Orange County Executive

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***Hudson Valley Counties Join in NY Launch of Smiling on America's Heroes  
Program offers Vets affordable dental, vision, and dependent family care***

**New Windsor** - Orange County Executive Edward A. Diana addressed a packed house in the theatre of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New Windsor. The assembled crowd of local, state, and federal elected officials, veterans, and veterans' advocates from throughout the mid-Hudson region were gathered for the New York State launch of a new program created to provide veterans with improved access to affordable dental and vision care for themselves and their dependents.

"Our men and women in uniform have made many sacrifices in the course of their service to our nation," said County Executive Diana. "It is truly fitting that we gather today in the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor to introduce a program that also recognizes our veterans for their sacrifices. Smiling on America's Heroes is committed to enhancing the health and well-being of our heroes as they return to civilian life," continued Diana.

Smiling on America's Heroes, a new program founded in conjunction with Careington, Inc., one of the nation's largest providers of discounted health care plans, will offer veterans discounted dental and vision services and assistance in receiving affordable health care services for themselves and their dependent family members. Careington selected New York's Hudson Valley for the initial launch of this new program.

Major General (Ret.) Thomas P. Maguire Jr., former adjutant general of New York and Commander of the NY ANG 105<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing at Stewart, served as emcee of the event introducing Smiling on America's Heroes. "After 30 years of service, I understand the challenges our service men and women face accessing dental and vision care following their military service," said General Maguire. "I'm happy to be involved in a program that will work to close the gap in coverage for our nation's veterans and provide them with the benefits they require," continued General Maguire.

Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef added, "It's unfortunate that so many of our members of the Armed Forces find it difficult to afford basic health services,

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including dental and vision care. Thanks to the commitment from Careington, Inc. and their recognition of our heroes dedicated service, we hope that Smiling on America's Heroes will improve the situation for our returning veterans," continued Vanderhoef.

Smiling on America's Heroes has been reviewed and endorsed by the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC). NYSAC Executive Director Steven Acquario said, "Our County Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) have long observed the complete lack of available dental and vision care coverage for our brave men and women who have worn the uniform. Up until now, we have only been able to assist our veterans on an ad hoc basis to get them any help they needed. Now, however, with Smiling on America's Heroes, we have a first-rate health care program to close this void. NYSAC is proud to endorse this program to assist the brave heroes who have sacrificed so much for all of us," added Acquario.

The veterans organization Wounded Warriors has also endorsed the program. Al Giordano, a Marine and founding member and Deputy Director of Wounded Warriors said, "I have the privilege of working with our veterans each and every day and have seen first-hand the trouble many of them face accessing basic health services like dental and vision care. Wounded Warriors is proud to support the great efforts of Smiling on America's Heroes to help our veterans obtain the care they need," continued Giordano. Careington representative Valerie Bostrom announced that 5% of the program fees will be donated to Wounded Warriors.

"The Hudson Valley is home to many thousands of veterans from all branches of service and all conflicts and wars; and our region's service to our nation dates back to the American Revolution," said Orange County Veterans' Services Director Tony Zippo. "It is appropriate that this program that will give back to the men and women who have served our country is launched in our region. We are proud to be a part of this special announcement and look forward to sharing the benefits of Smiling on America's Heroes with the many veterans with whom we work," added Zippo.

Smiling on America's Heroes has access to more than 6,700 dental access points throughout New York State and more than 95,000 nationwide. Vision care is available through 1,236 vision centers and private offices in New York and more than 41,000 locations nationally. For more information on Smiling on America's Heroes, visit their website at [www.smilingonamericasheroes.com](http://www.smilingonamericasheroes.com).

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*Director of Orange County Veterans' Service Agency and Vietnam veteran Tony Zippo, David and Karina Gonzalez, health care professionals and founding members of Smiling on America's Heroes, Assemblyman and Vietnam veteran Robert Castelli, Korean War veteran Senator William J. Larkin Jr., Careington Inc. client relations manager Valerie Bostrom, Orange County Clerk Donna Benson, and Major General (Ret.) Thomas P. Maguire Jr. celebrate the New York State launch of Smiling on America's Heroes, a program to provide veterans with access to low cost dental and vision care.*