

ADVOCATE **DRUM**



Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization

DECEMBER 2020



The New Transitional J Certificate

Stephen Todd

At its October meeting, the New York State Board of Regents gave final approval to the new “Transitional J” Teaching Certificate, which will provide license reciprocity for the spouses of active duty military personnel whose duty station is in New York State. The new certificate had received initial approval by the Board of Regents in July, and after the required public

comment period, the final approval allows the new certificate to be available beginning November 4, 2020. This follows several years of efforts and advocacy by Advocate Drum to create this much needed opportunity for military spouses, who had previously experienced many daunting hurdles as they attempted to transfer teaching certificates from other states to New York.

To be eligible for the Transitional J Certificate, a military spouse must either hold a valid certificate from another U.S State or territory or have completed a teacher education program. Candidates must have an employment and support commitment from a school district or BOCES as a teacher in the area for which certification is being sought. The certificate will be valid for 1 year, during which time the candidate must pass two New York State certification exams required of all certified teachers in the state. Once those two tests have been passed, the Transitional J Certificate can be renewed for an additional 2 years, during which time the candidate can complete the requirements for a permanent certificate (as all teachers must do). This Transitional J Certificate will allow qualified military spouses to go right to work in New York Schools without all the hurdles that previously made it very challenging to do so. It is a big win for our military families, our schools, and our communities. ■

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**Chair's Corner**

By: Tom Carman

2020 has been a year that none of us will soon forget. Each of us has faced our own personal challenges, but as organizations we've pulled together to support the great North Country. The endless commitment of Nancy and our volunteers helped Advocate Drum accomplish much during 2020. With their help, Advocate Drum has

focused its efforts on a range of issues.

In January 2020 Advocate Drum learned about the creation and stationing consideration of a fourth Army Corps Headquarters. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's Office notified us that Fort Drum had made the list and asked Advocate Drum to submit a response to the Community Support Value Analysis (CSVA) attributes on behalf of the North Country community. The CSVA attributes addressed in our response included professional licenses, housing, schools, medical and Intergovernmental Support Agreements.

With the support of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, Advocate Drum immediately initiated a Petition and Letters of Support campaign. Local media outlets assisted by producing advertisements which ran on television, radio, newspaper, and the internet. The campaign ran for a two-week period. The strong support of the North Country community is reflected in the signatures, letters of support and resolutions we were able to garner in that quick two-weeks: **3,260 petition signatures, 66 letters of support and 5 resolutions**. While Fort Knox is the new home to this Corps Headquarters, the North Country stood out once again with an incredible response and show of support for Fort Drum and our nation's military.

In early 2020, we celebrated our Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army F. Anthony Keating who spent 24 years serving our community in that role and 30 years serving on the Board of Directors of Advocate Drum. CASAs are a vital part of the Army, promoting good relations between the Army and the public and advising the Secretary about regional issues. In his role as CASA, Mr. Keating was not only responsible for Fort Drum, but the National Guard, the Reserves and recruitment for Northern York state. A paver has been placed at the Honor the Mountain monument at Thompson Park in honor of Mr. Keating's years of service to the community. We are thrilled that Tony agreed to serve as a Director Emeriti to our Board.

During its first Board meeting of 2020, we welcomed Joseph M. Butler Jr. as Mr. Keating's successor in the role as CASA, Northern New York. Mr. Butler is the former Mayor of the City of Watertown, and we all look forward to supporting and working with him in this new role.

Like most every business the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted Advocate Drum operations. With concerns about the financial impact on Advocate Drum's operations, in terms of membership dues and the unlikelihood of grant money from the federal or state level, the Executive Committee made the decision to reduce office hours during this pandemic. As a result, Nancy Datoush worked one day per week and was furloughed for the remainder of the week for a three-month period. We are glad Nancy could return to work full-time on August 3rd.

One of the biggest accomplishments was the New York State Board of Regents approval

to the new "Transitional J" Teaching Certificate, which will provide license reciprocity for the spouses of active duty military personnel whose duty station is in New York State. This is a HUGE WIN for our military families and for our area schools, as it will allow these excellent teaching candidates to begin teaching right away in New York, without the traditional hurdles and red tape that have made the process of acquiring a NYS teaching certificate very challenging for military spouses.

