

Dezil's Dispatch

Issue 016

Newsletter

Winter 2024

Dezil's Dispatch is sponsored by the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

DONATE TO OUR FUND

Wreaths Across America
Our Annual Wreath Laying at West Point Cemetery





Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve. Teach the next generation the value of freedom. That's exactly what volunteers with the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund did on a bitter cold Saturday this December. Dozens of people packed a bus and departed PNC Arts Center in Holmdel for the annual "Wreaths Across America" wreath laying event at West Point Cemetery in New York.

First, the Zilinski family, along with other Gold Star families, were recognized by the United States Army for the sacrifices they have made for our freedom during a ceremony at West Point Chapel. It was the largest crowd in attendance at this ceremony in several years. Each family was presented with a wreath to lay on their loved one's gravestone. It is hard to believe it has been 19 years since Dennis was laid to rest at West Point, the school he loved so much before losing his life fighting for our freedom in Iraq.

As we do every year, family and friends gathered for a group photo to remember our Dennis at his

grave. We remember his smile that could light up a room, his sense of humor and kind heart, and his dedication to a life of service. Nicholas Codispoti and his mother, Michele, joined us for photos at Dennis' grave. Nicholas, one of our scholarship recipients at Christian Brothers Academy in Lincroft, raised enough money this year to purchase more than one thousand wreaths to lay at West Point.

This heartfelt effort beautifully encapsulates the spirit of remembrance, gratitude, and community. It honors the sacrifices of Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II, and his family, while highlighting the efforts of the Memorial Fund to keep his legacy alive. Through Nicholas's participation in this meaningful way, we teach the next generation about the price of freedom. His efforts remind us that honoring those who served is not only about remembrance but also about inspiring future leaders to value and protect the freedoms we hold dear.







A Family's Dedication to Service
Honoring the Legacy of Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski II



Marion and Dennis Zilinski, Gold Star parents and co-founders of the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund, were awarded the prestigious Meritorious Public Service Award by the Department of the Army following our “Wreaths Across America” event this year at West Point Academy.

The award recognizes their extraordinary contributions to the military community from August 2023 to July 2024. The Zilinski’s work, rooted in honoring their son Dennis’ legacy, has provided

invaluable support to service members and their families. Their humility and dedication continue to inspire others, transforming their grief into a powerful force for good. By providing critical support to military families and ensuring that their son's spirit lives on, "the Zilinskis exemplify the highest ideals of service and compassion." Their story serves as a reminder of the profound impact that love, resilience, and selflessness can have on the lives of countless others.

During the ceremony, Dennis Zilinski expressed his humility and gratitude, stating, "We're just humbled and proud that we were able to do this for military men and women, and certainly without your support, we can't. West Point was certainly Dennis' love." Dennis added, "We don't look for anything. Our main goal is to keep our son's memory and spirit alive." Adding another layer of significance to the timing of this award, is that the couple's youngest child and Memorial Fund Board Member, Matt Zilinski, will be returning home from Syria soon. Marion shared, "Matt will have his feet on U.S. soil soon, and it just gives us more drive to help other military families."

Matt, along with other Memorial Fund Board Members, Joanne Trust and Steve Hoptay (President), were also honored by the Department of the Army with certificates for their dedication to service members and their families.



A Dose of Dennis



For those that didn't have the amazing opportunity to know Dennis.....he was a Christmas baby!

Happy Birthday in Heaven Dennis! 12.23.81

*****We need your memories and stories about Dennis so those who never got the pleasure of meeting and knowing him can get a glimpse into who Dennis was. If you'd like to share a short story about Dennis in an upcoming issue, please send us an email at runwithdennis@yahoo.com.**

Give Back Night II
Westlake Golf and Country Club
By Nick Pappas





Give Back Night II on Sunday, November 3, 2024, was once again a huge success. Our troops often need some personal items and snacks they cannot easily find when deployed. Attendees were asked to bring donations to the clubhouse which were gathered and will be shipped to the troops. Guests received raffle tickets and there were 3 gift baskets donated by Livoti's Old World Market, and the Panico family donated two of the baskets. All proceeds are used for donatable items and shipping costs.

