



Patchogue VFW #2913 gets new heat and air conditioning system courtesy of Local Steamfitters #638

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Shown in front row (from left) are: Dave Rogers, commander, VFW Post 2913 with Grunt, his service dog; Ryan McGrath of MJI; sen. Monica Martinez; Matthew Aracich, president, The Building and Construction Trades Council; George Egan, quartermaster, VFW Post 2913; James Shine, building chairman, VFW Post 2913; Jon Cavaliere of MJI. Second row: Janet Powers, Steamfitters Local 638; John Mueller of MJI. Back row: Rich Silvestri of MJI; Michael Herman, co-owner of MJI; and Dustin White of MJI.

Patchogue, NY A fleet of trucks bearing a team of technicians and project manager from a local heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) company arrived at VFW Post #2913 on September 22nd. They and a company co-owner met with VFW members and commander; senator Monica Martinez; president of the Building and Trades Council; and a representative from Steamfitters Local Union #638.

The mission of the day was to remove a failed main HVAC system and replace it with a new five-ton system that included both outdoor and indoor units, hot water coil, repiping and new valves. This particular HVAC system is one of three in the 32 Edwards St. building, needed for heating and cooling the lower level used for all Veteran meetings and member activities. Though the installation itself was routine, how it came to be was anything but.

The ball got rolling when senator Martinez received a visit from Veteran and constituent, Dave Rogers, the commander of VFW Post #2913 and his black Labrador Retriever service dog, "Grunt." The visit was an appeal for help. The VFW found that they could not afford to repair or replace this vital system, with their income impacted like so many others, by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senator Martinez sits on the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, so Veteran projects are a priority to her. She called Matthew Aracich, president of the Building & Construction Trades Council of Nassau & Suffolk Counties, who reached out to the Steamfitters Local Union #638 Metals Trade Branch's Union president, Patrick Dolan, Jr.

Trade unions are well known for coming together to solve problems and improve communities, and their response was exactly that. In an incredibly generous act, the Local Union #638 not only got on board, but they worked with the MSCA to purchase all of the equipment and materials donated to the VFW project.

Local Union #638's president Dolan called upon union members James Carlson and Michael Herman, owners of Michael James Industries, a Ronkonkoma commercial HVAC company to ask if there was any way they could help with this project installation. Carlson said, "We've had such a great relationship with Union #638 for many years, and Veterans have sacrificed so much for us - we were happy to get behind this and lend our support." Herman said, "We love helping out in my own community and giving back, so this project hits home."

Thanks to the commitment and selfless generosity of so many helping hands, VFW Post #2913 has a dependable new system that allows them to continue to provide valuable services and support to area Veterans for many years to come.