Advocate Drum thanks Stephen Todd and the Education Committee for their commitment in this achievement. The impact this will have on Fort Drum's relevancy is immeasurable.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was approved in July and included language that established Fort Drum as the preferred site for the location of a land-based missile defense underlayer. A special thank you to Congresswoman Elise Stefanik for her diligent efforts in securing this success.

Also in this year's NDAA, a pilot program was approved to provide federal funding to assist state and local governments and not-for-profit member owned utility services to address deficiencies in "community infrastructure" that is supportive of military installations. A group of Advocate Drum members met to help facilitate a process to identify potential eligible shovel-ready projects. Outreach was made to the three County Administrators and Watertown's City Manager.

The group, which included the Fort Drum Garrison, ultimately vetted six projects before recommending the Watertown YMCA's project. We believed that this project best fit Department of Defense's (DOD) desire that funding support projects that enhance the military quality of life, resilience, and military value to the installation. This project was the highest priority for Fort Drum and the unanimous choice by the group given its impact and construction readiness.

In July, Fort Drum announced a PEA and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact that analyzed and evaluated the potential environmental impacts of increasing mission and training activities at Fort Drum Army Installation and within the

Local Flying Area of Fort Drum. Environmental consequences were analyzed for two action alternatives; conducting high-intensity, multi-day training events per year to replicate multi-domain battle either two or six times per year, as well as the No Action Alternative. Advocate Drum reviewed the PEA and its findings and provided a Letter of Support on behalf of the North Country Community during the comment period.

Our Regional Economic Impact Statement is updated annually and developed in concert with Fort Drum and Jefferson County, and 2020 was no exception. The overall economic impact for the region was \$1.7 billion. David Zembiec, Board Treasurer, presented the Economic Impact information at our annual Membership meeting shedding light on the direct, indirect, and induced impacts of Fort Drum spending on the tri-county region and New York State.

Stephen Hyjek, who serves as Governor Cuomo's Senior Public Policy Advisor in DC on military matters continues to provide us with insight into various issues related to, National Defense Authorization Act (defense funding), military construction (MILCON) project funding, and Fort Drum. This helps prepare us for what's ahead at the national level and our quarterly meetings with the Fort Drum Garrison provides us with an opportunity to discuss issues and opportunities facing the Fort Drum community.

In 2021, look for Advocate Drum's Interviews and Insights. Question and Answer interviews will be held with individuals speaking on a variety of topics including the Soldier and Family; Protecting our Nation; a Local Perspective; and Big Army to name a few. Keep an eye out for your invitation in January.

With the hope that 2021 brings an end to COVID 19, we will once again hold membership meeting in all three counties and co-sponsor Business After Hours with the NNY-Fort Drum Chapter of AUSA.

I wish you the happiest of holidays and please stay safe. ■

I ♥ DRUM



2020 Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence

Fort Drum is known for achieving excellence in all areas of installation management – whether it's enhancing the quality of life, being responsible environmental stewards or improving efficiency and morale in the workforce. The Department of Defense has recognized these efforts by naming Fort Drum a winner of the 2020 Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence.

"When we receive an honor such as this, it is a reflection of our entire installation and the community as a whole," said Col. Jeffery Lucas, Fort Drum garrison commander. "Everyone contributes – our civilian workforce, leaders, Soldiers, family members, and volunteers. It is a collective effort, and I couldn't be prouder of everyone who lives and works at Fort Drum."

The Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence recognizes the outstanding and innovative performances of the people who operate and maintain U.S. military installations.

Award nominees were selected based on performance criteria such as mission support, energy and environment, unit morale, safety and health, communications, and security.

Fort Drum achieved key milestones in energy resiliency, to include 100-percent renewable energy sustainability, two power-source redundancy and 14-day generator capacity. The post saved \$1.9 million by establishing an After-Action Review facility within a repurposed furniture store and food court, using Public Works personnel on the project instead of contracting the work.

Additionally, solar walls installed at 53 facilities project an annual natural gas savings of \$32,000 and the Fort Drum Recycling Program reused 215,000 gallons of oil and 8,000 gallons of antifreeze.

Among the quality-of-life initiatives, a "Spouses Welcome" event was established to help acclimate new community members to Fort Drum, and the Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC) program provides confidential, non-medical counseling services for Soldiers and family members.

