

# Middle school honors veterans

By Jim Cornelius  
News Editor

Like the upper classmen in Sisters High School, the younger students of Sisters Middle School make a special presentation each year to honor Sisters-area veterans.

SMS Leadership Team Advisor Becky Aylor set the tone of the event at the beginning with her greeting to the attending veterans: "Thank you for your service then, your service now, and every moment in between."

A color guard of John Ferguson (U.S. Air force); Wendell Halterman (U.S. Navy); Jim Mandell (U.S. Air force); and Bill Anttila (U.S. Navy) presented the colors for the National Anthem, sung by the 7th/8th grade choir.

Seventh-grader Greta Davis read her winning Patriot's Pen "The America I Believe In" essay to the audience, closing with the note: "Thank you very much to our veterans for serving our country and contributing to these many rights and freedoms in our country. One day I hope to be in the military so that I can fight for our country just like these amazing veterans did." (See sidebar for full essay.)

Sisters resident — and grandfather of Sisters students — Pat Bowe took to the podium for the keynote address, to a rousing ovation.

Bowe presented a



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

A VFW color guard presented the colors at Sisters Middle School.

slideshow of photographs from his service in the 173 Airborne in Vietnam in 1966-67. Bowe saw extensive combat.

"It seemed like every time they sent us out, we got in a firefight," he recalled.

Bowe was twice wounded, the second time severely. He recounted the challenges the soldiers faced that went well beyond enemy contact — terrible weather conditions, jungle that looked green and lush but created hellish conditions.

"There were no good days in Vietnam," he said.

And Bowe is acutely aware of the cost. He also recalled an emotional visit to the Vietnam War memorial in Washington, D.C.

"I know a lot of people on that wall," he said. "I served

with some really, really great people, and they are the heroes of this nation."

Bowe told the assembled youngsters that he recommends service in the military, especially for those who aren't sure what direction they want to take in life and career.

"That opens a lot of doors for a lot of people," he said.

While the observances were duly respectful and tinged with somberness, they were also rousing, with the band and choir serving up strong renditions of patriotic music.

## Commentary...

# The America I believe in

By Greta Davis  
Sisters Middle School Student

*Editor's note: Greta Davis read her winning Patriot's Pen essay at the Sisters Middle School Veterans Day observance on November 10:*

The America I believe in is a place where everybody is treated equally. In the America I believe in, we have freedoms. We have religious freedoms. We also have freedom of speech. The America I believe in, is a place where we are fortunately protected by law enforcement, firefighters, and the military. Those brave people will risk their lives to save ours. The America I believe in has rights. We can all vote when we are 18, we can also drive a car when we are 16. There are many things that are unique about the America I believe in. In the America I believe in we are all treated equally. It doesn't matter whether you are a boy or a girl, we all can have the same rights. Even though people of color used to be treated poorly, now all people can own land and have

all the rights other people have. In America a person can believe any way they want to and still be treated equally.

One of the many things special about the America I believe in is that we have many freedoms. We have freedom of speech. We can talk or say anything we want. We have the freedom to decide where we go to church. We can believe any way or in anything we want to. We have the freedom to act the way we want to, but some inappropriate actions will be disciplined. We can decide what we want to do when we grow up, we can decide if we're going to get married or have kids. We can choose if we want to play sports or do other activities. These are only some of the things that make me very, very proud to be an American today.

Thank you very much to our veterans for serving our country and contributing to these many rights and freedoms in our country. One day I hope to be in the military so that I can fight for our country just like these amazing veterans did. Thank you.

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