

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Events honor veterans' sacrifices

Sharpe: Families part of service



Capt. Sherri Sharpe

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By MICKEY POWELL -

It is hard for today's soldiers to leave their families to go into combat, but they do so in the hope that other families will not have to go through the experience in the future, according to Army Capt. Sherri Sharpe.

Sharpe, an ROTC instructor at Virginia Military Institute (VMI), was the guest speaker for a Veterans Day Ceremony Saturday at Martinsville Middle School. Not only are soldiers veterans, but their families are as well, she told the approximately 100 people attending the event.

"Some of the best veterans of all time" are family members who patiently waited for soldiers to come home, having sacrificed time with them so they could help defend American families' freedom, she said.

Family is "the foundation of everything we do" as soldiers, she added.

Having achieved a distinguished military career since she graduated from Martinsville High School (MHS) in 1995, Sharpe said she has come "full circle" by returning to Virginia to teach other young people to become soldiers.

She said her heroes are youth who feel a calling to join the military. She told JROTC students who took part in Saturday's event that they had taken on "a responsibility beyond your years" of maturity.

Ultimately, soldiers are fighting to preserve freedom for today's youth, Lt. Col. David King, JROTC instructor at Martinsville High School, indicated.

Five students from Albert Harris Elementary School — Travon Dillard, Dashan Williams, Jasmine Morrison, Joshua Gravely and Daryus Estes — volunteered to lead the Pledge of Allegiance during the service.

Alluding to them as well as the JROTC students, King told the many local veterans who attended the ceremony that "if you've ever wondered if your sacrifices and service were worth it, here's part of your answer."

King said he has talked with Sharpe on several visits to VMI and he always has been impressed with her.

At MHS, “every time I mention her name, people always have something positive to say about her,” he said.

Sharpe learned to fly the Chinook, “the biggest helicopter the Army has available,” said King. She saw several tours of duty in the Middle East and received numerous awards and decorations for her military service.

“Capt. Sharpe has proven herself as a leader,” King said. He mentioned that the Army plans to promote her to the rank of major soon.

Sharpe noted that more than 60,000 soldiers have made the “ultimate sacrifice” — lost their lives — while protecting the United States in the past 90 years.

Sharpe said she has seen people die and suffer injuries in combat, and she has endured harsh conditions overseas, including constant 100 degree heat. She said combat is “not a sexy mission.”

For their bravery, soldiers somehow “should be honored everyday,” said David Kipfinger, commander of VFW Post 2820.

During the ceremony, the Veteran of the Year Award was presented to Darrel A. Peay, a Vietnam veteran who served in both the Army and Navy.

Veterans Honor Guard member James Rogers, a former Henry County sheriff, said the guard is in need of new members. Some members have recently died and others no longer are able to take part in funerals for veterans at local cemeteries, he said.