Fort Drum also implemented innovative programs and best practices to develop Soldier and civilian leaders, such as Team Member Orientation, LEADER Program, Teamwork and Respect Unit Strength Training (TRUST) and a hands-on Supervisor Development Course.

"Fort Drum is often referred to as 'The Army's Best Kept Secret,' though we would prefer that everyone knows just how truly



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Fort Drum's Role In Missile Defense Continues With New and Evolving Opportunities Ahead

Kevin Jordan

This past July Congresswoman Stefanik announced that Fort Drum was named as the preferred site for the location of a land-based missile defense underlayer. This was welcome news for greater Fort Drum community, especially following the prior announcement in June 2019 that Fort Drum had been selected as the preferred location for an east coast missile defense site. So let's start with a bit of background information to better understand what the recent announcement means for the future development of missile defense systems at Fort Drum.

In May 2014 the US Missile Defense Agency (MDA) announced that four sites would be studied for the potential location of an East Coast missile defense site including Fort Drum. At that time, and still today, there are two existing sites in the U.S. that have Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) systems, one at Fort Greely, Alaska, and the other at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. The initiative began with a comprehensive look at each potential location as part of a federally mandated process called an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS. The MDA completed the lengthy five-year process by issuing a final EIS in 2019 and in the same year the Department of Defense also announced Fort Drum as the preferred location. During that five-year span of completing the EIS and site selection many aspects of missile defense evolved. Potential threats around the globe shifted and development of new missile defense technology was underway. Given that new technology is not expected to be available until at least 2028 or beyond, plans have been laid out to bridge the gap by implementing a more comprehensive layered missile defense system until the next generation system is ready for deployment.

The existing GMD system is geographically centered on the west coast. By adding capacity at Fort Drum during this interim period, it will expand the coverage and increase the probability of interception overall in the system. Fort Drum was included as a preferred location for the underlayer system in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) pending the completion of an overall analysis of how and where to deploy existing systems. That system will utilize a battalion of Soldiers to operate plus an additional 100 support troops. As the development of new missile defense technology continues, based on the efforts of Congresswoman Stefanik, Fort Drum will play a vital role in the ongoing deployment of existing missile defense systems. This will likely help ensure Fort Drum remains front and center for any future opportunities when next generation defense systems are ready for deployment. ■

Annual Award for Installation Excellence *Continued from page 4*

remarkable it is," Lucas said. "In addition to supporting the readiness of one of the Army's most deployed divisions, we are effectively a joint regional training center for the entire Northeast. Fort Drum is truly a wonderful place to live and work."

The selection process also considers previous award

recognition. In 2019, Fort Drum was the recipient of the Army Partnership Award and the Secretary of the Army Environmental Award (for environmental restoration), was named a Great American Defense Community and received honorable mention as an Army Community of Excellence. ■



Fort Drum Survey Examines Military Spouses' Views On Employment Opportunities

Craig McNamara, Transition Services Manager,
Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program

There's a saying among military families, "Home is where the Army sends you." So if the Army makes Fort Drum your home, then we in the North Country are lucky and grateful to have you.

Fort Drum and the North Country have maintained a mutually beneficial relationship for decades. The diversity that Fort Drum brings is not just in the Soldiers, but also in the spouses and family members who accompany their Soldiers. Spouses and family members are a critical component to ensuring our Soldiers meet their mission. The military family is a critical component to the Army's success. It is said that the Army retains families, not just Soldiers.

Beyond the beauty of the North Country, which is evident in every change of season, opportunities here are plentiful. The opportunity to become a member of a strong, growing community; the opportunity to continue your education, and the opportunity to contribute to the economic viability of the region are all available within this community.

To assess these opportunities, how they are understood and perceived, Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) and the Employee Readiness Program (ERP) conducted a survey of the spouse and family member community living on Fort Drum and in the surrounding community. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact the North Country.

What we found is a capable and diverse population of educated and experienced members of our community who possess abilities and talents that span the full spectrum of needs. These potential employees bring a myriad of skills and experiences from across the nation and around the globe. Along with these skills, our spouses and family members display a level of resiliency not commonly found outside the military community. The North Country is fortunate to have the opportunity to engage, employ, and collaborate with such a diverse group of people and professionals.

Let's get to our findings. The study is not limited to the data discussed below; however, these are the areas that most directly impact and demonstrate the diversity and rich experience respondents bring to the community.

