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Army Reserve Ambassador, Former State Veteran of the Year to be Guest Speaker at Wreaths Across America Event

Public Invited to Honor New Britain-Area Veterans at December 13 Ceremony

New Britain, Conn., December 6, 2014 – U.S. Army Reserve Ambassador Carl Venditto of Southington, a retired U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Colonel who grew up in New Britain and was named Connecticut State Veteran of the Year in 2006, will be a guest speaker at ceremonies celebrating Wreaths Across America Day at Fairview Cemetery on Saturday, December 13.

The public is invited to attend the 12 noon ceremonies, which will culminate a months-long fundraising effort spearheaded by the Disabled American Veterans, Hardware City Chapter 8 to bring the national Wreaths Across America movement to New Britain for the first time. A large gathering is expected and the public is advised to arrive early.

A shipment of more than 1,350 red bow-adorned holiday wreaths is expected to arrive in New Britain this week from the Maine-based non-profit organization Wreaths Across America, which honors service and sacrifice through the annual placement of memorial wreaths during the holiday season on veterans' gravesites at Arlington National Cemetery and other sites across the country. This year, Fairview Cemetery joins a growing list of more than 900 participating cemeteries and military memorials nationwide taking part in Wreaths Across America Day.

An army of local volunteers will place the wreaths on veterans' gravesites at Fairview beginning early Saturday morning in advance of the 12 noon ceremonies. Those interested in volunteering to place wreaths may call DAV Chapter 8 Service Officer and Wreaths Across America New Britain Chairman Dennis Taricani at (860) 829-2960. Volunteers are asked to arrive at 8 a.m. and park in a designated volunteer parking area at St. Jean's Baptiste Society, 209 Smalley Street, across the street from Fairview.

The ceremonies will feature a wide assortment of local veterans groups and guest participants. Mayor Erin Stewart of New Britain will join Venditto as a guest speaker. Other participants will include Master of Ceremonies John Lynch, past commandant of the Marine Corps League, Hardware City Detachment 781; the Reverend Joseph Crowley of Saint Joseph's Church, who will offer the invocation; New Britain Senior High School Madrigal Singers Jahira Flores, Gabriel Leardi, Charles Osborne and Cassandra Saxton, who will perform the National Anthem; New Britain Senior High School Marching Band members Lewis Robinson and Voshon Ashman, who will perform the cadence; the Marine Corps League Hardware City Detachment 781 Firing Detail; and New Britain Senior High School Marching Band members Lukasz Regucki and Kevin Griffin, who will perform taps.

Participating color guards will include those from the American Legion, Department of Connecticut; DAV Chapter 8; Franco-American War Veterans Post 26; Marine Corps League Hardware City Detachment 781; Polish Army Veterans/General Haller Post 111; Special Guerilla Unit Special Forces/Lao Veterans; and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 511.

As part of the ceremony, single remembrance wreaths will be placed honoring those who served in each branch of the service as well as POWs/MIAs. Making these symbolic placements will be Mike Wanik (Army); First Sargent Carlos Xavier (Marines); Robert Smith (Navy); Michael Kardok (Air Force); Don Naples (Coast Guard); Tom Bozek (Merchant Marines); and Ann Targonski-Brown (POWs/MIAs).

Major sponsors and supporters of Wreaths Across America New Britain include Stanley Black & Decker; New Britain Memorial-Sagarino Funeral Home; Whitson's School Nutrition; Olive Garden, West Hartford; The New Britain Herald; Sir Speedy Printing and Marketing Services, New Britain; the Greater New Britain Chamber of Commerce; the Consolidated School District of New Britain; the City of New Britain, Department of Parks & Recreation and Office of Veterans Affairs; and Franco American War Veterans Post 26.

Additional sponsors include Cambridge Specialty Company; Dennis Buden Public Relations, LLC; Home Sweet Home Realty, Berlin; Jewish War Veterans, Department of Connecticut; Jewish War Veterans Post 56; Marine Corps League, Hardware City Detachment 781; Peter Gladis Consulting, LLC; Polish Army Veterans/General Haller Post 111; VFW Post 511 Women's Auxiliary; and Westside Tavern. St. Jean's Baptiste Society is donating its facilities for volunteer parking and a warming station.

For more information, visit www.goldenkielbasa.org/wreathscrossamerica.html. Also, visit Wreaths Across America New Britain on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wreathsforourvets.

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