



Michal Swanson gives Veteran's Day message at school programs

By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

A veteran who grew up in Imperial, and not much older than the students seated in front of him, gave the Veteran's Day message Monday to students at Chase County Schools.

Michal Swanson, a 2004 Chase County Schools graduate and Army National Guard veteran, spoke at two programs coordinated by the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter at the school.

Out of high school only eight years, Swanson, who served a year in Iraq, said he feels honored to now be included in the "veteran" category.

His message was short and to the point to students at the morning program—serve your community and nation.

"There is a common thread that runs through all veterans. What makes that individual different?" Swanson asked.

"The idea of service is the common thread," he said.

Swanson said it's unnatural for someone to put on a uniform, pick up a weapon, be willing to be sent all over the world and experience separation from their families to voluntarily serve in the military.

"We are all blessed that we have men and women who answer that call," he said.

Swanson reminded the students that's not the way it is in a lot of other countries.

Swanson said there is one sure way to honor veterans and thank them, especially those who did not come home.

"It comes back to service," he said.



While acknowledging military service is not for everyone, Swanson said there are other ways to serve in your community by being active in your church and community or school organizations.

"If we can put the idea of service in our communities, it will be a better place," he said.

The idea of lifting others up instead of pushing them down is among the ideals on which this country was founded, he added.

Incorporating that into acts of service would be a great testament to the sacrifices our veterans made, he said.

“I challenge you to serve others. Don’t do it for the accolades or the awards but for the greater good,” he concluded.

Swanson holds a special place in his heart for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, having served himself there.

He encouraged people to google “faces of the fallen,” where they can read about the 6,604 Americans who have died as a result of the wars in those two countries.

A service of The Washington Post newspaper, each of those who died is pictured with a short report on how he or she was killed. The vast majority killed in action were between the ages of 20-24.

Members of the VFW Post 4688 Color Guard advanced and retired the colors at both programs.



A locally-produced video featuring students in many of the CCS classes said “thank-you” to veterans in a variety of ways. Some spelled out “thank you” with balloons while others, with a veteran’s picture in their hands, gave their thanks to veterans they knew.

FBLA member Emily Owens coordinated the video. Bethany Sorensen directed a moment of silence.

All of the veterans present at the programs were asked to stand, where they were introduced and in what branch they served was read.

They were also invited to stay for lunch at the school cafeteria, with their tab picked up by the FBLA chapter. Advisor Sandy O’Neil said 26 individuals took them up on the offer.

Music was provided by the CCS band and choir, with Tapainga Kahle and Anna Bauerle singing the National Anthem at the morning grade 7-12 program.

A second program was given Monday afternoon for grades K-6 students, when Swanson also spoke. Part of the K-6 program was a special musical number by the fourth and sixth grade classes and a skit that demonstrated proper care and respect for the flag.

The FBLA has placed videos of both Veteran’s Day programs on the school’s website at: chasecountyschools.org

On the top bar, click on activities, then on video stream to access the program videos.

Sponsor O’Neil noted the FBLA chapter is also collecting photos from any serviceman or woman who has them from when they were in the military. They are hoping to acquire ones from different branches of the military.

They can be sent to CCS, Attention: Sandy O’Neil, PO Box 577, Imperial. Photos will be returned, she said.

Veterans recognized at programs

Gene Rider

Mark Berry

David Oxford

Irvin Bauerle

Bud Statz
Duane Todd
Eldon Kuntzelman
Bill Sharp
Leo Lines
John Osler
Jack Claney
Patrick DeLack
Harry Jaeger
Ansel Hill
Glen Ashmore
Thomas Russell
Michal Swanson
Ken Robinson
Jerry Huydenberg
Annette Kasselmann
Chuck Sargent
Tom Cravey
Rocky Martin
Jim Graham
Max Hoffmeister
Eldon Roschewski
Marv Teply