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ALERT TOP STORY

Albany celebrates Veterans Day with artillery, fighter jets and more

Maddie Pfeifer

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American flags lined the sidewalks of Timber Linn Memorial Park in Albany on Thursday morning as **veterans, active military personnel and community members** gathered under the gray sky.

Randy Martinak, president of the Linn County Veterans Memorial Association, said he prayed for good weather for the annual Veterans Day memorial service. Fortunately, attendees only got sprinkled on during the service.

“I’m just glad to see everyone here,” Martinak said.

Troy Shinn

The service included remarks from Mayor of Albany Alex Johnson II and Linn County Commissioner Sherrie Sprenger as well as an invocation offered by Pastor Ben Atchley of Eastside Christian Church.

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Veterans and current members of the armed forces attended in their military regalia. Community members headed to the park with their children, dogs and loved ones. A couple hundred people total gathered at the park.

“As we all know, Albany has served as a beacon and an example for how Veteran’s Day should be celebrated in communities large and small across the nation,” Johnson said.

Some even came from outside of Linn County.

“I just love to come to Albany on Veterans Day because they have one of the biggest parades in the Pacific Northwest,” Eugene resident Leanne Gibson said. “I love to see those that have returned and to know that they are still here and they are appreciated.”

There were plenty of veterans in attendance on Thursday, including keynote speaker for the event Peter Troedsson, Albany city manager and retired helicopter pilot for the U.S. Coast Guard.

Troedsson's speech highlighted the differences between Memorial Day and Veterans Day and the reason to celebrate Nov. 11.

"On Memorial Day we give thanks in solemn remembrance to those who have given the last full measure of service to our country," Troedsson said. "Although on Veterans Day we also give thanks, this day offers a chance to express our gratitude to those who served and are still living. For that reason, it can be a happy day — it should be a happy day."

Following the keynote address, Terri Thorpe, whose son died while serving in Iraq, laid down a wreath in honor of all parents who have lost a child who served in the military. Vietnam veteran Dennis Pollock laid down another wreath in remembrance of prisoners of war and those missing in action.

The memorial service also included a 21-gun salute by a group of 105mm Howitzers. These pieces of artillery made a thunderous noise throughout the park. The salute was followed by a performance of "Taps" on the bugle.

Two F-15 Eagle **fighter jets also flew over Albany** during the service. The foggy sky made it difficult to see the fly over, but the roar of the jets could be heard all over the city.

Veterans shook hands with each other and attendees embraced as the event went on.

"I'm here to support veterans past and present," Jim Fenn, Albany resident and former member of the Marine Corps, said. "I want to show my pride. Part of being a dedicated American is showing your gratitude. I make sure to take off work on Veterans Day every year."

The emphasis during the memorial was on giving thanks to veterans.

Martinak said it doesn't matter what branch of the military someone served in or what war they fought in, they are all veterans.

During her remarks, Linn County Commissioner Sprenger challenged community members to do one thing:

“Never miss an opportunity to thank a veteran.”

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Editor's note: This article was edited to correct the spelling of Linn County Commissioner Sherrie Sprenger's name.

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