

VETERANS: Multiple observances were held in Sisters

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a cause that is greater than themselves.” He noted that he is “proud that our students were willing to put on such a great event.”

The choir and jazz choir offered up their traditional, well-rendered service anthems and patriotic songs as a lead-up to a keynote speech by a relatively recent Sisters resident — Jim Horsley.

Horsley had a remarkable career as a Navy pilot and a member of the elite Blue Angels demonstration team. Post-military, he started his own commercial real estate

company, and has devoted himself to worldwide humanitarian work. He is currently developing his talents as an artist.

Horsley flew 200 combat missions as a Navy pilot stationed on an aircraft carrier off the coast of Vietnam.

“The best part of my aviation résumé is that I have an equal number of takeoffs and landings,” he told the students.

Horsley noted that “all veterans have memories” from a time in their life that may be the most intense experience they have ever had. It is hard to recreate the camaraderie that comes with working together with a group of people for a purpose greater than self, especially when that work is conducted in an atmosphere of shared adversity,

sacrifice and danger.

“On any given day, they were going to be better than they were ever going to be — and they did it for each other,” he said of his shipmates.

Horsley, like many veterans of his generation, needed time to fully process the experience of Vietnam. After 15 years or so, he “began a journey to reconcile some of the emotions of that experience.”

He noted that many veterans of America’s most recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will, likewise, have a great deal to process. Many served in as many as five deployments, sometimes more — entailing separation from families and a great deal of strain. The effects of that, and of combat experiences, will linger.

“In reality, that war is



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Bill Anttila, John Ferguson, Wendall Halterman and Lance Trowbridge served as color guard at Sisters Middle School Veterans Day observances.

going to be with us for a long time,” he said.

At Sisters Middle School, Jay Wilkins told youngsters about a vow he and his friends took when they were just little kids that they would all join the military. They all did. Wilkins entered the Army, where he served on active duty for six years. He went to Ranger School and earned the coveted Ranger Tab. He became an Apache attack helicopter pilot.

In a lively Q&A exchange, he gave the young teens a glimpse of military life.

He noted that he prepared for military life by staying fit — and working hard in school, even in subjects he

didn’t like.

“I wasn’t very good at math when I was your age,” he said. But being an Apache helicopter pilot required math skills. “By then, I needed it. If any of you don’t think math is important, trust me — it’s very important.”

He also noted that good communication skills are vital for a soldier. Wilkins said that military service provides skills and qualities that are beneficial in civilian life — discipline and an early experience of serious responsibility.

In response to a question about his favorite part of the service, Wilkins echoed

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PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Sisters veterans enjoyed breakfast and Veterans Day observances with Sisters High School students.

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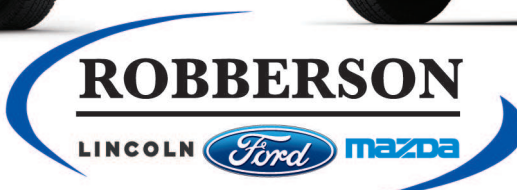
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