

# Ceremony keys on true meaning of Memorial Day

**Memorial** from Page 1A

In Lounsbury's opinion, making it a national holiday, and subsequently part of a three-day weekend, is "when some of the true meaning of Memorial Day was lost."

The holiday is about more than a chance for a miniature vacation, Lounsbury said.

"It's a great day to remember," he added. "Every day is a great day to remember our veterans and their families."

Mitch Miller, of Oregon's Veterans of Foreign Wars department, also paid tribute to "our American fallen," whom "humble Americans have gathered" to honor since the Civil War.

"Every American owes a great debt to the courageous men and women who have selflessly given their all to defend and protect our way

of life," he said. "And while giving back to the extent they deserve is impossible, celebrating their memory and honoring their most selfless deeds offers a start."

He thanked the approximately 1.3 million members of the nation's military who have fought to defend American values and the daily freedoms citizens enjoy.

"God bless our fallen, their families and those that live in uniforms in this world," said Miller, himself a Vietnam War veteran who served several years in the 1960s.

In Vietnam, he said, he saw many good service members fall, memories that still touch him.

"It was no picnic," he said. The war was lost, he added, but not by the soldiers. "We did our job. We got 'er done."



JOSHUA BESSEX — THE DAILY ASTORIAN

**Will Batty, a volunteer with American Legion Riders, puts the finishing touches on a battlefield cross as a tribute to Sgt. James Treber during the Memorial Day ceremony at the American Legion in Seaside.**

Guest speaker Luke Thomas, the Clatsop County Veterans' Service Officer, said he's committed to helping veterans get the services and benefits they deserve. He

told the veterans in the audience to call him, even when they might believe another veteran needs his help more.

"You're a veteran, you've paid your due," he said, add-

ing the fallen soldiers who were being memorialized that day would want the living veterans to now receive what they deserve.

Maureen Boggs, a member of the Seaside American Legion Auxiliary, sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Amazing Grace" and "America, the Beautiful" for the ceremony. A member of Boy Scout Troop 642 led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Kyrstin Crawford, a member of the legion's Junior Auxiliary, served as Miss Poppy and handed out red remembrance poppies, made by veterans, at the ceremony for donations. The Junior Auxiliary members also pass them out in front of grocery stores and in other locations, and the donations go to veterans, Crawford said.

After leading the crowd in the closing prayer, Chaplain Jere Mattila read "Flanders Field," a poem written by John McCrae in May 1915 during World War I. The poem, which is the inspiration behind the traditional remembrance poppies, reads: "In Flanders fields the poppies blow, between the crosses, row on row, that mark our place; and in the sky the larks, still bravely singing, fly scarce heard amid the guns below."

"We are the dead. Short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flanders field," the poem reads. "Take up our quarrel with the foe: to you from failing hands we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high. If you break faith with us who die we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders fields."

# Local police try to approach panhandling with wider perspective

**Dilemma** from Page 1A

Begging is listed as an offense against public peace and safety in the city's General Offenses Ordinance.

"No person shall beg or solicit alms or other gratuities upon the streets or in any public place in the city," the ordinance states.

The offense can carry a penalty or a fine not to exceed \$700 or imprisonment not to exceed 180 days. Each day a violation occurs is chalked up as a different offense. The ordinance, however, is not enforced, especially if the offense is isolated from others, such as disorderly conduct.

"The problem with it, is there are basically case laws out there that contradict" the city's ordinance, Ham said.

A person could claim citing or arresting someone for panhandling is a suppression of their First Amendment rights, Ham said. And many people have done so. In at least Arizona, Utah, Michigan and California in the past four years, courts have struck down different types of panhandling laws, ruling they are unconstitutional since the First Amendment protects the right to free speech, according to the nonpartisan First Amendment Center.

After being made aware of this situation and realizing "we might be setting ourselves up for some bad decisions," Ham said, the department as a whole backed off citing people for only panhandling based on advice from the city.

Now police response is complaint-driven and officers will not initiate contact with a panhandler unless he or she is aggressively panhandling, using profanity to threaten another person, following an individual, blocking sidewalk traffic or using some other kind of aggressive tactic to solicit, Ham said. When a person calls the department to report an incident of panhandling, the dispatcher often will ask if

it only is panhandling or if there are other aggravating factors that would require an officer to respond to the situation. The same applies to street performers.

Even when officers do respond, they handle the incidents as informational or educational opportunities, Ham said.

Besides the possibility of being sued for repressing people's First Amendment rights, citing someone who claims to be in need could be seen as impractical, Ham said.

"What's the point of citing someone to get a monetary fine from someone who can't afford it?" some may ask, Ham said, which has led the department to question, "Is it really worth the enforcement action in the manner of issuing a citation and having them appear into court?"

They instead try to approach the problem with a wider perspective that aims to treat it at its root. The department would prefer to offer or suggest resources for people who claim to need assistance. Those could include referrals to Helping Hands, the South Clatsop County Food Bank, food programs at community churches, the Department of Human Services and others. The problem, Ham said, is options for officers to help are limited, and the panhandlers they encounter are living in a wide

range of situations. Some are transients, for whom begging has become an integral part of their lifestyle as they travel from place to place; some are homeless and truly need assistance; and others may not need food or work as much as they just desire money.

That is what some community members are experiencing when they interact with panhandlers, as well.

Residents have shared a number of stories about certain panhandlers quickly disposing of donated food

by tossing it into the nearby parking lot, or simply rejecting it outright and insisting they only want money.

But there also are stories of recipients who seem to truly be in need and respond with gratitude when offered food or help from passers by.

One man, who did not want to be named for the article, said he is not from Seaside but more or less passing through. Panhandling isn't something he always does, he said, but he's "going through hard times" and is waiting for unemployment benefits and

other social services to get sorted out. He has a car for transportation and just uses the money he collects for gas and food, he said.

Several people in an on-line discussion on the Seaside Oregon Virtual Garage Sale page expressed frustration about not being able to distinguish between those who truly are in need and those who aren't and were concerned panhandling and solicitation from the latter could be detrimental to serving the former. Some suggested giving the indi-

viduals information to Helping Hands or other resources when giving them food or money.

For those who are frustrated by the panhandling that often transpires in front of Safeway or elsewhere in town, Ham would suggest they don't give to those people.

"If it truly is a community livability problem, then the community as a whole is going to have to not support the activity - whatever it is," he said, adding if you don't feed an issue, it might go away.

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