

'Hometown Heroes' program underway in northern Niagara

The "Hometown Heroes" banner program is slowly starting to gain recognition in northern Niagara County.

This initiative was introduced this fall in the towns of Lewiston and Porter, including the villages of Lewiston and Youngstown. It's modeled after similar programs in the Town of Niagara, the City of North Tonawanda and Town of Newfane. "Hometown Heroes" was most recently introduced in the Village of Wilson.

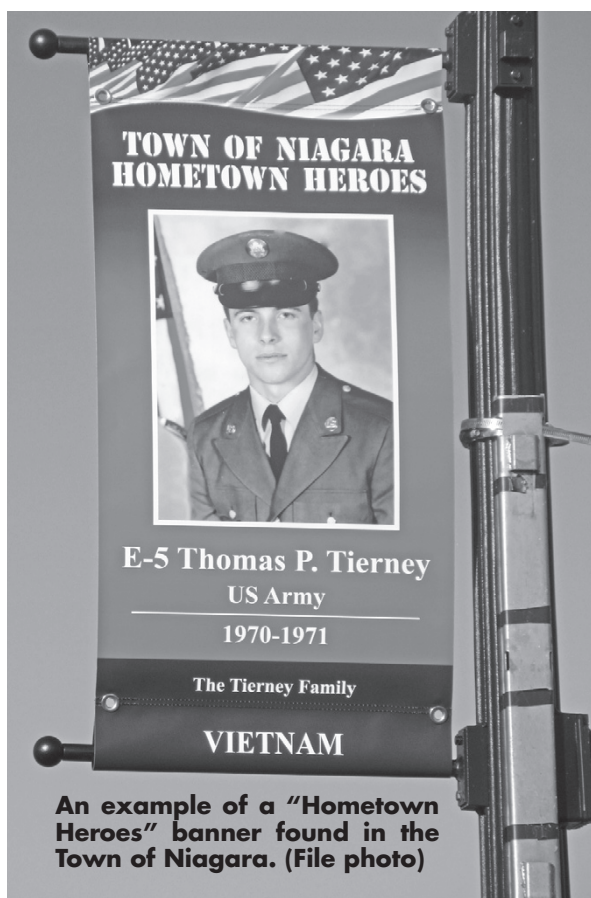
Typically, "Hometown Heroes" recognizes service members in the community by means of banners funded by sponsors that are placed on utility poles in prominent areas of the municipality.

Introduced in the early 2000s, "Hometown Heroes" currently has a number of communities participating nationwide. It recognizes "the sacrifice and commitment of those who served or presently served in the military," according to a description offered by the Town of Porter. "The banners can be purchased by friends, families, community organizations or businesses."

Currently, both the towns Lewiston and Porter are availing a sponsorship package to interested residents, businesses and organizations. This features a full-color banner measuring 66 inches by 30 inches in size and constructed of a durable vinyl fabric. The banner may include a patriotic theme along with the service member's photo and information on the service member.

Once complete, the banner will include the necessary hardware to allow for mounting on utility poles in a community. Cost to the interested sponsor is \$190 in Lewiston and Porter, and \$185 in the Village of Wilson. The banners are displayed from May through October of each year and remain the property of the participating sponsor (or can be stored by the municipality). Useful life of the banners is generally from three to five years.

Interested sponsors who may want to participate are asked to provide the service member's name, branch of service, as well as conflict or era of service. Branches include the U.S. Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, National Guard or National Reserve. Time periods of service are generally from current day to the wars and conflicts of past centuries that saw U.S. participation. Examples include the Persian Gulf/War on Terror (from 1990 to present day);



An example of a "Hometown Heroes" banner found in the Town of Niagara. (File photo)

Panama, Grenada, Lebanon or Vietnam (from 1964 to 1975); Korea (1950-55); World War II; World War I; the Spanish-American War; the Civil War era in the U.S.; and peacetime.

The service member recognized may be currently active, an honorably discharged veteran, MIA or having passed in the line of service.

Interested sponsors in the northern county area are best advised to contact their individual participating community for more information.

√ For those in the village and town of Lewiston, contact Historian Louise Maggard at Lewiston Town Hall at 716-754-8213.

√ Town of Porter, including the Village of Youngstown and hamlet of Ransomville, email Town-Historian@townofporter.net.

√ Village of Wilson, email vow@villageofwilson.org.

Milestone for program that gives children gift of safe, comfortable sleep

Submitted by Catholic Health

One of the most important factors to both our physical and mental health is sleep. A basic human need, it is the time when our body restores its energy sources and supports healthy brain function. Sleep is especially important for children and teens, as it aids in growth and development, memory and academic performance, and emotional wellbeing.

Unfortunately, quality sleep is not always accessible to all children, especially those living in at-risk communities.

When Sister Nora Sweeney, DC, a social worker at the Mount St. Mary's Neighborhood Health Center, witnessed children in the community she serves sleeping on floors, towels, even lawn chairs – she knew she had to act quickly. She brought this to the attention of Dave Maries, a member of the board of directors for the Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation, and he was incredibly moved. Dave decided that having a comfortable mattress, soft pillow, clean sheets and a warm quilt should not be a luxury to any child, and he and Sister Nora set out to find a solution immediately.

In 2019, purely a result of Sister Nora's passion to care for those she serves, and Dave's business acumen and outreach to contacts, "Beds for Kidz" was born to serve a much-needed purpose. The focus and mission of this program is to raise awareness about this devastating problem within underserved communities, raise funds for this initiative, and partner with bed manufacturers

to provide the necessity of bed packages to families in need.

These bed packages even include a book titled, "Just a Silly Little Caterpillar," by Uncle Brian, which was written to inspire the recipient to follow their dreams – and know that their current reality does not indicate their future.

What started with just 30 bed packages to begin the program, "Beds for Kidz" has now surpassed their 225th bed package! Two-hundred-twenty-five children are now enjoying sleep in the warmth, comfort and security of their own bed, when they otherwise would have not had this experience. They have also received the message that they are loved, cared for, and worthy of this simple luxury that many of us take for granted and to never give up hope.

Mount St. Mary's Foundation Executive Director Ashley Misko stated, "Beds for Kidz" was established and privately funded by a multitude of donors partnering with a wonderful corporation that chooses to remain anonymous. The Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation would like to celebrate them for giving the gift of restful sleep to a current total of 225 children! We share our immense gratitude for their support. A special heartfelt thank you to Sister Nora and Dave – because this could not have happened without your vision and diligent work!"

To find out more about this program, or to see how you can help, visit www.bedsforkidz.com or contact Misko at 716-298-2166 or Misko@chsbuffalo.org.

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