The Westlake community's response was once again, truly remarkable. John Tapanis addressed the guests and recognized the Panico and Zilinski families and the numerous volunteers that made this evening possible. Also in attendance were 2 veterans who were recipients of service dogs.

A sit-down dinner was served by The Grille. Westlake salad, ravioli and chicken parmigiana were served family style.

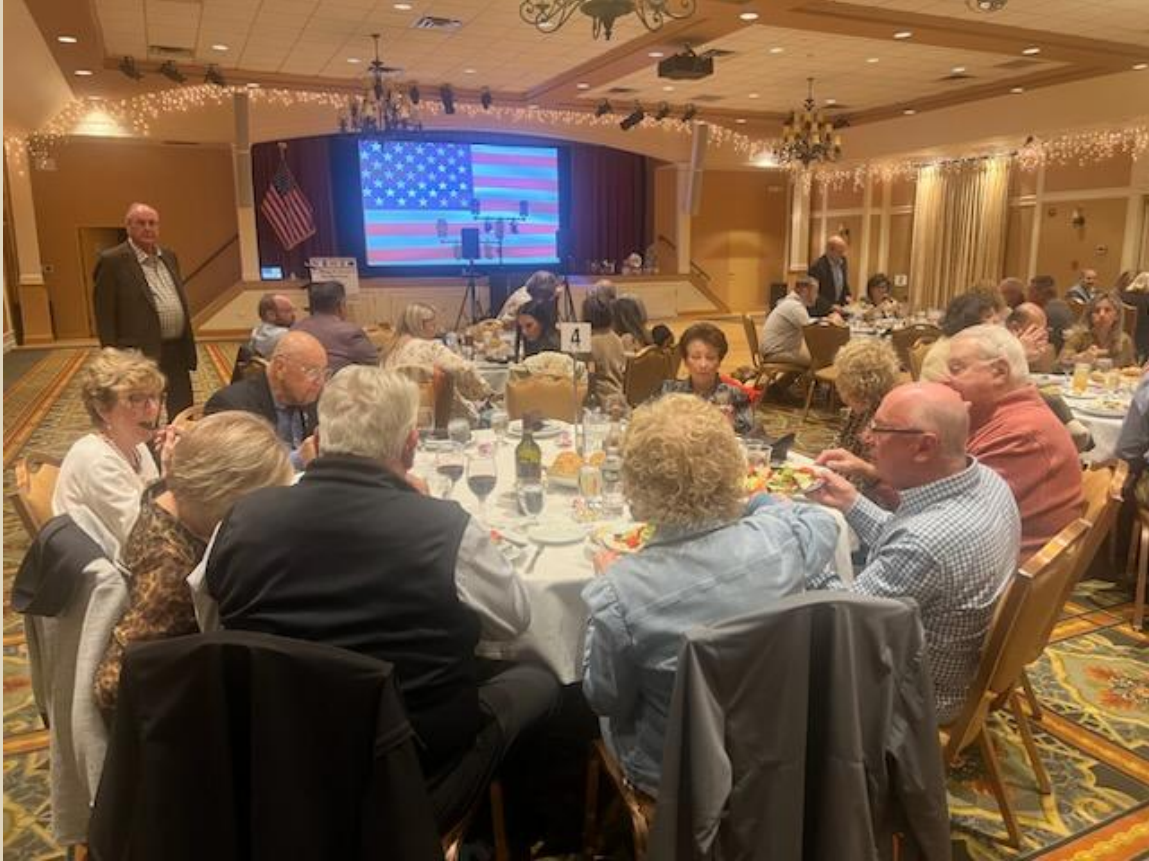
Following dinner, Marion Zilinski shared a video from her son Matthew, who was stationed in Syria thanking Westlake for their generosity. Matthew is now back home following his deployment, as well as all of the members of the NJ Army National Guardsmen that were deployed.

