

Holyoke honors city's veterans at annual service

Published: Nov. 11, 2021, By Dennis Hohenberger

[Story source: MassLive.com](#)

HOLYOKE — Veterans Day services returned to the War Memorial Building Thursday. The event honored the Veteran, Public Safety Officer and Citizen of the Year.

Christopher Sims, who chairs the War Memorial Commission, presided over the ceremony.

Acting Mayor Terence Murphy said he was proud to honor those who sacrificed for the nation's freedom. He noted the city council would soon vote on a bond to replace the War Memorial Building's roof, ensuring the structure stands for another century.



Mayor-elect Joshua A. Garcia joined Murphy on stage.



Historian Olivia Mausel joins the procession into the war memorial auditorium.

State Sen. John Velis, D-Westfield, said Veterans Day is the most important annual event after Memorial Day. The senator serves as a major in U.S. Army Reserve.

“We are blessed to have young men and women willing to raise their right hand and take an oath,” he said.

In his proclamation honoring the day, Velis said, “We’re reminded of the great sacrifices and contributions our veterans have made to our country,” adding that they “served for generations with honor, patriotism and courage.”

Sims presented Edwin R. Colon the Veteran of the Year Award. A native of Cayey, Puerto Rico, Colon joined the army in 1982. He served as a combat engineer in Cold War hot spots, including the demilitarized zone in

South Korea and along the Berlin Wall that separated West and East Germany.

Colon was also stationed at Fort Campbell in Kentucky and Fort Carson in Colorado. He has worked for the U.S. Postal Service since 1993. He founded the Latin American Motorcycle Association in Holyoke.

Colon, who thanked the organizers for the award, said he did not regret his decision to serve and would gladly do so again.



Edwin Colon thanks organizers for being named Veteran of the Year.

Citizen of the Year Michael J. Falcetti has been a fixture on city boards and commissions for over 30 years, including the Holyoke Housing Authority, public library, Wistariahurst Museum and community block grant committee.

Falcetti recently accepted a grant from Velis toward restoring the Lady Liberty statue in Veterans Park.

“I’m humbled and surprised by the award. It pales in comparison to the sacrifice you folks (veterans) have all made,” Falcetti said.

Larry Roberson, a Springfield native, earned the Public Safety Official of the Year Award. A graduate of Springfield Central High School, Roberson is the assistant chief court officer responsible for securing district court facilities in Holyoke, Chicopee and Westfield.

He volunteers with the nonprofit Brethren Community Foundation and Springfield Partners for Community Action. Sims said Roberson “defused many volatile situations during his tenure with the trial court,” including rendering emergency

medical attention. “His commitment to safeguarding his community is a credit to himself and the city of Holyoke.”



Master of Ceremony Christopher Sims salutes fellow veterans.

Joseph M. McGiverin offered greetings from the city council. Council President Todd McGee was unable to attend the ceremony.

The Mountain View Baptist Choir opened the ceremony with the national anthem, followed by chaplain Chad Correa offering the invocation. Commissioner Robert McKay closed the service with the traditional ringing of the bell.

The Holyoke Caledonian Pipe Band led city and state officials into the auditorium.