

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 9, 2010

Contact: Joel Keefer
(716) 753-4672

Chautauqua County Executive Officially Opens Dunkirk Veterans Service Agency Office

Dunkirk: -- Chautauqua County Executive Gregory J. Edwards gathered with local officials today to mark the official opening of the Dunkirk Veterans Service Agency office. The VSA office was forced to relocate following a devastating fire that swept through downtown Dunkirk in late February, 2010.

At approximately 5:45 p.m. Wednesday, February 24th, fire broke out in the Masonic Temple building, and eventually gutted the longstanding facility. The Liberty Square Building and the Graf Building, located on either side of the Masonic Temple, were also damaged in the fire.

The Dunkirk VSA office was located at the Liberty Square Building, and Edwards said they had to work quickly to find a new spot to offer critical services to Dunkirk area veterans.

"Veterans from northern Chautauqua County rely on the VSA Office and its staff to provide them with information on benefits and a host of matters and to have the office closed for an extended period of time would have been detrimental," Edwards said.

VSA Director Troy Smith said help came quickly in the form of an offer from Office for the Aging Director Mary Ann Spanos and Dunkirk Mayor Richard Frey.

"The day after the fire, Mary Ann Spanos contacted me and asked me if I might be interested in relocating the VSA office to the Senior Center in Dunkirk," Smith said. "The Senior Center is in a great location and has all of the assets we needed."

Smith then spoke with Mayor Frey, who agreed to allow the VSA to use the space at the Dunkirk Senior Center free of charge.

"I can't thank Mayor Frey enough for his generosity," Smith said.

Moving the VSA to the Senior Center also accomplished a goal Smith, Spanos and Edwards had been striving for: create a one-stop shop by being in the same location as the Dunkirk OFA office and the VA Clinic located just across the street.

The Dunkirk VSA office at 45 Franklin Avenue is currently staffed Monday - Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. by Lewellyn J. Hurley. Call 363-3842 to speak with a representative.

-END-