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**VETERANS**

**Fordham Prep**  
**Veterans Newsletter**  
*Fall 2023*



This is the first edition of a quarterly newsletter for Fordham Prep's military veteran community.

Our cover features the prominent display in the Prep lobby honoring graduates who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country. This newsletter will provide our living veterans a view of what the Prep is doing to ensure their legacy continues to motivate today's students. It will also cover opportunities for veterans interested in actively encouraging and supporting Prep students seeking leadership roles in the military or society.

In true military fashion, this first edition opens with mission, objectives and organization...the charter of the new *Veterans of Fordham Prep Charter* (p.3)

It then covers current veteran-led initiatives at the Prep - counseling students interested in the military, evaluating student leaders for the Veterans Council Vanguard Award, and support of the Prep's goal to win the national "Great Ignatian Challenge" food drive for the first time this year. (p.4-5)

Each edition will also include stories about Prep veterans from the past who distinguished himself for their military or Prep service. There is a treasure trove of such stories going back to the Civil War that reinforce the legacy of those who chose to be "men for others" by serving their country. (p.6)

# Veterans of Fordham Prep Charter

Vision: Continue to serve God, Country and Fordham Prep

Legacy: In the spirit of Saint Ignatius, a former soldier, members of *Veterans of Fordham Prep* answered the call to military service. We follow in the footsteps of Prep alumni who have served honorably in every conflict since the Civil War.

Founding Principle: The Jesuit's "service for others" ethos that we learned and embraced at Fordham Prep was an important factor in our choice to join the military. That ethos is our motivation for forming a Veterans Council to apply the lessons of our military experience in furthering our alma mater's mission of faith, scholarship and service.

Mission: The Veterans Council's mission is to support and mobilize the talents, resources and experiences of the Fordham Prep community's veterans to benefit the Prep, its students and its veterans.

## Commitments:

- Support all veteran alumni.
- Guide Prep students considering military careers.
- Sponsor an annual award to a Prep student who distinguished himself for community service leadership.
- Lead the effort to promote the adoption of a service leadership award by Jesuit high schools across the United States.
- Support and encourage Prep graduates in their military academy, ROTC and military callings.
- Provide career transition support to Prep graduates leaving the military.
- Support the Prep's service community.

Organization: *Veterans of Fordham Prep* welcomes membership by any member of the Prep community who has served, is currently serving, or is preparing to serve in the active military or Reserves. We are led by a steering committee composed of alumni veterans chosen for their willingness to continue to serve the Prep and their fellow veterans.

## Fall 2023 Activities

### *Leadership and Initiatives*

- The Veterans Council was formed in 2021 by five Prep graduates from the following classes and Services – Jimmy Corbett, P'99, USMC; Charles Brusco, FP'17, US Army; Gerry Byrne, FP'62, USMC; Ralph Dengler, FP'84, USMC; Jack Bergen, FP'60, US Army.
- Those five individuals formed a Steering Committee. Working with JP Feighery, FP' 03, Director of Alumni Engagement, they obtained formal approval for the Council's Charter.
- The Council is now looking to expand the Steering Committee to ensure representation of veterans from all Military Services and to provide successors to the current committee members.
- The commitments in the Council Charter are based on the ideas of the few founding members. The untapped opportunity for Fordham Prep and its graduates who chose service to country remains with the ideas and energies of more than 100 living veteran Prep graduates.

*If you are interested in membership on the Steering Committee or would like to contribute ideas/participation in the Council, contact the committee chair, Jimmy Corbett ([james.j.corbett@protonmail.com](mailto:james.j.corbett@protonmail.com); 646-579-3576)*

### *Student Counselling*

- On 1 May, 7 members of the Veterans Council met with the entire Class of 2024 to discuss military opportunities that they can pursue after graduation from the Prep – ROTC, military academy, active duty. Emphasis was on the financial benefits to pay for educational costs as well as the opportunities to pursue a career of service.
- During the fall, the Veterans Council will have another counseling session for seniors who are interested in pursuing one of those activities. The Council needs veterans who entered the military from each Service to counsel interested seniors.