The survey consisted of 294 respondents representing a statistically relevant sample size. The age distribution of the survey respondents followed expected patterns, with 18 percent in the 18-24 age bracket and 33 percent in the 35-50 age bracket. The majority of respondents, 51 percent, were in the 25-34 age bracket. Many in this age group have obtained a college degree or a certificate and have worked in a professional environment before arriving at Fort Drum. The data also indicates the 18-24 age bracket may be good candidates for educational and/or vocational learning opportunities.

The study showed that 95 percent of respondents had some education beyond high school, with 36 percent having a bachelor's degree and 20 percent having a masters or advanced degree. Additionally, five percent reported having a certificate or license in a professional field. This makes our efforts to obtain licensure reciprocity in New York state that much more significant.

The vast majority of our respondents, 67 percent, have lived on Fort Drum or in the Fort Drum area for greater than 12 months. This provides an increased level of validity to the study, as these respondents are familiar with our community and have had sufficient time to understand and assess the local job market. Fort Drum was the first duty station for 38 percent of the respondents, with the remainder reporting two to five duty stations before coming to Fort Drum. This means that the majority have experienced other military communities and have a strong baseline from which to formulate their opinions. The survey asked respondents to rank their expectations of the economy and job prospects in the area as compared to their previous duty stations or hometowns. About a third of

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Watertown Family YMCA Community and Aquatics Center Is Recipient of Defense Community Infrastructure Program



Purpose of the DCIP Program: To assist state and local governments to address deficiencies in community infrastructure supportive of a military installation. The highest priority is given to Tier 1 projects that enhance Military Family quality of life. Projects must be shovel-ready with construction to begin within 12 months.

Matching Funds: The Watertown Family YMCA Community and Aquatics Center was awarded a \$9 Million DCIP Match Grant to support the \$18.1 Million Project. The Project had previously been awarded a NYS Empire State Development grant of \$2.1 Million. Community and Fort Drum

supporters are now stepping up to fill the remaining gap and match the trust that has been placed in the Fort Drum community through the YMCA Transforming Community Capital Campaign.

Local Endorsement: The Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization/Advocate Drum, with input from local municipal leaders and Fort Drum Installation leaders, reviewed community infrastructure needs and selected the new YMCA Project as its highest ranked community infrastructure project to enhance Military Family quality of life. The YMCA Project has been identified as a significant community need and is part of both the City of Watertown's Municipal Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan; and New York State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency stepped up to the plate to serve as the applicant for the grant in partnership with the Watertown Family YMCA.

Project Need: Community-based *indoor* recreation, physical fitness, family programming activities and respite childcare.

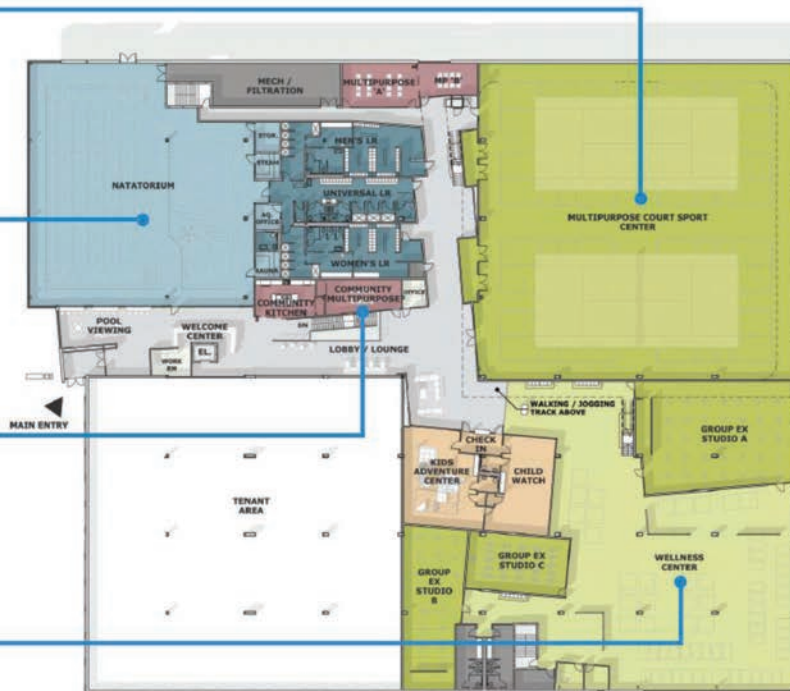
- The rural area surrounding Fort Drum receives up to 200 inches of snow annually and can experience temperature extremes from the high 90's in summer to 40 below zero in winter. While this is outstanding for Army training, it creates a significant need for indoor recreation.
- There are few community-based indoor recreation opportunities for Fort Drum Families other than the Watertown YMCA.
- The YMCA Downtown Y's aging infrastructure, a 104-year-old pool, a land-locked building with only 12 dedicated parking spaces, cramped program areas, and retrofitted locker rooms challenge the Y's ability to serve the needs of today's children, adults and families.
- The 10th Mountain Division is often deployed, and spouses have limited access to trusted respite or intermittent childcare, so they can go to dentist/physician appointments, get groceries and take care of other business or to spend a night out with their spouse when they return from deployment. The Watertown YMCA is an Armed Services YMCA affiliate and provides this childcare.
- 53% of Fort Drum Soldiers and Families live off the installation in the community. These young Soldiers and Families access the YMCA on a regular basis for high quality family and children's programs and respite childcare
- In the Fort Drum community-integrated healthcare and schools' model, 100% of Fort Drum families and children use community provided services. A significant percentage of families who live on the installation also utilize the YMCA.

