

# VETERANS

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those men and women who have served. It is truly an honor to have such courageous people in our community to look up to. It is because of you here today that the United States remains the greatest country in the world."

Troyer, speaking at a patriotically decorated podium behind the veterans, urged her audience to continue reaching out to those who have served.

"I want to challenge us as a community to not let the appreciation for the men and women in front of me end today. Even something as simple as going out of your way to say thank you when you see a veteran is something anyone can do to show our gratitude," she said. "It is also important that we stay connected with these men and women, listen to their stories and stay educated on the issues they face today and on how we can serve them as they have served our country."

Royes told those assembled that she could not fathom experiencing what many of the veterans there have had to go through.

"I am 18 years old, and the thought of leaving home and going either across the country or to other nations seems crazy. That's what a lot of veterans here and all across the nation had to do at this age," she said.

Troyer then asked students to imagine having to leave their family, parents, grandparents and siblings and face combat.

"That's why I have so much respect for our veterans. Their bravery, courage and sacrifice is still paying off today for our country," the IHS senior said.

After the talk by Troyer and Royes, Imbler Elementary School students sang "Thank You Soldiers" — then there was the Veterans Appreciation Line. The students shook hands with each veteran and often provided notes and cards of thanks. The notes were as innocent as they were heartfelt. One from a fourth-grader read: "Thank you for defending our country and protecting us, it's very unselfish of you to serve in the Army."

Students who have been participating in the Veterans Appreciation Line for years include Troyer, who said she has been attending

the Veterans Day Assembly since she was a kindergartner.

"I see a lot of familiar faces. It is wonderful that (the veterans) want to come back each year," she said after the ceremony.

Veterans who attended Friday's program included Allan Sather of La Grande, who served in the Vietnam War while in the U.S. Army. Sather left the ceremony grateful for the sentiments expressed by the students.

"It is very meaningful not to be forgotten," the veteran said.

Gary Pierson, a La Grande veteran, said the assembly is a great way of giving students a historical perspective.

"It lets the little kids know what happened before they got here," he said. "It helps them appreciate what the old folks did."

G. Royes, a veteran from Summerville, echoed this sentiment: "It is for the kids — that is what it is about."

He was impressed with the gratitude the students expressed. Royes noted that he heard one veteran say that he had never been thanked for his service prior to Friday's assembly.

IHS Principal Mike Mills said the assembly provides students with a valuable opportunity to see the importance of recognizing what veterans have done for the country.

"It is a good way for students to show support for the community," Mills said.

## IHS educator Charley Hughes played key role in starting Imbler Veterans Day Assembly

The current version of the Imbler School District's Veterans Day Assembly is a credit to the late educator Charley Hughes.

Hughes was a social studies teacher at Imbler High School when he helped start the Veterans Day tradition in 2004 or 2005, said Doug Hislop, IHS wrestling coach and former Imbler School District Superintendent.

"He was the ramrod. He said, 'By God, we're going to do it,'" said Hislop, who served as superintendent from 2004 to 2014 and has attended almost all of the district's Veterans Day assemblies.

Hughes taught in the Imbler School District for 16 years before retiring in 2006. He also served as a counselor and sixth-grade teacher during portions of his tenure.

According to Hislop, Hughes was an excellent educator. "He connected with kids and made things happen for them," he said of Hughes.

Hislop said Hughes, who died in 2008 at age 63, would be delighted to see how far the Veterans Day program has come.

"When I close my eyes at the assemblies, I always see Charley smiling from ear to ear," said Hislop.

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