

Editorial: Kudos to those who have heart

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CHEERS: To the Middletown Fire Department for providing 126 years of pride and inspiration with its annual parade. While the news this week was the decision to hold the parade every third year in the future, a response to declining participation and increasing cost, the community knows that what it owes these firefighters goes well beyond a parade. The new cycle will allow the department to call attention to the service of the outgoing chiefs, who serve three-year terms, and those chiefs never fail to acknowledge the hard work and tireless spirit of those who serve the department and the community. The Middletown Fire Department dates back to 1859, so this year's parade will mark the department's 158th anniversary.

CHEERS: To the Newburgh school district for adding two special honorees to the ceremony for students graduating in August. Frances Warner would have graduated more than 80 years ago but had to leave school during the Depression and work seven days a week to help support her widowed mother. Frank Robinson would have graduated a generation later but instead was undergoing basic training and eventually served in Vietnam. Last month, the two wore the traditional Newburgh Free Academy blue graduation robes and gold sashes and were the first to have their names called. "It feels like I'm the luckiest lady in the world," said Warner, the founder of Meals on Wheels of Greater Newburgh. Meals on Wheels' current board began looking for ideas to honor the organization's 45th anniversary this year, and Warner's 100th birthday on Dec. 14. Robinson, who now lives in New Windsor, left a high school in Brooklyn to enlist and later came to Newburgh to work.

CHEERS: To Danny Mulvey of Chester whose battle with cancer has kept him from joining the U.S. Armed forces but whose admiration and dedication was repaid in a recent ceremony. Mulvey, now 20, has been in and out of hospitals most of his life and is in hospice care. Although he's weak and uses a wheelchair, he insisted on standing for the honor. With assistance from two Army officers in camouflage he recited the oath, standing in front of the Chester Fire Department's tower ladder truck. An adoring crowd of about 400 family and friends who packed the equipment bay at Chester's Walton Engine & Hose Co. gave him a standing ovation. "This is so awesome," Danny said as soldiers piled on Army-style gifts – a hat, an Army T-shirt, a West Point sweatshirt and much more. "I don't even know how to say thank you."

CHEERS: To the Institute of Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz. Director Amy Nitza and Rebecca Rodriguez, the program and operations manager, will be leading 20 students from the institute to Texas over the college's winter break, from Dec. 21 to Jan. 23, to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey. The institute has helped out in similar situations before, including during the response to Hurricane Katrina and earthquake devastation in the Caribbean country of Haiti. "Every semester you prepare for this," Nitza said. "Then you are in a situation of not wanting any disaster to happen but ready if one does."



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