Dennis Zilinski took the opportunity to inform the crowd on the process of getting these donations to the troops. A huge turnout of Westlake Veterans Club volunteers turned up Monday morning and over 60 boxes were made ready for shipping.

Westlake resident Laura Sliwak who currently works for Abbott Nutrition and was able to secure a generous donation of Abbot products including hydration and nutrition drinks worth \$15,000. John Tapinis took over as MC and raffle host. Marion and Dennis Zilinski presented Debbie and Joe Panico with a framed American flag that was ordered flown by Major Matthew Zilinski, over the Rumalyn Landing Zone in Ryz, Syria, in their honor. An additional flag was also ordered to be flown by Major Zilinski over the Rumalyn Landing Zone and was presented to the Westlake Community for their tremendous support, which was accepted by our concierge Jenna Pappalardo.

Closing remarks were provided by Dennis Zilinski who thanked all those for attending, and the numerous volunteers that made the event possible.





A Memorable "Run with Dennis" at PNC Arts Center







This year's "Run with Dennis" at PNC Arts Center in Holmdel was a truly special gathering of remembrance, community, and honor. Although we missed the presence of Matt Zilinski, who is currently deployed in Syria with the Army National Guard, his wife Brie and two of their three daughters stepped in to inspire the crowd.

Taking center stage before the start of the 5K Run/Walk, Brie and her daughters shared heartfelt words about the sacrifices they've made over the past year without their husband and father by their side. They spoke of the challenges of his absence, the phone calls they look forward to each day, and how much they miss him. Their courage and grace reminded everyone of the strength of military families and the depth of their sacrifices.

The crowd, wearing their vibrant yellow, long-sleeve t-shirts emblazoned with the words, "It's Our Duty to Preserve their Memory and an Honor to Run," was visibly moved by their testimony. This powerful message captured the heart of the event—honoring those who serve and supporting the families who carry the torch of their legacy.

The 5K Run/Walk brought together a large group of runners, walkers, and supporters, all united by a common purpose: to preserve the memory of those we've lost and to support service members and their families. The energy, camaraderie, and dedication of everyone involved made this year's event truly unforgettable.

Thank you to everyone who participated, volunteered, and supported this event. Together, we continue to honor the sacrifices made by our service members and their families.







A Night for the Troops: Our 15th Annual Pasta Dinner





The Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund is deeply grateful for the dedication and spirit of Christian Brothers Academy (CBA) and its Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) club in hosting the 15th Annual Pasta Dinner, "A Night for the Troops." This cherished event honors the legacy of our Dennis, a proud CBA graduate from the Class of 2000, whose life of service continues to inspire meaningful action within the community.

The pasta dinners serve a greater purpose beyond a delicious meal. The proceeds are used to purchase and send essential supplies to our deployed service members. These care packages remind our troops that they are not forgotten and that their sacrifices are deeply appreciated.

We extend our deepest thanks to Mr. Bill Frake, the dedicated faculty advisor of SADD, for his exceptional leadership in making this evening a success. Under his guidance, the young men of CBA worked tirelessly to organize and prepare a remarkable event in Brother Frank Byrne Dining Hall, even preparing hundreds of homemade meatballs and stuffed peppers!



**A Special Morning for Children of Deployed Troops
in New Jersey and their Families**





“Sharing a breakfast and hearing the supportive words is nice. It’s comforting to have a community within a community that understands what we’re going through, because they’re going through it, too. An event like this brings us all together, and it gives us someone to share similar struggles with, including both the highs and lows,” said Courtney, a mom with two little boys, ages three and nine months old. Her husband is deployed until April.

We met Courtney and her family at the Annual Holiday Breakfast sponsored by the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund in mid-December at Pemberton Early Childhood Education Center for children of deployed soldiers. “We want you to know how much we appreciate your sacrifice, taking care of the home, the kids, all of it. It’s hard. My daughter-in-law has been doing it for the last year with three young girls while my son Matthew has been deployed in Syria. It’s not easy. We salute you and want to thank all of you for your service for our freedom,” said Marion Zilinski, Co Founder and Board Member of the Zilinski Memorial Fund and Dennis’ mother.