*If you are able and willing to be a counselor, contact Ralph Dengler ([RADengler@venable.com](mailto:RADengler@venable.com); 917-846-2327)*

### *Service Leadership Grant --- Vanguard Award*

- An obvious contribution that veterans can make is to emphasize the importance of leadership and to share the leadership lessons they learned in the military.
- The first initiative of the Veterans Council was to institute an award for a graduating senior who distinguished himself for his leadership within the Prep's service programs. One of the founding members of the Council, Gerry Byrne, volunteered to donate \$5,000 for a grant to a student who demonstrated leadership of Prep service programs. The Veterans Council Vanguard Award was presented on Senior Awards Night in May of 2022 and 2023. [Read about the award here.](#)
- During the fall, the Council will lead the process to choose the winner of the 2024 award.
- The idea of a veterans service leadership award is now going national. Boston College Prep has launched a similar award. With the support of two BC Prep grads – Joe Dunford (USMC), former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and George Casey, former Army Chief of Staff -- the BC and FP Veterans Councils are guiding other Jesuit high schools to create a similar award.

*Contact Gerry Byrne ([gbyrne@pmc.com](mailto:gbyrne@pmc.com); 917-969-3490) about participating in the expansion of the Service Leadership Award on a national basis.*

### *Veterans Initiatives – the Great Ignatian Challenge*

- Each newsletter will highlight current initiatives sponsored by veterans.
- Last fall, two members of the Veterans Council launched the Brendan Walsh Service Endowment a Fordham Prep fund drive in the name of their classmate who leads a shelter and food kitchen for the poor of Baltimore.
- The connection between the Vietnam War veterans and Walsh – an anti-Vietnam War protester-- is described in the [September issue of America Magazine.](#)
- This November the Brendan Walsh Service Endowment will help to fund Fordham Prep's participation in the Great Ignatian Challenge, a competition among 22 Jesuit high schools nationwide to collect and distribute cans of food to their local communities.
- Winning schools receive significant cash prizes to endow scholarships and funding for services projects.
- Since the launch of the national Challenge in 2016, the Prep has never won the Challenge.

*Contact the FP Alumni Office at [alumnioffice@fordhamprep.org](mailto:alumnioffice@fordhamprep.org) about the Great Ignatian Challenge and the Walsh Service Endowment.*

## Legacy

- Lou Di Giorno, a Prep Classics teacher who also serves as the Fordham Prep's archivist, has discovered and chronicled the stories of Prep veterans. In this issue, I will share three of those stories.
- Our legacy goes back to the Civil War when three Prep brothers - the McMahons – fought for the Union. Two died in battle and the third was awarded the Medal of Honor. [Read about the McMahon Brothers here.](#)
- A former Prep student, Robert Shaw, was killed in the Second Battle of Fort Wagner, while leading the only Black Regiment in the Civil War. He is memorialized in the movie “Glory” with Matthew Broderick in the role of Colonel Shaw. [Read about Colonel Robert Shaw here.](#)
- The most recent veteran to be inducted into the Fordham Prep Hall of Honor was Jack Fischer, a highly decorated WW II pilot who survived as a POW after being shot down and then served in the Korean War. [Read about Colonel Jack Fischer here.](#)
- In future issues, we'll share stories about former graduates, teachers and coaches who served in the military during the past 180 years.

## Conclusion

Fordham Prep maintains an ever-growing list of graduates who served in the military, [please click here to view the Veterans Network Registry.](#)

If you or someone you know would like to be added to the list, [please fill out this form](#), or contact the Fordham Prep Alumni Office at [alumnioffice@fordhamprep.org](mailto:alumnioffice@fordhamprep.org)

*If you have comments, critiques or contributions for the Veterans Council newsletter, send them to Jack Bergen at [jack@bergenpartners.net](mailto:jack@bergenpartners.net)*