When Military Families PCS to Fort Drum, they seek out the YMCA, an entity known to them from communities across America. Military Families are comfortable in YMCAs as they value healthy living, social responsibility, and youth development where character counts, all values our Army families also hold close to heart. Fort Drum Families deserve the same high-quality program and recreational amenities the community that they expect on the military installation, from other host communities, or other YMCAs.

Project Description

Quality of Life Features: Conveniently located in the center of Downtown Watertown, a new Y will provide modern, responsive and fully accessible program and social spaces, as well as vastly improved parking. The new Y will include:

- Lap and Recreational Pools
- Lobby/Social Lounge/Café
- Child Watch/Kids' Adventure Center
- Community Kitchen
- 300+ Additional Parking Spaces
- Tennis & Multi-Sport Courts
- Multi-Purpose/Community Rooms
- Group Exercise Studios
- Adult and Family Locker Rooms
- Indoor Walking/ Running Track
- Teen/Intergenerational Space
- Wellness Center
- Community Creative Arts Space





Shovel Ready This project is ready to go but for the funding gaps which are being filled by the OEA Defense Community Infrastructure Pilot Program \$9 Million Matching Grant and the YMCA Transforming Community Capital Campaign to raise the Matching funds. This is the catalyst to ensure construction of this critical community infrastructure to improve the quality of life for our combined military and civilian community. The project is prepared to break ground in summer of 2021 and be complete and ready to occupy by late summer of 2022.

Conclusion - In the Fort Drum region of NYS the

Community cares deeply about our Army and about our Army Families. They are our friends and neighbors, they sit beside us in our doctors' offices and at our children's basketball games. Army children and civilian children compete together on the Y swim and gymnastics teams and share art and drama lessons at the Y. These children deserve high quality spaces in which to practice and perform. The new YMCA facility will provide thoughtfully designed and fully accessible spaces up to the standards that our Military Families expect and deserve, to connect families and neighbors, transform community health, and nurture the potential of Military Families and civilian families together. There is no greater need or higher priority for community-based Military Family quality of life infrastructure; the project has strong state and local commitment, is part of the municipal plan, and is shovel ready. The OEA DCIP funds and the Transforming Community Capital Campaign will make it a reality for Fort Drum Families and the community that supports them. ■

Military Spouses' *Continued from page 6*

those surveyed found that the area is on par with their previous communities, while 62 percent felt that their economic and employment opportunities were worse than the communities they left.

Seventy-one percent of respondents sought either full- or part-time employment within the community; 12 percent brought a work-from-home or remote job with them and 58 percent of those seeking employment were able to find jobs by the time they completed the survey. Thirty-two percent reported it takes three months or less, while 15 percent reported it took six months or more to find employment. Child care, and finding work in a desired field, remain the greatest concerns for spouses and family members. Finally, 49 percent of respondents reported that they started their job search process before arriving at Fort Drum, which means it is critical to advertise and recruit outside the local area or through national job sites.

