

Good Evening Everyone,

It is an honor to stand before you tonight to celebrate the outstanding achievements of the graduating class of 2025. Congratulations, may this be the start to a wonderful celebration for you all.

As a lifelong resident, and Verona Alumni, I am honored to represent the Verona Municipal Republican Committee in awarding scholarships for two of this years graduating seniors.

Our committee aims to support the youth in our community as well as honor our active Military and Veterans. For our scholarships we required students to write an essay on how they would personally thank a US Military member or Veteran for their service, and how they felt about the risks and sacrifices military members have made for our country. Each essay was judged and voted on anonymously by our committee members and read by active duty military and Veterans. We received many thoughtful and wonderful responses.

I am beyond honored to have with us two very special Verona residents, who have served our great country to present our scholarships.

Please welcome Veteran Albert Rawding, retired Captain of the US Marines who served active duty from 1988 to 1992. Captain Rawding started his service by completing Marine Officers Candidate School in Quantico, between his Junior and Senior year in college. Upon graduation from the University of Richmond he received commission as a 2nd Lieutenant and completed Marine Officer Basic School, also at Quantico. His first duty station was Okinawa Japan where he deployed to training operations in Japan, Korea and the Philippines. He then transferred to Camp Lejeune,

North Carolina to begin preparations for deployment to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Storm. Captain Rawding served in combat, in Kuwait during the Gulf War. He then returned to Camp Lejeune before completing his service back in Okinawa Japan, in March of 1992.
Please join me in thanking him for his service.

Please welcome Veteran James “JJ” Schroeder, Retired Sergeant First Class.

James joined the US Army at the age of 17 in 1962. He attended his Basic Training at Fort Dix NJ. After Basic he was assigned as a Military Police Officer to Germany where he spent 3 years. Upon his return to the US, he was assigned to Fort Ritchie Maryland. After 5 months at Fort Ritchie, he was sent to the Republic of Viet Nam for a 1 year tour.

When he returned stateside, he was again assigned to Fort Dix. After a 1 year assignment there he was deployed to Okinawa Japan for 18 months and honorably discharged in December of 1969. In 1971 he joined the NJ Army National Guard where he remained for 17 years completing a total of 25 years of service before retiring in 1992 at the rank of Sergeant First Class. Many of you may know him as the longtime Crossing Guard at the corner of Forest and Hillside Ave. Please join me in thanking him for his service.

Captain Rawding will be presenting our scholarship to this years winner.
Congratulations to Yianni Yanniotis

Sergeant Schroeder will be presenting our scholarship to this years winner.
Congratulations to Robert Maher