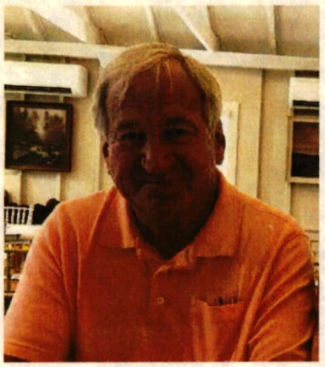
William J. Pomfret Veteran Community Service Award

The William J. Pomfret Veteran Community Service Award is presented annually to a Veteran of the United States Armed Forces, in recognition of his or her distinguished service to the citizens of Connecticut, and selfless commitment to public service.

The 2026 Recipient is Paul Mangini of Middletown.



Paul's life of service spans more than five decades, encompassing military aviation, law enforcement, emergency medical transport, community service, youth mentorship, and continued volunteer service to veterans and the public.

Paul enlisted in the **United States Army on June 10, 1966**, with the goal of becoming an Army aviator. He attended Army flight school from September 1966 through June 1967 and was subsequently deployed to the **Republic of Vietnam**, where he served from July 1967 to July 1968 with the **334th Armed Helicopter Company**. Flying UH-1C "Huey" gunships, Paul completed **897 search-and-destroy combat missions**, approximately two-thirds of which were conducted at night.

His nighttime missions required exceptional skill and teamwork. Flying at approximately 500 feet with a high-intensity spotlight mounted in the aircraft, Paul supported missions patrolling the canals and rivers of Vietnam in search of enemy supply boats. These missions were conducted by a three-helicopter team, with one aircraft providing communications, navigation, and high cover while another flew low and dark beneath the illuminated aircraft.

Following his service in Vietnam, Paul was stationed in Germany, where he flew border-surveillance missions along the Czechoslovakian border. He was discharged from active duty in January 1970 after completing his Army service.

Paul continued his commitment to military aviation by joining the **National Guard**, where he served as a UH-1H instructor pilot and later flew fixed-wing aircraft. He ultimately completed **41 years of military service**, retiring after reaching the mandatory age of 60.

After active duty, Paul attended the **Academy of Aeronautics**, now Vaughn College, and in 1973 received its **Distinguished Alumni Award**. He later studied engineering at the University of Hartford while working in the engineering department at Pratt & Whitney.

In 1977, Paul began what would become another distinguished career of service when he joined the **Middletown Police Department**. During his career, he served as the department's firearms training officer and training officer and was a member of the **Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team**. He also became deeply involved in community policing, particularly in Middletown's North End.

Paul served with **New Horizons Domestic Violence Services**, working with its first Executive Director, Nancy Archer, under Mark Masselli. Recognizing the importance of communication in serving the community, he attended the Emerson Language School to learn Spanish. His language skills became an important asset in the Community Policing Program, helping residents and victims of domestic violence navigate the criminal justice system and access needed resources.

The North End Community Policing Program focused on working directly with families to promote safety, security, and solutions to neighborhood concerns. Paul retired from the Middletown Police Department in 2000 with the rank of **Sergeant**.

His commitment to service extended well beyond his professional career. Paul served as an assistant Boy Scout leader with **Troop 16 in Westfield** and coached youth soccer. He and his wife, Patricia, have also been strong advocates for children with disabilities. Together, they worked to help secure additional federal funding through the State of Connecticut for families of children with disabilities through what was known as the **Katy Beckett Program**, helping families with expenses related to medical assistance, braces, therapy, and necessary equipment.

Paul's aviation career continued after his retirement from the police department. He became a pilot with the **Life Star Program at Hartford Hospital**, later serving as the lead pilot for the Life Star program at Backus Hospital in Norwich. Between October 1999 and February 2011, he flew **1,984 Life Star missions**, responding to hospitals and accident scenes throughout the region, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in all types of weather.

In 2018 and 2019, Paul served as a post-production test pilot for **Kaman Aerospace**, flying H-2G helicopters as part of a contract with the Peruvian Navy.

Paul has also continued to volunteer as a pilot with the **Eagle One police helicopter program**, one of the earliest pilots involved with the program when it began in the late 1980s. Based at Chester Airport and managed by the Old Saybrook Police Department, Eagle One provides aerial search-and-rescue support. Paul continues to volunteer with the program today.

His commitment to aviation and public service also includes membership in the **Civil Air Patrol**, where he encourages young people to pursue aviation by taking interested youth on flights and introducing them to the world of flight. The Civil Air Patrol also assists with missions throughout Connecticut, including winter patrols of the Connecticut River for ice accumulation and support to the Coast Guard in locating and addressing ice flows. During the summer, members assist with patrols of Long Island Sound, including efforts to locate boats in distress and identify illegal dumping.

Paul serves as the **Wing Maintenance Officer**, responsible for the maintenance and condition of the Civil Air Patrol's eight state aircraft.

Music and remembrance have also become an important part of Paul's community service. He is a founding member and executive board member of the **Middletown Police Benefit Association Bagpipe Band**. The band performs at community events throughout Connecticut and the region, including Middletown's Memorial Day Parade, the Essex Irish Heritage Parade, Madison's Fourth of July Parade, and the Deep River Muster. Members also perform at the State Veterans Cemetery on Bow Lane, Middletown High School graduations, police academy graduations, and the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Support the Troops Breakfast.

Paul remains actively connected to the veteran community as a member of the **Middletown Vietnam Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars in Rocky Hill, American Legion in Meriden,** and the **Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association**.

Paul and his wife, Patricia, have been married for **53 years**. Together, they have built a life defined by service, compassion, mentorship, and a steadfast commitment to their family, fellow veterans, and the communities they have served.

For more than five decades, Paul has answered the call to serve—first as a soldier and combat aviator, then as a police officer, emergency medical pilot, mentor, volunteer, advocate, and community leader. His continued dedication to helping others embodies the spirit of the **William J. Pomfret Veteran Community Service Award**.

Congratulations to Paul, the 2026 William J. Pomfret Veteran Community Service Award recipient.