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Fitzgerald Announces Allegheny County Veterans Service Award
Award Named in Honor of Longtime County Council Member Dr. Charles J. Martoni

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald today announced the creation of the Allegheny County Veterans Service Award which will be given out annually to a veteran member of the armed forces who has continued his or her service to their community after their discharge. The 2021 award was presented to Dr. Charles J. Martoni, posthumously, in honor and recognition of his long career in public service. It will hereafter be known as the Dr. Charles J. Martoni Veterans Service Award.

“Chuck served as an example to so many, and was an inspiration as evidenced by his many colleagues who join us here today, or who sent their memories of him in their stead. He lifted people up with his quiet, caring ways,” said Fitzgerald. “He was a thoughtful, fair man who made the world a better place through his service. His life epitomized the idea behind the Veterans Service Award - whereby service members continue their service, even after their discharge.”

The award was created to recognize those individuals who continue their service to our country following their discharge. The nomination period for the Dr. Charles J. Martoni Veterans Service Award will open each May following Memorial Day and will remain open through the end of August. The nomination form will be available on this webpage and paper versions will also be distributed to various veterans’ organizations and organizations supporting veterans throughout the county. Nominations will be made via an online nomination form, or through submission by hard copy to the Veteran’s Office.

After the nomination period closes, submissions will be reviewed by a panel determined by the Allegheny County Veterans’ Services office. A group of finalists will then be presented to the County Executive for review and selection. The presentation of the annual Veterans Service Award will be made annually around Veterans Day.

“The legacy of community service Dr. Martoni leaves behind exemplifies the virtues of selfless service instilled by the military and is something all veterans should aspire to in their post-military service,” said Dwight Boddorf, Chief Veterans Affairs Officer for Allegheny County. “His dedication to his fellow veterans and the community at large has made a lasting impact on our region’s military and veteran community and will be remembered and honored by this annual award.”

Dr. Martoni was a veteran of the United States Army serving in the late 1950s in Alaska. After his discharge, he was approached by a wrestling promoter to become a professional wrestler. Between his work in the ring, and working in the steel mill, he was able to pay his way through college, launching his college career and his love of education. Dr. Martoni continued his lifelong journey in education, obtaining three Masters’ degrees and a PhD.

Dr. Martoni believed that giving other people opportunity in their lives would make this world a better place. At the urging of his godmother who saw leadership skills in him, he put that vision into action, running for a seat on the Swissvale School Board. He won and later followed that service with campaigns to become Mayor of Swissvale and then Swissvale Council where he served as president of council. In 1999, he was elected to serve on the first Allegheny County Council, a position he held from January 2000 until his death in May 2019. Dr. Martoni won every election he ever entered.

In addition to his elected offices, Dr. Martoni also served the community as a member on many boards, including the Port Authority, Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Mon Valley Providers.

“Our family thanks you for instituting this award in my brother’s name and in our family name for his years of service to his community,” said Phyllis Friend, Dr. Martoni’s sister. “Our entire family, especially those who served in the United States military, would be very proud of the Dr. Charles J. Martoni Veteran Service Award. Thank you for recognizing Charles in this very special way. It means a lot to our family. We look forward to congratulating the veterans who receive this award for years to come.”

Fitzgerald was joined at today’s announcement by Boddorf and Dr. Martoni’s sister, Phyllis Friend, brother-in-law, Jake, and their three children, Katie, Brian and John. Also in attendance were several former County Council colleagues who served with Dr. Martoni including Jim Burn, Mike Crossey, Sam DeMarco, Vince Gastgeb, Bill Lestitian, and Anita Prizio. Several others sent remarks that were shared during the event.

More information on the award is available on the [Veterans Services webpage](#).

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