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West Orange to Hold Annual Memorial Day Ceremony

West Orange High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Will Host Event

May 19, 2013 – West Orange, NJ – Mayor Robert D. Parisi and the Township of West Orange will hold its Annual Memorial Day ceremony, to begin 10:00 AM Monday, May 26th at Township Hall. For the first time since its inception, the event will be presented by the West Orange High School's Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

"The focus of the Air Force Junior ROTC is leadership training and civic responsibility," said instructor Major Joseph Marchesini. "It is a testament to the town that they have placed so much confidence in these exemplary students. They are honored to host the ceremony and are looking forward to showing pride in their community and country."

For the last 15 years, the centerpiece of the annual ceremony was presentation of the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, the state's highest honor for military service. In that time, 360 West Orange combat veterans received the award; the largest contingent in any New Jersey municipality. As a result, the Township lays claim to the title of "New Jersey's Most Decorated Community."

"It was a wonderful initiative while it could be sustained," said former Event Chair Gary Englert, "But with veterans comprising no more than 7% of the population, and combat veterans being fewer still, there's not an infinite pool of those eligible for the award. It's time to pass the torch and involve the next generation."

"Having the students of the Air Force Junior ROTC program host this ceremony symbolizes a 'changing of the guard' for this honored event," Parisi said. "This is always a proud day for West Orange as well as for veterans that we honor and their families. I know that these model high school students will deliver a fresh perspective on this time-honored tradition."

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