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Veterans honored in Dixie County



A tank float created and entered in the parade by American Legion Post 383 of Old Town is among the units on display in the procession. Cross City Mayor Kenneth 'Tank' Lee is a member of this post, and he said he appreciates the work by the members of the Post, the Auxiliary, the Sons of the American Legion, the Riders and the Americanism Committee.

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Story, Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © Nov. 12, 2016 at 3:47 p.m.

CROSS CITY -- The 16th Annual Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony in Cross City again provided people with a chance to honor veterans and celebrate the day in Dixie County.

This year's featured speaker Anthony A. Zenner, Ph.D., of Dixie County, a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, shared a strong message related to freedom, responsibility and respect, as well as covering some of the historical foundations of what was once known as Armistice Day and the "birthday" dates of the various military services of the United States of America.



The parade started at Evans Square Shopping Center at and proceeded northbound up U.S. Highway 19 to its point of conclusion at the flagpole and memorial at the Dixie County Manager's Office.

Debbie Brigman extends a free cookie to a veteran. There was free water, lemonade, cookies and American flags given to everyone who wanted them.

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Bob Leichner of Dixie Music Center sorts wires as he sets up the public address system. Leichner noticed eight years ago that the system being used was not very well heard, especially by older veterans who had hearing aids. Ever since then, he has volunteered and brought his equipment to help the transmit the music and messages at the event.



The Dixie County High School Red Coat Regiment Marching Band makes its way to the starting point of the parade.

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Seen here, (Ret.) USMC Lt. Col. Harvie Hampton, the Judge Advocate for the Tri-County Marine Corps League Detachment 1018, watches the parade on Veterans Day in Cross City. Col. Hampton and MCL Detachment 1018 Commandant Rosanna Powers are among the many Marines who have provided critical support for the Tri-County (Marine Corps Reserves) Toys for Tots efforts. Bryan Chrisp, another Marine, has led those efforts the past couple of years. Vince Arcadi and Pat Arcadi are known as leaders early-on in this charitable program to help needy children enjoy a bit more fun at Christmastime than those children would see of not for their efforts.

Dixie County Veterans Service Officer Steve Fremen pauses for a photo op when requested to do so. Fremen was the featured speaker at last year's Veterans Day Ceremony in Cross City.

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The ceremony included the Pledge of Allegiance; singing of the Star-Spangled Banner; comments by local officials; and this year's featured speaker.

After the ceremony, every veteran who wanted to be in a group shot was invited to pose for that.

This heralds the 16th year of the event that was originated by Kenneth "Tank" Lee, who is the mayor of Cross City and who still orchestrates and coordinates this annual production.

What started out as a handful of people at a cemetery has grown into a



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production that has drawn a couple hundred attendees and participants the last few years. All area residents and visitors are encouraged to attend this event to honor those that have so valiantly served their country.



As Shauna Clark sings the *Star-Spangled Banner* everyone salutes and pays respect to the flag.

Among the people who Mayor Lee thanked for assisting him this year with the event are Debbie Lee, Angel Lee, Kasen Lee, Maggie Forehand, Branson Forehand, Chuck Elton, Debbie Brigman, Mike Brigman, Holly Brigman, Michelle Lilie and Bob Leichner of Dixie Music Center of Old Town.

Sam Bryant, 13, was among the volunteers who helped with his friend 13-year-old Kasen Lee.

Among a very long list of other people and groups who assisted in various ways to make this event a success are the Town of Cross City and its City Council; the Cross City Police Department; the Dixie County Sheriff's Office Citizens On Patrol; Shauna Clark, who again sang the National Anthem; Dixie County Clerk Dana Johnson; Dixie County Tax Collector Michelle Cannon; Dixie County Property Appraiser Robbie Lee; Dixie County Veterans Service Officer Steve Fremen; Gary Poore; Brandon Ross and Family; John Taylor; Jobi Taylor; and the Dixie County High School Marching Band.

And there are others, including every American veteran who did his or her part in keeping the country free.

Mayor Lee said he appreciates the work of Terry Dembo and Andrew Rains, and Debbie Dembo, and the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce for its Hero Flag Program that placed more than 150 flags with crosses, and veterans' names along one part of the parade route.

As the mayor opened the program he called out different campaigns in which the United States was involved, including World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. He also asked veterans in time of peace to raise their hands for recognition.

He mentioned various dignitaries in the crowd beyond those who were among the helpful county officials.

Among those other leaders in the community who were at the event are Dixie County

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School Board Member Paul Gainey, a veteran; City Clerk Angie Bush, who welcomed everyone on behalf of the city; Gary Pinner, city manager of Cross City; City Councilman Rick Beckham, a veteran; City Councilwoman Heddie Johnson; incoming City Clerk Brenda Royal; Dixie County Commissioner-elect David O'Steen; Dixie County Superintendent of Schools-elect Mike Thomas.



Cross City Mayor Kenneth 'Tank' Lee introduces his friend and the featured speaker of the day Dr. Anthony 'Tony' Zenner.



Dr. Tony Zenner speaks about freedom, responsibility and respect.

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Mayor Lee introduced Dr. Zenner. As he did, he said Zenner joined the United States Marine Corps in 1959. After his service, Zenner earned his bachelor's degree, master's degree and a doctor of philosophy from the University of Tennessee, Lee said.

