

Legion Post 57 salutes vets with service

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American Legion Post 57 honored its members, visiting veterans and fallen comrades Tuesday morning with a Veterans Day Service and luncheon at the post.

The ceremony began at 11:11 a.m. with a prayer before the post's Honor Guard presented the colors and the ceremony began to unfold with a Quilts of Valor presentation, recognition of the Veterans Day Parade Grand Marshal and dignified flag disposal ceremony.

More than 100 veterans attended the event, many with their spouses, children and grand children creating a huge audience for the ceremony.

One of the most poignant moments of the ceremony took place when Kenneth Bowen, who served as the Veterans Day Parade Grand Marshal received a standing ovation.

Bowen was a POW in Beirut, Lebanon from June 14-July 2 in 1985 after he and other military personnel were taken hostage when their plane was hijacked.

Bowen's response to the audience was to offer a salute, tip his cap and cover his heart.

Bill Huggins, American Legion Post 57 Commander, said he was pleased the event had such a large audience attend the post's Veterans Day Ceremony.

"There's no way to describe the excitement," he said. "Just to see the way we're impacting our community and the community is responding to what we're doing — it's priceless."

Huggins also commented on Bowen receiving a standing ovation from the audience.

"As the American Legion we are here to service our veterans and when we have a veteran such as himself, who was a POW to be a veteran,



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Members of the American Legion Post 57 honor guard Jackson Koon (left) and Wayne L. Hons fold a flag for the dignified flag disposal ceremony.

to see him recognized by his peers, his community again touches our hearts," he said.

Also during the ceremony, The Quilts of Valor program presented seven veterans with quilts on Tuesday at the ceremony.

Marjorie Gallardo, with the Quilts of Valor program, said applications where handed-out to other veterans so the organization can provide more veterans with quilts.

"The program is Quilts of Valor and they've got a foundation that this all goes through where you put an application in, they accept, we make the quilt, then we award it and we give certificates with each one," she said, noting they've provided quilts locally for three years.

Gallardo said she was pleased to see so many veterans attend the ceremony.

"It means a lot to me as being a veteran myself," she said. "I'm giving back to them. This is my way of paying it back to them."

Matthew Bailey received the first quilt during Tuesday's service.

"It means a lot," he said of getting the quilt. "For the longest time it was like nobody cared. To know that people out there actually do care, it means a lot, it really does. To be honored like that it means the world."

As a veteran, Bailey never saw combat, due to having an adverse reaction to the Anthrax vaccine that he took in the late 1990s.

"There's a lot of people that's earned it more than me, but I have buddies that tell me the opposite, but that's the way I feel about it," he said of receiving a quilt. "We all signed a blank check..."

Randall Madison, a Navy

veteran, also received a quilt.

"It's very touching to be honored for my service, for sure," he said. "You don't feel like you deserve things like this, but when you look back on it and all the hours you spent doing your job and once in a while seeing somebody shooting at you..."

Paul Barnes, a Desert Storm veteran who served in the Marine Corps, also received a quilt during the ceremony and said it adds to the legacy of his family

and forefathers who also served in the military.

"This is a symbol of legacy, of service," he said. "I come from a long line of military people, so when my grandfather was in the military, his dad was born into slavery, so the military was a means for African-Americans to make something of themselves and contribute to society. This is just a recognition of that contribution that was made, so for me this is more of a legacy statement."



Anthony R. Hare (center) has a quilt of valor draped across his shoulders during the American Legion Post 57 Veterans Day program on Tuesday.