

## *New Hampshire Veterans Home Honors Fallen Heroes on Memorial Day*

Memorial Day Services were held at the New Hampshire Veterans Home (NHVH) on Monday, May 25, 2009. Residents of the Home, staff, family members, and friends attended the ceremonies.

Barry E. Conway, NHVH Commandant, welcomed residents, staff, and guests. David Clark, President of the NHVH Resident Council and a Vietnam War veteran, led the Pledge of Allegiance. Rev. William Paige, Joint Forces Headquarters Chaplain of the NH National Guard, gave the Invocation, and Brandon Heimlich, a student at the Belmont Middle School in Belmont, New Hampshire, read a Memorial Day message. Brandon and his Newfoundland dog, Fergie, have been volunteering at the Veterans Home for the past few months.

The Memorial Day Address was delivered by Major Tony J. Gagnon of the New Hampshire Army National Guard. Major Gagnon said, "I thank each and every one of you for your service and support to our great nation. Memorial Day is a time when we commemorate the service of men and women who have died serving this nation in uniform." He reflected,

"Many think of Memorial Day as the unofficial first day of summer, a time to plan the first weekend at the beach or a vacation spot, or a long holiday to catch the sales at the mall, but it is much more. It is a special day—a time to pause and reflect upon the sacrifices of our fellow citizens—those who gave their lives in service, the families whose lives changed forever with the death of a loved one, the lives suddenly and cruelly shattered, the losses suffered by friends, neighbors, and the extended community."



*Major Tony J. Gagnon of the New Hampshire Army National Guard gave the Memorial Day Address*

Gagnon encouraged the audience "to honor this day, perhaps by flying the American flag and the POW/MIA flag." He also suggested that people observe the national moment of silence at 3:00 PM, include time to pause and pray, and place flags on the graves of local service members. He added that veterans of all wars "are all heroes, just like all of you, who gave all to keep us free here at home and abroad."

The Memorial Day Proclamation from New Hampshire Governor John Lynch was read by Garry D. Naughton, NHVH Director of Operations, who also read the Veterans Home Remembrance, a tribute to NHVH residents who passed away during the previous year.

The NHVH Memorial Day Program also featured musical selections by the Winnisquam Regional High School Band, conducted by Music Director Kirk Young; as well as the Color Guard Presentation by American Legion Post 49 and VFW Post 1698. The Benediction was given by Rev. Paige.

Letters were read from Congressman Paul Hodes, Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen. Special guests included NHVH Board of Managers President Don Caron; Board Secretary Junius "Bud" Owens; and Board member John Rubery; NH State Representatives Jenn Coffey, Michael Rollo, Fran Wendelboe, and Deborah Wheeler; Russ Armstrong, Ph.D., of the State Council on Aging, and his father, Al Armstrong—World War II veteran; Jim Lefebvre of the NH Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America; Jennifer Perkins of Congressman



Paul Hodes' office; Chuck Gilboy of Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter's office; and former Representative Bill Tobin and his wife, Faith.

The New Hampshire Veterans Home was established in Tilton in 1890 as the Soldier's Home for Civil War Veterans. One of just four New Hampshire nursing homes to win the 2007 Quality of Life Award from the NH Department of Health & Human Services, the facility is home to 200 men and women who have served their country and fellow New Hampshire citizens. The mission of NHVH is to provide high quality, professional long-term care services to the Granite State's elderly and disabled veterans. NHVH is the only long-term care facility in the Granite State that is dedicated exclusively to veterans.



*Memorial Day photos:*

*Far left - NH Veterans Home residents Bob Kelsey, Dave Pryor, and Larry Draper at the Memorial Day flag ceremony;*

*Left - Major Tony Gagnon and Rev. William Paige;*

*Below - Russ Armstrong from the State Council on Aging with NHVH Commandant Barry Conway and Russ's Dad, Al Armstrong, a World War II veteran.*

