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REMEMBER OUR VETERANS EVERYDAY

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (NOVEMBER 9, 2023) – To some, Veteran’s Day is just another holiday on the calendar.

For Allen C. Wagonblott Jr., Post Commander of VFW Post 4487, and other veterans, Nov. 11 is about much, much more.

From honoring the men and women who’ve served and remembering the sacrifice of veterans, Wagonblott said Veterans Day helps educating future generations, promoting peace, growing community spirit and unity, making sure veterans have the resources and support they need and reminding everyone of the importance of civic duty.

To help reinforce all those messages, the VFW 4487 Gilbert-Burton Hall is holding a ceremony on Nov. 11 starting at 9 am from Paradise Valley Park, 19 Prospect Ave. All Middletown offices are closed on Friday, Nov. 10 to mark the important holiday.

“Veterans Day holds profound significance for our country,” Wagonblott said. “It’s not just a day off or a mere date on the calendar, but a time to pause, reflect, and express our deepest gratitude to all the men and women who have donned the uniform and selflessly served our nation.

“They have risked their lives to uphold the values we hold dear: freedom, democracy, and peace. By commemorating Veterans Day, we honor their sacrifices and ensure that the stories of valor, courage, and dedication are passed down through generations. It is a powerful reminder of the debt we owe to our service members, both past and present, and the enduring strength and resilience of our nation.”

With Naval Station Newport and all the other related entities, it should come as no surprise there’s such a strong military presence on Aquidneck Island among active and retired veterans.

According to statistics from the town’s tax officer, there are close to 690 people who currently receive a veteran tax exemption in Middletown. That’s more than 13 percent of the total homes in the community.

Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown, a US Army veteran, said not a day goes by where he doesn’t reflect on his time in the military and the life lessons he learned. Brown said he’s also extremely proud of the veterans memorial in Paradise Valley Park, which helped provide a place in Middletown to formally mark the community’s appreciation.

“I know people might not believe this, but it’s rare for a day to go by that I’m not using a lesson that was stressed in the Army here with the town,” Brown said. “It was a great experience for me and I couldn’t be more proud of our recognition of veterans and all they do and have done for Middletown — and our country.”

Wagonblott said Veterans Day is critical in so many ways, some most might not even think about. For example, he said the day helps draw more attention to veterans issues like Post Traumatic Stress Disorders, physical disabilities or difficulties in transitioning back to civilian life.

Then, there’s the opportunity to show children and teens how much others have given and sacrificed so they could enjoy the lives they lead today.

“Veterans Day is much more than just a date on the calendar or a day off from work,” Wagonblott said. “At its core, Veterans Day serves as a profound reminder of the sacrifices made by millions of men and women who have served in the armed forces to protect our freedoms, our values, and our way of life.”

Wagonblott said it was important for everyone to keep veterans in mind year round, not just on a single day in November.

“Appreciating and honoring veterans is vital for recognizing their sacrifices and service to our nation,” Wagonblott said. “To deepen this appreciation, one can educate themselves on military history, visit war memorials and museums, and engage directly with veterans to hear their personal stories.

“Participating in Veterans Day celebrations, supporting veteran-owned businesses, and writing letters to active-duty members can further this connection. Volunteering with organizations that aid veterans, staying informed about current veteran issues, supporting military families, and practicing empathy towards the visible and invisible wounds many veterans carry are other meaningful avenues of appreciation. By combining education, engagement, and empathy, we can ensure that the contributions of these brave individuals are never overlooked.”

These lessons are especially important for children, he said.

“To help children better appreciate our veterans, consider activities like visiting local veterans' museums, reading children's books about military service, attending community ceremonies on Veterans Day or Memorial Day, writing letters to active duty members or veterans, watching movies or documentaries about the military, and engaging in art or service projects that honor our servicemen and women,” Wagonblott said. “Personal interactions, like listening to a veteran's story or learning about family military history, can also deepen their understanding and respect for those who've served.”

As for the Nov. 11 ceremony itself, Wagonblott said it was another important reminder of the efforts of veterans.

“I hope that the Veterans Day ceremony on Nov. 11 serves as a reminder of the sacrifices and contributions made by our veterans,” Wagonblott said. “It's an opportunity for us to express our gratitude, reflect on the values of courage and service, and reinforce the importance of unity and peace. Additionally, I hope the ceremony educates the younger generations about the significance of the day and instills in them a sense of respect and appreciation for those who have served. Ultimately, I hope this day fosters a deeper understanding and strengthens our commitment to support our veterans, both past, present and in the future.”

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