

Veterans Day message for students



“You are the best and the brightest, and we look forward to you taking that baton.”

By Gary Weckselblatt

Speaking to hundreds of middle school students, Navy Rear Admiral Linda Wackerman made it clear that a career in the military is something worthy of consideration. “There’s something in it for each and every one of you,” she said. “We would love to have you. You are the best and the brightest, and we look forward to you taking that baton.”

Adm. Wackerman was the guest speaker Friday at Palisades Middle School where students from Palisades, Pennridge and Quakertown’s Sixth Grade Center enjoyed the “Honor The War Veterans” program.

“I have been all over the world, and there’s nothing like what we



Navy Rear Admiral Linda Wackerman have here in the United States,” Adm. Wackerman told the audience of students and veterans from seven different organizations.

She said she was “honored and humbled” to be asked to speak, and wanted the young people to understand that the military has a

See VETERANS DAY on Page 2



VETERANS DAY

Continued from Page 1

place for them. "They are our next generation," she said. "That's our future right there. They're not exposed enough to what their future can be in the military. They can be anything, and do some great things for our nation."

The veterans who were praised throughout the 90-minute ceremony have answered that call. They were lauded by Craig Wilhelm, Eastern Section Vice Commander with the Department of Pennsylvania, U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, state Rep. Craig Staats, Palisades Middle School Principal Dr. Karl Scheibenhofer and Palisades High School Principal Richard Heffernan Jr.

Fitzpatrick noted that veterans run to danger to risk their lives against human nature. He described them as "the most special among us ... What an honorable way to live one's life."

Dr. Karl Scheibenhofer said their service and sacrifice "have left us with the peace and prosperity we enjoy today... Thank you for giving us the gift of freedom."

Mr. Heffernan added, "These men and women are our true role models, which

we should all aspire to be."

Eric Thompson, principal of the Sixth Grade Center, said Wackerman's words are "great for the students to hear. This is a wonderful opportunity for them to learn about the important contributions veterans have made to our society and to our freedoms. They had the opportunity to see generations of veterans and to honor them in a public and special way."

Natalie Welliver, a student at the SGC, said "I'm glad we get to thank them for their service and all that they've done for us." Natalie's dad and grandfather each served in the Navy. She said "There are times it can be very hard for a family, so I have respect for what the families of veterans go through, too."

Abby Boone, also a SGC student, said "It was really cool to see all of the different veterans. There were so many of them and it was nice to see them come together in one place."

Adm. Wackerman, spent 33 years as a Navy pilot, including the last 19 years in the reserves. For the last 22 years, she has lived in Quakertown, where she has raised her four children. Last spring she spoke at Strayer Middle School

about "Women in Leadership." She also received the Neamand Award from the Quakertown Community Education Foundation. The award recognizes the accomplishments of Neamand, a former teacher who touched the lives of local students for several decades.

"It's good to see students see the different ages and faces of our veterans," Adm. Wackerman said. "We're not that removed from them."

The veterans program rotates among the three Upper Bucks County districts. Next year, Quakertown is the host. Besides the districts, students from Faith Christian Academy, Upper Bucks Christian School and St. Isidore's School attended the event.

Veterans organizations represented included Hartzell-Crouthamel Post No. 280, John Rivers Memorial Post VFW Post 11322, Nase-Kraft Post No. 255, Palisades District Memorial Post No. 399, VFW Post 245, Forrest Lodge, Vietnam Veterans of America, VVA Chapter 468, and Wallace Willard Keller Post No. 242.

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