



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO UNVEILS NEW VETERANS AREA AT FREDERICK DOUGLASS GREATER ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

New area honors local Medal of Honor recipient Corporal William T. Perkins Jr.

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today unveiled the new William T. Perkins Jr. Veterans Center at the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport. This area is a tribute to Marine Corporal William T. Perkins Jr., a Vietnam War photographer from Rochester, New York.

Perkins received the Medal of Honor for his courage and sacrifice on the battlefield. On October 12, 1967, a grenade landed near him and three other soldiers while he was documenting a firefight at an enemy base camp near Quang Tri. To save three fellow soldiers, Corporal Perkins yelled "incoming grenade!" and threw himself on the explosive, absorbing the blast.

"It's fitting that we name this area for a man who willingly gave his life for the lives of his fellow soldiers. The sacrifice of Corporal Perkins highlights the risks faced by all who serve our nation," **said County Executive Bello**. "Considering the sacrifices that our veterans make, it's rewarding to provide them a space for reflection, family reunions after deployment, and education for the public to honor their service. This tribute to our veterans is possible thanks to Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York State Department of Transportation, our New York State delegation, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and Congressman Joe Morelle."

William T. Perkins Jr. was born in Rochester and lived here until his early teens, when his family moved to California. It was here in Rochester that he learned of his family's rich history in serving our country. His maternal great-grandfather fought at Gettysburg, his grandfather commanded a unit in Guadalcanal and his father flew a B-24 Bomber in Italy during WWII.

The center is part of the \$37 million airport renovation project that was largely funded by an \$18 million New York State Department of Transportation grant and \$16 in million federal funds.

"I'm proud that with the opening of the William T. Perkins Jr. Veterans Center, our community has a space that both honors the courage of heroes like Corporal Perkins and

provides an area of reflection and support for veterans and their families,” **said Congressman Joe Morelle.** “In Washington, I’m committed to continuing the fight to ensure our servicemembers receive the care, recognition, and respect they deserve.”

State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez said, “The opening of this beautiful new veterans area is a major milestone in the transformation of the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport into a world-class travel gateway and it’s also a poignant reminder that we should always honor and never forget the selfless service and sacrifices made by those who served our nation. The heroism of U.S. Marine Corporal William Thomas Perkins Jr., a Rochester native and Medal of Honor winner for whom the area is named, should never be forgotten and this new veterans area will help ensure that his legacy endures for future generations.”

The new Veterans Area provides a much larger space to honor our local veterans. This space offers relaxation, a place to gather, and features exhibits honoring veterans from every branch of the military. This area will also host veterans taking part in the airport’s frequent Honor Flights. The center includes many artifacts and historical displays put together by the Military History Society of Rochester and had strong support from the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 20.

“The William T. Perkins Jr. Veterans Center is a labor of love for the veteran community,” **said Chuck Baylis, Military History Society of Rochester.** “The new space showcases veterans’ stories and highlights the significant role local businesses played in supporting our troops with technology and products. Thank you to County Executive Bello and all who helped make this day possible.”

New York State Senator Jeremy Cooney said, “Our brave veterans have made countless sacrifices to protect our community, it’s only right that we give them a space of their own to join together with family and friends and reflect on their service to our nation. This new area is the latest in a string of renovations to provide the kind of airport Rochesterians deserve and I am grateful to County Executive Bello, Governor Hochul, my colleagues in the legislature, and our federal partners for making this project a reality. Named after one of Rochester’s own heroes, the William T. Perkins Jr. Veterans Center will provide a space for education and comfort to our community for years to come.”

“It is an honor to have the beautiful new Veterans Center at Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport named after Corporal William T. Perkins Jr., who is part of a proud legacy of Rochesterians who have devoted their lives to serving and protecting others,” **said New York State Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson.** “This welcoming, restful space not only provides respite for our veterans, but an opportunity for travelers to reflect on their service and sacrifice. Thank you, County Executive Bello, New York State Department of Transportation, Empire State Development, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, Congressman Joe Morelle, my State delegation colleagues, and the Rochester

Building and Construction Trades, for the collaborative partnership that resulted in this latest addition to our airport.”

The William T. Perkins Jr. Veterans Area is now open to the public and will host its first Honor flight this Sunday, June 1, 2025.

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Media inquiries:

Steve Barz, Director of Communications

SteveBarz@MonroeCounty.gov

(585) 753-1064

Molly Clifford, Deputy Director of Communications

MollyClifford@MonroeCounty.gov

(585) 233-3699