

South Tahoe gathers to honor local veterans

By Kathryn Reed

Veterans tend to carry scars upon their body, mind and soul. The scars never completely fade away – whether they have left the battlefield or left the service.

Speakers at South Lake Tahoe's Veterans Day ceremony at the packed American Legion Hall reiterated this reminder in their various ways, many on the verge of tears.

The more than 100 in attendance sat on the floor, friend's laps, stood and drifted into the hall to be part of this annual day to honor all veterans.



Curt Emrie leads the Veterans Day ceremony in South Lake Tahoe.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

"We understand the sacrifices service members and their families make every day," said Curt Emrie of Legion Post 795. "We will remember you always not for protecting our freedom, but for putting service before self."

With a heavy heart, George Ramirez, who is the POW representative for the area, spoke about how vets Bill Hanson and Gene Ross are not doing well – and will no likely be here for next year's service.

Hanson was a prisoner of war. Ross is former commander of the local post.

For the six veterans at Barton's Skilled Nursing Center, goody bags were to be taken to them after the ceremony to honor them.

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago spoke of her father who served in Vietnam and was in the Navy for 25 years.

"What I have learned from my father is to stick by what is right," Santiago said. "As your supervisor, I am committed to the veterans of this community."

She mentioned how next week she and her colleagues will be faced with making \$5.5 million in cuts for the next fiscal year – just half of what will be slashed in the coming months from the 2011-12 budget. Veterans' services could be axed. Santiago, though, pledged her vote would be to keep the programs intact.

For Patty Smith and Kenny Curtzwiler, Thursday was about their sons who are no longer here. Smith lost her son, Timmy, in combat in 2008. Curtzwiler spoke briefly about his son, Kaleb, who had been in the military, who took his life earlier this year. The boys were high school friends.

John Lingar paid tribute to the prisoners of war and those missing in action. A table sat for one was at the front of the room representing the lone soldier against his or her captors. The white table cloth a symbol of purity, a single rose for the blood that may have been shed, a yellow ribbon for hope of their return, a slice of lemon for their bitter fight, a flickering candle as the beacon of light in their dreams

leading them home.

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