

By Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

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## Leavenworth celebrates Veterans Day

Leavenworth celebrates the 97th annual Veteran's Day Parade.

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The 97th annual Leavenworth County Veterans Day Parade parade was Nov. 11 in downtown Leavenworth. The parade is the nation's oldest regional Veterans Day observance.

"This parade is also considered among the largest west of the Mississippi river and is honored to be designated an official Veterans (Affairs) National Event," said Dan Wiley, who served as reviewing stand emcee. "And, Washington, D.C., has designated Leavenworth, Kan., as a regional site for the observance of Veterans Day to the states of Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Colorado. This parade draws 12,000 to 14,000 spectators annually."

The parade had four emcees scattered along the parade route. Ron Coaxum was at Fourth and Cherokee streets, Tim Vandall was at the Riverfront Community Center, Bill Corbet was posted between the 400 and 500 blocks of Delaware Street, and Wiley was at the reviewing stand.

"It's an honor to be here," Coaxum said. "As always, this is dedicated to the many veterans and active-duty service members who were and are still engaged in conflicts around the world."

The parade started at 10:30 a.m. with bagpipers Dale Cleland, John Bauer and Kevin Regan leading the procession. Soldiers from the Fort Leavenworth Medical Department Activity served as the lead color guard for 2016.

After the parade stopped at 11 a.m. for the playing of taps, Lt. Gen. Michael Lundy, commanding general of the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, presented parade Grand Marshal A.C. Byrd and Chaplain Gary "Sam" Sanford with the Commander's Award for Public Service. The awards recognized their service to active-duty military members, veterans and their families, as well as their efforts within the general community.

Many generations were represented as spectators and participants in the parade. One of the Scouting organizations partnered with one of the veterans service organizations.

"Participating in the parade is a great opportunity for all of the scouts in the area and they really enjoy it," said John Schatzel, an assistant scoutmaster with Boy Scout Troop 366, which supports Boy Scouts of military families and retired military in the Fort Leavenworth, Leavenworth and Lansing area. "This is the second year our Scout troop has partnered with the (Veterans of Foreign Wars). Last year our Scouts carried a banner with them commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam conflict. And, this year, they will be carrying a banner with them commemorating the 25th anniversary of the war in the Persian Gulf."

The 2016 theme spotlighted the contributions of Desert Storm veterans. The parade participants covered a broad spectrum from service and civic organizations to private clubs and public service agencies.

A large contingent of service members from Fort Leavenworth marched in the parade, as well as school bands and Junior ROTC cadets from throughout the area.

"Our corps of cadets has participated in the Veterans Day parade since the early 1900s, and each of our seven companies is here today," said Cadet Capt. Hunter Garritano, a senior at Leavenworth High School and company commander of Echo Company with the Junior ROTC Battalion at LHS. "JROTC means the world to me in that it will provide the preparation needed to get into ROTC at a college, then go into the service of our country as an officer. My father is currently a major in the Army and my role model. I plan on following in his footsteps."



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

The Medical Department Activity Color Guard — comprised of Spc. Frannie Maureen Bermudes, Spc. Rahul Raval, Spc. Jorge Bermudez-Sanchez, Spc. Jennifer Jackson, Spc. Rashell Cogan and NCOIC Sgt. Aaron Miller — leads the Veterans Day parade through downtown Leavenworth Nov. 11. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp