

# Bedminster non-profit launches 'Christmas in July' drive

**BEDMINSTER TWP.** – The non-profit Independence for Veterans is holding its first "Christmas in July" donation drive now through Monday, Aug. 5.

The drive benefits the formerly homeless and disabled veterans living at transitional housing facilities in New Jersey.

Items being collected are toiletries, such as shampoo, body wash, baby wipes, razors, deodorant, sunblock and lip balm; new underwear, undershirts, socks, basketball shorts, and summer clothing in all men's sizes from S to 3XL; wal-

lets, and blankets.

Gift cards from Visa, Amazon, grocery stores, Walmart and Target are also much sought after items by veterans.

Items may be dropped off at collection boxes hosted by Citizens Bank, 315 Route 202/206 South, Pluckemin; and Kearny Bank branches at Riverwalk Village, 675 Martinsville Road, Basking Ridge; and 122 Morris-town Road, Bernards-



**STACIA McDONOUGH**

ville.

All items collected are hand-delivered directly to the shelters by Independence for Veterans founder Stacia McDonough and her team of volunteers.

There are a combined total of more than 275 ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen residing at the four complexes. Of those, 20 are female, according to McDonough.

Since Jan. 1, 2024, Independence for Veterans has hand-nearly \$500,000 worth of brand new clothing, laptops, groceries, toiletries, bedding, necessities, etc. to veterans

shelters throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

McDonough founded the group in memory of her late husband, John, a highly decorated Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force who served "In Country" during the Vietnam War. The annual collection is now officially "Dedicated in Memory of John E. McDonough."

Sgt. McDonough was assigned to the 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron which engaged in frequent critical combats in Vietnam's hot zones of Saigon, Anloc, and Nha Trang and earned five Presidential Citations.

For his exceptional bravery and extraordinary leadership, he was posthumously inducted to The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Holmdel on Veterans Day, 2008.

"As Americans, we must keep our veterans in the forefront. For their service, bravery, and unimaginable sacrifices these noble warriors should be revered, and never forgotten," said Stacia McDonough.

She added that she is thrilled by the tremendous success of her previous campaigns. "I am looking forward to a banner year, hoping I

can spread a little bit of Christmas cheer to our amazing heroes," she said.

"It is a tremendous privilege for me to be able to conduct this 10th annual campaign, and an unparalleled honor to spend quality time with our veterans. It's beyond humbling just to be in their presence," she said.

On any given night, an estimated 40,000 veterans are sleeping on the streets.

For more information about Independence for Veterans, visit <https://independenceforveterans.org/>