For the last 50 years, Dr. Zenner has been a speech therapist with the past 28 years helping people in Dixie County, Lee said.

Dr. Zenner told about the history of Veterans Day, which was formerly known as Armistice Day.

Armistice Day was originally set as a U.S. legal holiday to honor the end of World War I, which officially took place at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, 1918.

In legislation that was passed in 1938, Nov. 11 was "dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be hereafter celebrated and known as 'Armistice Day.'" As such, this new

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legal holiday honored World War I veterans.

Later it became Veterans Day to honor all veterans.

Zenner shared with the audience that serving in the Marine Corps taught him self-discipline. He also gained self-motivation from being a Marine.

“And it instilled in me the confidence to succeed,” Zenner said.

He applied these skills when he returned to school after the service. He would become tired and not want to study anymore, and then he would remember long hikes in full gear and carrying the nine and one-half pound M-1 rifle.

“The most important lesson I learned from the Marine Corps,” he said, “is that I could do what I thought I couldn’t (do). I own my academic success entirely to the United States Marine Corps.”

All veterans carry something more from their military days – respect.

Zenner said soldiers learn respect for rank; respect for equipment; respect for their fellow members of the service; and respect for the symbols of the country – The National Anthem and The Flag.

“What the hell is going on out there?” Zenner asked as he quoted Coach Vince Lombardi when he saw his team was not doing well on the field.

With San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick having started showing disrespect for America by kneeling during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner, Dr. Zenner took time on Veterans Day to speak about respect.

Zenner said a poll shows slightly more than 30 percent of students respect their teachers. Another poll showed 57 percent of parents think their children show respect to them.

Two of the most important sets of people in children’s lives are saying now that they do not see due respect.

Respect is not taken, he said. It is given, and it must be earned.

Zenner said there is no method to legislate respect. It is not a crime to not stand for the Pledge of Allegiance or for The National Anthem, although there is a Flag Code.

Zenner said Americans enjoy the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. He mentioned the first two amendments, which note, respectively:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” And

“A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

Freedom, Zenner said, is balanced by responsibility.

So when Kaepernick did not stand to show respect to the American flag and the National Anthem, Zenner said, that is his right, which he exercised.

“He did not break any laws by behaving as he did,” Zenner said. “But is it responsible?”

Kaepernick’s alleged reason for not standing, Zenner said, was to protest what he considered as social injustices. Kaepernick reportedly feels that the entire nation is at fault, and these symbols of the nation are not to be respected as a consequence of these social injustices, according to Kaepernick’s logic, Zenner said.

Zenner said any American sees there is some social injustice in this country.

Using this as an excuse to show disrespect to the symbols of America, Zenner said, is

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unreasonable and it is despicable.

When his action is causing others to show similar disrespect, Zenner said, it shows his lack of responsibility.

Instead of this misplaced and improper form of protest, Zenner said, “Let us make responsible the persons who are responsible for these social injustices – not the Color guard or the musicians.”

Make the people and not the symbols of American freedom – the flag and the national anthem - responsible for social injustice.

One thing that may help reduce the level of disrespect shown for America’s symbols is a committee at the American Legion. The Americanism Committee is part of the American Legion, he said.

The Americanism Committee for American Legion Post 383 of Old Town is donating flags for local schools; raising the flag at special events; conducting flag education classes in schools; and replacing worn flags at fire stations and other places where they are found.

“And they are selling flags and patriotic caps in an ongoing fundraiser,” he said.

Mayor Lee is the chairman of the American Legion Post 383 Americanism Committee, Zenner said.

“It is a wonderful, proactive effort and it should be supported,” Zenner said.

Zenner wrapped up his speech by noting that no person should ignore any social injustice, and each person can do their part to resolve those issues.

He sees injustice, however, that is not as well broadcast or published. This is the injustice levied upon veterans who have earned benefits by their service to the country, but who find the United States Department of Veterans Affairs not providing the promised health care.

There are 57,000 homeless veterans now in the United States, he said.

There are 22 veterans a day, on the average now, who commit suicide, he said.

Zenner said the American people need to call their representative in Congress. They need to write to them, too, and demand that the federal government honor its veterans by showing them respect – and to honor the contractual agreements they made when men and women enlisted in the service.

“Veterans’ lives matter,” Zenner said as he concluded his speech.

Publisher's Note: There was also a Veterans Day Parade in the Town of Bell to honor veterans in Gilchrist County, and it was sponsored by the people of Gilchrist County, the people of the Town of Bell, the Gilchrist County Historical Society, the Gilchrist County Veterans Services Department and ForVets Inc., which is located in the park and campground at Otter Springs. And also in Gilchrist County, all active members and veteran members of the Armed Forces and their spouses were invited to a free breakfast. The general public was invited, too, and the non-veterans were asked for a donation for the breakfast at the Gilchrist County Woman's Club, 2107 S.E. Gilchrist County Road 339 in Trenton. The menu included pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, biscuits and sausage, fruit, assorted muffins, coffee cakes, orange juice and coffee. Several schools, churches and other groups held programs to honor veterans throughout the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.