The celebration included a buffet breakfast with egg soufflé, roasted potatoes, and French toast for the children of deployed troops who attend Pemberton Early Childhood Education Center and Fort Dix Elementary School. The Memorial Fund donated gift cards to the pre-school students who also received stuffed toys thanks to our partnership with PetSmart. Additionally, parents registered for the event each received gift cards. Carrie, a mother of two, whose husband will also not be home until April said, “It just brings us a little Christmas right now, and it’s what we all need.”



Trees for Troops
One of Our Favorite Days of the Year!





"Oh soldier, how I thank you for protecting our freedom," a young student read aloud, the heartfelt words capturing the spirit of the day at the 21st Annual Trees for Troops event at Dees Nursery in Oceanside, New York. The event brought the community together to honor and support our deployed service members during the holiday season with more than 150 local school children, police officers, veterans, families, and Girl Scouts in the crowd.

This cherished tradition, supported by The Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund in partnership

with DHL, ensures that real Christmas trees, along with lights, ornaments, and Hanukkah items for Jewish service members, are delivered to troops stationed in the Middle East, Africa, and around the globe. Homemade letters written by local school children accompanied the shipments, adding personal touches to the holiday cheer.

Marion and Dennis Zilinski, founders of the Memorial Fund, addressed the crowd during the ceremony before presenting their annual donation. Marion shared the joyous news that her youngest child, Major Matthew Zilinski, had returned safely to the United States from Syria after a year-long deployment, where he had been separated from his wife and three girls. She expressed her gratitude, calling it the best birthday gift ever, as her birthday is in December, and remarked that this Christmas would be a merry one. Marion also spoke about the sacrifices Matt's family had made during his deployment, encouraging the children to imagine how challenging it would be to go an entire year without one of their parents. Her words resonated deeply with the crowd, reminding everyone of the true meaning of service and sacrifice.

Following the ceremony, a police-escorted caravan transported the trees to JFK Airport, where attendees helped load them onto a DHL plane bound for our troops overseas. Complete with a visit by Santa Claus who landed on the tarmac in a helicopter, the day was a beautiful experience for all involved. Through the efforts of community members, sponsors, and volunteers, the Trees for Troops event ensures that our service members far from home feel remembered and appreciated during the holidays.



Special Thanks to Quentin and Ellen Walsh!



