

Gratitude for Those Who Served



Clark College President Bob Knight, U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Eric Sheline, Community Foundation for Southwest Washington President Jennifer Rhoads, and Clark College Trustee Royce Pollard attended the college's Veterans Celebration.

This November, Clark College began a new tradition: a college-sponsored celebration honoring veterans. The event was held the Thursday before Veterans Day in Gaiser Student Center.

"We need to make sure that our veterans are taken care of," said Clark College President Bob Knight in his welcoming address to the event participants. "We're going to have an annual Veterans Day celebration and, one day soon, a Veterans Resource Center here at the college."



Veterans salute the flag during the Posting of the Colors.

That center could become a reality sooner than expected, thanks to an announcement made during the celebration by Community Foundation for Southwest Washington President Jennifer Rhoads. Rhoads announced that, in honor of CFSWW's 30th anniversary, the foundation would be donating six grants of \$30,000 each to different organizations in the region helping to alleviate poverty, and that the first grant would be going to Clark College to create its new Veterans Resource Center. She offered a quote by the writer Cynthia Ozicks: "'We

often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude.'

"Our veterans most deserve our gratitude, today and every day," Rhoads concluded.

Once complete, the center will support veteran students with quality academic and career advising, resource referrals and information regarding military tuition benefits. The center will help expand the services already provided by Clark's Veterans Programs office—services that have led to Clark being named a Military-Friendly School by Victory Media for three years in a row. About 700 veterans enroll at Clark College every quarter; about 500 of them use GI Bill benefits to help pay for tuition, fees, housing, books and supplies.



Clark's Veterans Celebration was a community event, honoring members of every branch of service.

The event was originally planned to begin with a Changing of the Colors at the flagpole outside the Penguin Union Building. However, bad weather canceled that portion of the program. Instead, it began with a Posting of the Colors ceremony inside Gaiser Student Center, after which Clark student Petya Grozeva sang the National Anthem. Guests were also invited to write and sign cards thanking veterans for their service; the cards were delivered to retired and disabled veterans at the Vancouver Veterans Administration Medical Center by members of the Clark College Veterans Club.

Sgt. Maj. Eric Sheline, U.S. Marine Corps, 6th Engineer Support Battalion, gave the keynote speech. Since joining the Marines in 1987, Sheline has participated in operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield; was squad leader of an anti-terrorism

team in Mogadishu, Somalia; and was deployed twice to Kuwait in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sheline noted that as the U.S. military continues to draw down forces, more and more veterans will be entering higher education in the coming years. He urged all veterans to continue to be role models, even after they leave the service.

“When we leave [to serve overseas], we do great things,” he said. “When we come back, we continue to do great things.”

Student Success & Retention Administrative Assistant Susan Muir, who served on the committee that helped organize the event, said the college plans to make the Veterans Celebration an annual tradition. She added that there will be another event on May 22 in recognition of Memorial Day.

Photos: Clark College/Elizabeth Christopher