Local students honor and thank veterans

COMMUNITY SUPPORT — Mayor Rocky Jernigan was among the crowd of cheering students, staff and community members welcoming veterans at the Randleman High School Veterans Day Celebration.

By Micki Rare
mrare@oosterctribune.com

RANDLEMAN — In a powerful display of support, appreciation and patriotism, Randleman High School (RHS) hosted the eighth consecutive year a celebration for veterans that has become a much-anticipated annual community event.

The entire student body, faculty and guests stood and cheered as the veterans were escorted into the gym by the members of the JROTC. A sea of waving flags and the RHS Band's rendition of "Celebration March" by Bob Och put the veterans and their families more than 100 veterans participating in this year's event.

After the procession, the choir and band led the singing of the national anthem. Then a candle was lit on a display honoring service members as "Taps" was played.

This year's theme was "Home of the Free, courtesy of the Brave." Students were invited to participate in poster and writing competitions based on the theme. Winners, announced during the ceremony, included Ms. Allison's class: Matty Bils, Kayla Almena, Dwayne Grant and Alaina Brack, who won first place in the poster contest. Brandon Pauley won first place in the writing contest.

Students Trey Hall, Turner Motes, Jiang Ringer and Olivi Adams were the featured speakers. They talked about the freedoms that veterans protect, why they are needed to appreciate our sacrifices, and how we can support veterans and their families.

"As we look around, we should remember that veterans surround us. They teach Spanish, math, electronics, JROTC, EOC, metals, English in our own administrative staff," McCollum said. "They may be our parents, our grandparents, our neighbors or our minister ... those people we all respect for their service.

"What do you love so truly that you would be willing to give your life for?" Adams asked. "For all of our veterans, the answer is our country.

Their sacrifices and bravery have been an integral reason that we, as Americans, continue to live with the freedoms we exercise daily.

The event began as a way to honor local veterans and their families each year, included in the student's back-to-school paperwork is a form that can be used to submit veteran names and contact information. The school's JROTC cadets compile the list of veteran contacts.

Those enrolled in chorus class spend a few afternoons addressing invitations. The goal is to invite as many veterans to participate in the annual, public event as possible. This year students mailed 240 invitations to veterans in the community.

A reception followed, with food prepared by students as well as donated refreshments. "Southline Elementary also hosted a Veterans Day program on Thursday. Sheriff Graves was the featured speaker. Southline Randolph High JROTC cadets participated and there were performances by the staff choir and third-grade students.

Ashboro City Schools

This week, Guy B. Teague Elementary hosted 15-20 veterans for lunch each day. Veteran guests who had time also visited classrooms to talk to students about what it means to be a veteran and why the holiday is celebrated.

On Thursday, Lindley Park Elementary hosted 20 veterans who visited classrooms to share their experiences with students. Speakers represented every branch of the military, with the oldest guest having served in World War II. A reception was held for the veterans in the media center, where second-grade students showed their gratitude through song.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for us to both honor veterans and provide a unique educational experience for our students," Principal Nikki Donnelly said. "We count ourselves fortunate to have been able to learn from these men and women as we celebrate the Veterans Day holiday."

Members of North Asheboro Middle School's Mustache Fraternity, a mentoring program for male students, plan to participate in Asheboro's Veterans Day parade, planned for Saturday at 4 p.m.

Uwharrie Charter Academy

For the past four years, Uwharrie Charter Academy has been facilitating a Veterans Day card-writing project. The project helps students learn about veterans in the community and gives students an opportunity