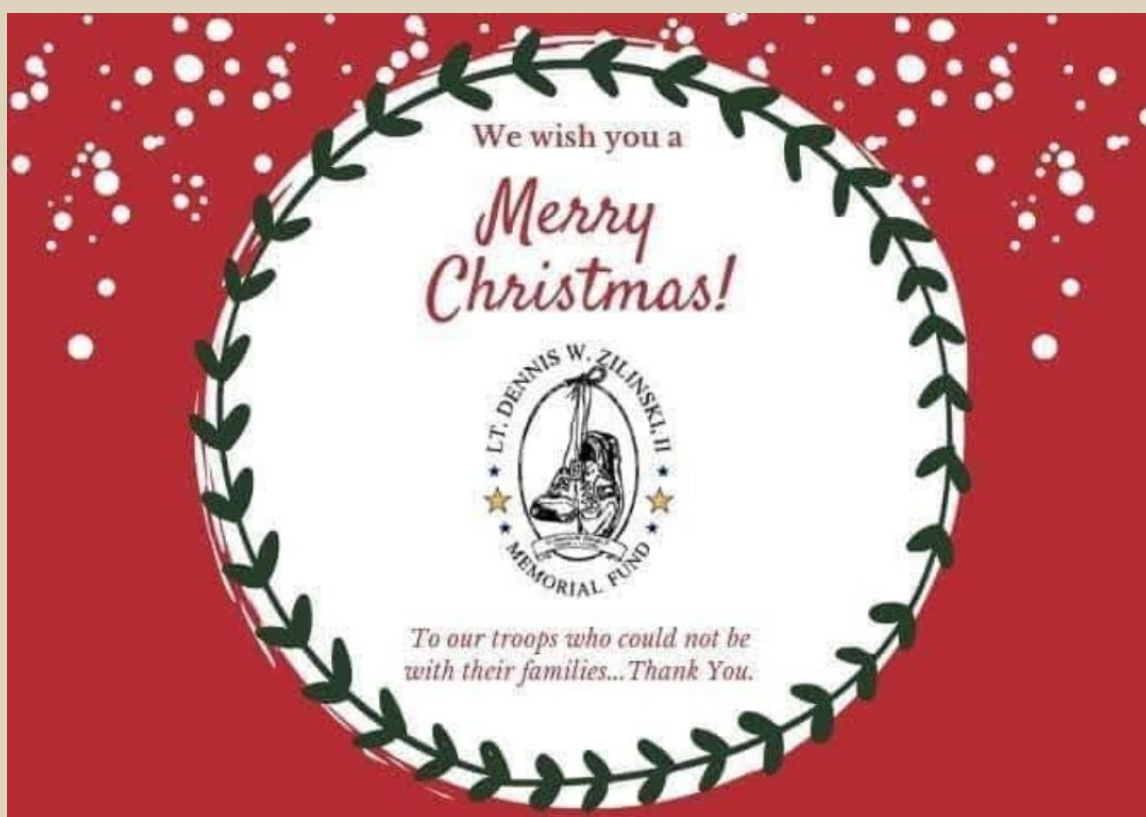
We were also honored by the presence of our dedicated board member Quentin Walsh and his lovely wife Ellen, who made the journey from Florida to participate. As they do every year, the couple attended both the Trees for Troops event and the Wreaths Across America event at West Point that preceded it.

Quentin and Ellen also represent the Memorial Fund when our service dogs graduate at the K9s for Warriors Training Facility in Punta Vedra, Florida. Their steadfast support exemplifies the commitment and unity of the community who stand with us at the Memorial Fund and help us fulfill our mission to support wounded American veterans, service members, and their families. Quentin and Ellen, we are profoundly grateful.



Happy Hanukkah!

The Festival of Lights





Ways You Can Help!



MOST NEEDED ITEMS

**GATORADE DRINK POWDER
GRANOLA BARS
TRAIL MIX
APPLE SAUCE
CHIPS/DORITOS/
PRETZELS/SNACKS
CANNED SOUPS
CEREAL (CHEERIOS, RAISIN BRAN,
FROSTED FLAKES, COCOA PUFFS)
POPCORN
COFFEE K CUPS OR GROUND
PROTEIN BARS
POP TARTS
BREAKFAST BARS
OATMEAL
BEEF JERKY
DEODORANT
TUBE ONLY - SHAVING CREAM
PAPER PLATES
PLASTIC SILVERWARE
RICE (10 MINUTE RICE BAGS)
PASTA
MAC-N-CHEESE
CANDY/COOKIES
LEMONADE AND ICED TEA MIX
TEA BAGS**

Please consider buying "most needed items" from our list above. You can purchase them online from your favorite retail website and have them shipped directly to us at:

Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund
76 Crooked Stick Road
Jackson, NJ 08527

The Memorial Fund will cover the postage and box the items according to government protocol for overseas deliveries to our service members. Thank you for your help and support!

#RockYourFlag



Let's not forget to #RockYourFlag! Proudly hang our stars and stripes, take a picture, and post it. Be sure to use our hashtag #RockYourFlag and tag us!! Be LOUD AND PROUD!

2025 Upcoming Events

Row with Dennis at CBA - January 18th

Markham Cares at Markham Place School in Little Silver - January 24th

Month of the Military Child Breakfast - April 3rd

[DONATE NOW](#)

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)

The Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law (Tax ID # 03-0601077).

Check us out on social media...



Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski II Memorial Fund | P.O. Box 124 | Adelphia, NJ 07710 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!