The survey covered a wide range of topics and observations among our spouse and family member community, but it is not all-inclusive. While the sample population is statistically relevant, the study does not show trends and obstacles over time. It is the intent of SFL-TAP and ERP to run this

survey annually and to compile and analyze the data to establish short-term and long-term trends.

Many spouses are looking for remote opportunities, and while we have seen this trend accelerated over the last few months, this could be considered a by-product of the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend will likely remain constant as the opportunity to work remotely lessens the need for child care and broadens opportunities outside the local community. This further allows spouses and family members to better align their employment with their education and experience. We look forward to measuring and analyzing these trends in the future.

There are several organizations on and off post that are interested in improving quality of life and economic opportunities our spouse and military families can enjoy while assigned to Fort Drum. These collaborative efforts hold great potential in assisting the Fort Drum military community by improving quality of life and making the North Country a friendly and welcoming community and a viable place to settle permanently. Fort Drum truly is a great Army community and a great place to live and serve. ■

WE NEED YOU!



We understand the hardship COVID has placed upon our North Country Neighbors. **Advocate Drum** has been impacted as well. As a member funded organization, we have taken significant steps to keep our budget low and doors open!

*We need your membership **NOW** more than ever!*

Please consider renewing and increasing your commitment and/or adding an individual membership. Complete the membership form on the back of this page and return to **Advocate Drum**, 200 Washington Street, Suite 406, Watertown NY 13601 to join the **Advocate Drum** team !

Or go to www.fdrlo.org and join electronically!

We appreciate your support in our efforts to **Advocate Drum!**

ADVOCATE

**JOIN TODAY**

**Fort Drum
Regional Liaison
Organization
Membership
Levels**

Individual	Corporate	Supporting
1 year \$35	1 year \$250	1 year \$1,000
Lifetime \$500	3 year \$700	3 year \$2,500

Benefits

Recognition as Drum Advocate	★	★	★
Invitations to Annual & Quarterly Membership Meetings	★	★	★
Weekly Electronic News Feed	★	★	★
Quarterly Newsletter	★	★	★
FDRLO Window Cling	★	★	★
Number of Designees to Receive Information	1	3	5
Listing on Weekly New Feed			★
Invitation to Annual Leadership Event			★

**Fort Drum
Regional Liaison
Organization
Membership
Levels**

Leadership	Sustaining	Enduring
1 year \$2,500	1 year \$5,000	1 year \$10,000
3 year \$7,000		

Benefits

Recognition as Drum Advocate	★	★	★
Invitations to Annual & Quarterly Membership Meetings	★	★	★
Weekly Electronic News Feed	★	★	★
Quarterly Newsletter	★	★	★
FDRLO Window Cling	★	★	★
Number of Designees to Receive Information	10	10	10
Listing on Weekly New Feed	★	★	★
Invitation to Annual Leadership Event	★	★	★
Web Link in newsletter and FDRLO.com		★	★
Periodic Feature in Quarterly Newsletter		★	★
Plaque		★	★
Recognition on FDRLO Banner			★



Why Should You Join?

To be successful in its mission to Advocate Drum, FDRLO requires a demonstrated base of support – a strong community partnership is essential for ongoing effective advocacy.

FDRLO is the link between Fort Drum and the North Country. Your membership is critical to maintaining and growing that bond to ensure a lasting, mutually supportive future between Fort Drum and the community.

Advocating Military Value

FDRLO leads the way in demonstrating Fort Drum's value to federal, state and local interests.

Advocating Effective Communication

FDRLO's mutually respected role ensures the lines of communication between the military and civilian leaders remains open.

Advocating Economic Benefits

FDRLO monitors Fort Drum's economic impact on the North Country and plays a vital role in growing hometown investment.

Advocating Cultural Understanding

FDRLO prioritizes integrating military families into Northern New York to grow the relationship between Fort Drum and the community.

Advocating Mutual Support

FDRLO ensures the military and community work together when issues of mutual concern arise.



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REGIONAL LIAISON**

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INTERVIEWS
& **INSIGHTS**
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Join us for our new Speaker Series - Interviews and Insights.
On **January 11th at 11:30 am**, eat lunch at your desk and listen
while Cathy Pircsuk interviews

MG Brian Mennes, Commanding General of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum.
General Mennes is currently deployed to Afghanistan.

RSVP by January 10th to office@fdrlo.org for Zoom link.