

News

Students pay tribute to vets at Iwo Jima Memorial

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NEWINGTON — The lawn of the National Iwo Jima Memorial located on the town line of New Britain and Newington was filled with local students Friday in a show of honor and remembrance for war veterans.

Eighth grade science and social studies students at John Wallace Middle School in Newington partook in several activities to pay homage on the clear, spring day. To complement their tribute, they all wore some form of red, white and blue.

The morning started with an introduction by Jessica Morris, one of their teachers.

“This monument honors veterans of Newington and neighboring communities,” she said, after a brief moment of silence.

She explained how appropriate it was for this monument to be here.

“Many Marines who fought in World War II were from the Hartford area,” she said.

The students then sang the National Anthem and said the Pledge of Allegiance. The eighth grade chorus and band contributed to the event.

“I felt like it was an honor to sing the National Anthem at a service like this where we’re honoring our country and our veterans,” said Kiera Sheehan, 13.

Some of the students honored the veterans by reading poems, as well.

“Every student here wrote a poem or drew an original piece of artwork for social studies, and then we selected two (students) from each class to present theirs,” said Morris.

Some of the poems read by students incorporated personal experiences with family members in the military while some simply gave thanks.

Kayla LaRosa, 14, wrote “Soldiers of the Land.”

“My inspiration was my grandfather who fought in the mountains of Italy,” she said. “It was inspiring to write about him because my grandmother had told me who he was and I thought this was a perfect time to write a poem about him and how he served his country.”

“You can do this online for sure, but it wouldn’t be the same,” said Keith, Bechard, 67, a Vietnam veteran with the 9th, 7th and 1st Marines.

“I remember when I was younger, my mom used to say, ‘go outside and play.’ Well, today you don’t send a kid outside to play because you’re afraid of what might happen to them. Today this is outside and play. This is hands-on and represents something that’s really important to this country and to us as a society.”

“Young people today really don’t understand what some of the people in the past have done to preserve what we have today,” Bechard said. “Some people might not think this is the perfect society, but it’s the best that I know. I’ve done quite a bit of traveling and I know that for a fact this is the greatest country on Earth. And I think this gives these young people a sense of who we are, what we are and where we came from.”

The event came to an end with the band playing a few patriotic songs, while the students put small American flags in the ground around the memorial. Students then interacted with a several veterans who said they were delighted with the event.

“It was very nice. I think they should do this more often for the kids in the high schools,” said Harry Rosenfeld, 87, who fought in the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II.

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Rob Heyl | Staff The students of John Wallace Middle School read essays that included information about family members that served. 04.13.12 for 04.14.12

