

*James Becker continued*

In 1994, he received his MFA from SUNY Albany. In 1996, he began his career as a counselor as an addictions counselor at Horizon Village, a residential addiction treatment facility in Sanborn NY.

After the attacks of September 11th 2001, James joined the 402nd Civil Affairs Battalion, part of the U.S. Army's Special Operations Command. He led a civil affairs team during the invasion of Iraq serving in theatre for 12 months from 2003 to 2004. He returned to Iraq in 2006 where he commanded a civil affairs company for 12 months until his return in 2007. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for each of his combat tours.

A year after returning from his second deployment, James was hired as a readjustment counselor for the Buffalo Vet Center. He continues to serve in the Army Reserve. He currently holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and is assigned as the Deputy Commander of the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade headquartered in Riverdale, Maryland.

### **Joseph Chudoba**



Joe proudly served in the U.S. Air Force and the 107th NY Air Guard collectively for six years. He participated in his Scott AFB Honor Guard for one and a half years honoring our fallen veterans. Since 2009, Joe is a team leader with the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court.

In April of 2014, New York Senator Mark Grisanti awarded Joe as Erie County Veteran of the Month. Joe currently works with the Erie County Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit as a victim advocate. He serves on the advisory board for the Veterans One Stop Center in Erie County.

Traveling throughout Erie county, Joe speaks to students of all ages on issues of bullying, cyber bullying and teen dating violence. He also discusses safety awareness for the elderly in local senior facilities. Joe is married with two children and two stepchildren. His son Kenny is presently serving in the U.S. Air Force.



**Wednesday, June 22, 2016**  
**8 to 11 a.m.**

Ramada Amherst/Getzville Hotel and Conference Center  
2402 North Forest Road, Getzville



## WELCOME TO BRIDGING THE GAPS: WNY IN SUPPORT OF VETERANS

This symposium has been designed to encourage feedback from you to help identify key issues and possible service gaps within the Western New York community.

Earlier this spring, Catholic Charities and Headway of WNY held a focus group for current and former service members and their families. Some valuable, key points were identified at that time and the report from that session will be used as a spring board to further the discussions today.

We are pleased that New York State Senator Robert Ortt, and the distinguished panel of speakers, is with us today and our hope is to help further these discussions and address current community needs.

### SCHEDULE

<b>8 – 8:30 a.m.</b>	Registration
<b>8:30 – 9 a.m.</b>	Introductions/Keynote Address and Focus Group Report
<b>9 – 10 a.m.</b>	Panel
<b>10 – 10:45 a.m.</b>	Group Discussion
<b>10:45 – 11 a.m.</b>	Evaluation

We encourage all to participate in the group discussion. Thank you for joining us.

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## New York State Senator Robert Ortt



Robert enlisted in NY Army National Guard in October 2001 in direct response to the attacks on September 11th. He is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where he served from March 2008 until December of the same year. His mission was to serve as a combat mentor/advisor to the Afghan National Police in Kandahar City, the second largest city in Afghanistan. As the Executive Officer/Unit Movement Officer for an infantry company, he was responsible to ensure that all the logistical needs of the company were met to facilitate operational readiness, coordinate and run all company meetings, and act as the commander in his absence. He successfully moved \$10 million worth of equipment to Afghanistan and back to the United States.

He is the recipient of the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal, the Afghan Campaign Medal and the Combat Infantryman's Badge in recognition of his service.

### PANEL OF SPEAKERS

## David Shenk



David is the director of the Erie County Veterans Service Agency. He began working in the office in May 2014, and was appointed to his position in February 2016. David's work history includes serving one year as Erie County comptroller and 20 years as Boston town clerk.

David has served in the U.S. Army Reserves since 1988 as a health care specialist, aka medic. His deployments include Desert Storm-Oman (1990-91), Iraqi Freedom-Iraq (2003), Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan (2010-11) and Enduring Freedom-Kuwait (2013-2014). He holds the rank of Master Sergeant and is the Senior Health Care NCO for the 401st Civil Affairs Battalion.

David earned a Bachelor's degree in management from Houghton College and a Master's degree in health administration from Roberts Wesleyan College.

His accomplishments include Erie County Town Clerk of the Year 2012, Business First 40 Under 40 2009, Bronze Star, Combat Action Badge and Meritorious Service Medal.

## Kerry Donnelly, PhD



Kerry is a board certified clinical neuropsychologist at the VA WNY Healthcare System.

She is a clinical associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology at University at Buffalo/SUNY. Her primary research interest is in mild traumatic brain injury (TBI). She is principal investigator on a large, multi-site, longitudinal study of veterans with and without TBI. Dr. Donnelly has more than 30 years of clinical experience in behavioral health and neuropsychology. She is the author of more than 35 scientific papers and over 50 national and international scientific presentations.

## James Becker



James enlisted in the Army in 1989, and was commissioned as a second Lieutenant in the Army Reserves in 1991. That same year, he graduated with a BFA from SUNY Fredonia. After completing Infantry Officers Basic Course, he pursued his graduate degree.

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