

WHAT TO Watch

SALTAIRE

VILLAGE ELECTIONS.

Residents of the Fire Island village of Saltaire go to the polls today to elect two members of the board of trustees from among three candidates. Polls are open from noon to 9 p.m. Check Candice Ruud's **Twitter updates @candiceruud**.

WANTAGH

AIR SHOW.

The 10th anniversary Bethpage Air Show will take place tomorrow and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Jones Beach State Park. Among the headliners are the Royal Canadian Air Force F18 Demonstration Team. The air show is free, but the standard \$10 vehicle use fee will be collected each day upon entry to Jones Beach. Check Bill Bleyer's **updates at newsday.com**.


LONG ISLAND

MEMORIAL DAY PARADES.

Memorial Day parades and other commemorations will be held across Long Island on Monday, including in the communities of Long Beach, Mastic Beach and Southampton. Check staff **updates at newsday.com**.

NOW ONLINE
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TOPtweet

 Nothing better than getting to grow up living on the Long Island sound

@marry_lin

ISLANDIA

HOME BASE

Vets-only affordable housing subdivision believed to be first in U.S.

BY NICOLE FULLER
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Since settling on Long Island after two tours in Iraq, Marine Staff Sgt. Shawn Hunkins has found a job with the Internal Revenue Service, left active duty in 2011 and joined the Marine Corps Reserve in Farmingdale.

Stung by high rents, Hunkins and his wife, Andrea, a stay-at-home mom to their three daughters, live in his in-laws' cramped Bohemia basement.

"It would mean the world to us to have a home of our own," Hunkins, 26, said yesterday at the Islandia site where a local charity broke ground on a veterans housing project. He is one of about 30 applicants. "I can't even believe this opportunity — I'm so grateful."

The Long Island Home Builders Care Development Corp., the charitable arm of the Long Island Builders Institute, held a ceremonial groundbreaking yesterday at the site of the planned six-home development — believed to be the nation's first veterans-only affordable housing subdivision.

The charity began its project, "Building New Homes for Returning Veterans" in 2009 and has constructed two low-cost homes for veterans on Long Island in Lake Ronkonkoma and Sound Beach. More are planned.

"People don't understand, serving two, three, four tours — the toll it takes on families," said Tom Datre, the nonprofit group's president. "I'm proud that we as builders are able to do this for our vets."

Veterans have until June 30 to apply to purchase one of the three-bedroom homes, which range in price from \$172,000 to \$199,000. Officials said the homes, which will be in the Hauppauge section of Islandia, would be valued at about \$400,000 on the open market.



Marine Staff Sgt. Shawn Hunkins of Bohemia, holding his daughter Elaina, 5 months, attends the groundbreaking for houses for veterans in Islandia. His wife, Andrea, is behind him, and his daughter Natalia, 12, is at right. Suffolk County Legis. Sarah Anker is at left. ■ **Video: newsday.com/suffolk**

How to apply

Applicants for the homes should write a letter to LIHBCDC, 1757-7 Veterans Memorial Hwy., Islandia, NY 11749 with contact information, military service, present employment and living status and why the home would be life-changing.



Artist's rendering of one of the houses

A committee made up of Veterans of Foreign Wars officials will choose the soon-to-be homeowners, who must be veterans of the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq, be first-time home buyers and qualify for a Veterans Affairs home loan.

"It's very difficult; they all deserve it," said Joe Cognitore, chairman of the committee and commander of VFW Post 6249

in Rocky Point.

The homes, which can be customized for those who have disabilities, are to be built on a 3.5 acre parcel on the south side of Motor Parkway, west of Old Nichols Road. The land was donated by Islandia-based CA Technologies in a deal facilitated by Islandia Mayor Alan M. Dorman, himself a veteran.

The charity still needs to

raise about \$500,000 to complete the project. It is also counting on companies for in-kind donations, such as building materials and manpower. Datre yesterday pledged to contribute \$1,000. Workers at the site will have to add water and gas lines, and officials hope to begin building the homes in June.

A tentative completion date is planned for November, before Veterans Day.

The group has built a three-bedroom home in Lake Ronkonkoma for Marine Sgt. Ryan Donnelly.

In 2010, the group built its first home in Sound Beach, and the towns of Brookhaven and Islip have offered to donate land for more homes.

Hunkins said even if he doesn't get a home, he's been humbled by the community's generosity. "It's awesome," he said. "We're so hopeful."

PHOTO BY DANIEL BRENNAN

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