



DENNIS *DUNNE*

Medal of Courage 2017

Special people possess a form of strength that surpasses all the degrees of pain and grief they encounter. Words like courage, valor, bravery and grit cannot adequately describe the character of such individuals. Dennis Dunne has a daily regimen that ignores affliction in an effort to fulfill an overriding desire to move through life with a positive attitude dedicated to serving others.

Dennis began his wrestling career in 1963 at Division Avenue Junior High School in Levittown. He continued to wrestle as a member of the varsity team at the Division Avenue High School under coach Dick Wright. Wrestling had a profound effect on Dennis. He credits wrestling's "life lessons" as the foundation for the discipline and perseverance he would later rely on in pursuit of his career in public service.

Two weeks after graduating High School, Dennis enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. He was sent to Vietnam the following year. While on patrol in the jungles of Vietnam, Dennis came under fire and sustained a debilitating wound to his leg. His tibia (shin bone) shattered, Dennis was medically retired from the Marine Corps.

After a long and grueling rehabilitation, Dennis returned to the wrestling room and became an assistant coach at Division Avenue JHS in 1976. In 1979, despite his nagging injury, Dennis competed in the Empire State Games in the Freestyle and Greco Roman competitions under Hall of Fame coaches Al Bevilacqua and Sonny Greenhalgh.

Dennis substituted his desire to compete with a desire to serve the sport of wrestling in the 1980's. He served as the athletic director for the New York State American Legion "Boys State" program. The program works to develop leadership skills to youth. Dennis began to run the Police Athletic League (PAL) wrestling program for the Levittown and Island Trees

communities in 1982. In addition to his service, Dennis spent much of his time as a coach, helping to develop the wrestling skills of his All-County son, Dennis Jr.

In 1991, Dennis joined the Long Island Wrestling Officials Association and began his career as a high school wrestling referee. Dennis served as a wrestling official for 20 years before his old war wound forced him into retirement.

Although Dennis could no longer participate on the mat, he continued to serve the sport of wrestling and the public at large. In 1996, Dennis was elected to the newly formed Nassau County Legislature and has gone on to be re-elected 10 times. In his capacity as a veteran legislator, Dennis has developed numerous initiatives to help youth programs. He continues to work closely with the Marines and serves at the Vice President for the Marine Corp "Toys for Tots" program. He has also been very active in helping veterans having served as a former director of the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency.

Dennis is a graduate of Hofstra University and remains active in support of their wrestling program. The Esterbrook Award, Hofstra's most prestigious award for alumni, was awarded to Dennis in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the university. Dennis continues to support wrestling as a member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Long Island Wrestling and the downstate Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

We are pleased to honor Dennis Dunne as the recipient of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Medal of Courage.

