



Photos by BARBARA FORD (inset)

From left, Quincy Antonic, Carly Scheck and Megan Cooper, all fourth-graders in Michele Almerhofen's class, sang "This Land Is Your Land" at Elk Creek Elementary's Veterans Day celebration last Thursday.

## Students honor vets at Elk Creek Elementary

*'It's good modeling for our kids,' school's principal says*

By BARBARA FORD

Staff Writer

The students at Elk Creek Elementary School showed their support for veterans with a program and salute to the USO on Veterans Day.

Students spent last week learning about the military and why veterans are important to the country. Area veterans who attended the

program were honored on a Wall of Honor with their picture and a brief history of their service.

Elk Creek Elementary School principal Joanne Marion said every grade participated in the program, and the kids were very impressed with the veterans.

"It's good modeling for our

kids," she said. "It's good for the veterans and for the kids to see how our community comes together for the vets."

About a dozen veterans attended the afternoon program, but many more filled the gym at the evening presentation.

"When all the veterans came up on stage at the end of the program, it's an emotional moment," Marion said.

Rick Johnson, Center VPW Post 11003 district 8 vice commander, said the VPW supports the school, and he's grateful for the widespread alignment of local veterans' service.

"We support the school

because they do this for the VPW and all vets in the immediate area," Johnson said.

Johnson said that before he joined the VPW, Veterans Day was just another day.

"Now it means community support for us, and we look at it as our day of recognition," Johnson said. "People just think it's another day, but it's not."

Along with his brothers in the local branch, he said, it's important to support all veterans and help them be successful when they return from duty. Many people are unaware of a vet's sacrifice and what the day means, he said.



World War II veteran Art Donnell, 81, attended the school's event.



**A DOZEN VETERANS ATTENDED Elk Creek Elementary School's salute to the USO last Thursday.**

**ELIZABETH HUNTER**, a third-grader in Karen Benschel's class, performed a poem during the Veterans Day celebration.



Johnson said he was treated badly when he came back from the Vietnam War but said soldiers returning home today get a much better welcome and more support in dealing with problems associated with their service.

"It woke America up," he said of the treatment of veterans returning from Vietnam. "Now they support the troops."

Proud to serve, Johnson said he would do it all again if he could.

Johnson is also part of the local color guard and decorated fourth-grader and Boy Scout Adam Basso, 10, to help him carry the colors into the gym. Adams was thrilled and

understood the importance of carrying the U.S. and Colorado flags.

"It's very important to carry the flags, and it's exciting," Adams said.

Former Marine and Elk Creek dad Todd Clayton came in dress blues and watched the USO pageant from the back of the gym. Clayton, now a staff sergeant with the Air National Guard in Cheyenne, Wyo., said he was proud to attend the event.

"You earn this uniform. It isn't just given to you," Clayton said. "You earn it by putting in a lot of effort."

Clayton said the uniform affects people on a personal level, reaching their patri-

otism and a their gratitude.

"I think the uniform represents people's own pride in their country and their own willingness to serve in some way or another," Clayton said. "People are overwhelmed by the uniform, not just me, but all the men and women that protect our freedoms."

He hoped his sons, RJ, a fourth-grader, and Benjamin, a kindergarten, would be proud that he wore his uniform to the event.

RJ, a student in Beverly Ak's class, was surprised to see his dad in uniform.

"At first I didn't recognize him," RJ said. "I didn't know it was him until he walked up on stage."

RJ participated in the program along with other Scouts from Troop 215, Den 6. The group read a poem about soldiers.

Clayton said Nov. 11 is a special day. Not only was it the celebration at Elk Creek Elementary, it was the Marine Corps' 19th Birthday.

"It's awesome to see people care about veterans and those who served," he said. "It's an awesome privilege to serve this country."

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