Chester County honors American veterans for their heroism, valor

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KENNETT SQUARE — In wake of endless sacrifice, America celebrated the men and women who served the nation in the U.S. military on Friday in recognition of Veterans Day.

“On Veterans Day, we thank all those who have served and protected this great country,” said Chief William Holdsworth of the Kennett Square Police Department.

The first national holiday in honor of American veterans of all wars took place in 1954 on Nov. 11. Previously the date had been recognized annually since 1938 as Armistice Day, dedicated to the cause of world peace in honor of World War I veterans.

“Our nation’s veterans answered the call to safeguard the American principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” said Chester County Commissioner Josh Maxwell of Downingtown.

“Veterans continue their service as teachers, doctors, lawyers, police officers, and firefighters, continuously building on their contributions,” he said. “We must commit to return their efforts by offering our respect, wholehearted appreciation, and advocacy.

“It is on this Veterans Day that we pause to reflect on their continued service and thank them for their work and sacrifices to protect us all,” Maxwell continued. “I encourage everyone to thank the veterans in their lives for their countless contributions to our country.”

Maxwell joined fellow Commissioners Marian Moskowitz, chairperson, and Michelle Kichline to launch Operation Green Light in Chester County this November.

The initiative, which happens in counties across the nation, began on Nov. 7 and runs until Nov. 13, Sunday.

During Operation Green Light, the Chester County Historic Courthouse shall be bathed in green light to express profound gratitude for the sacrifices and contributions of the region’s veterans and their families, the commissioners announced earlier this fall.

On Veterans Day, and throughout much of November, local businesses have been offering veterans special discounts and free services in thanks to their heroism as men and women who served this nation when duty called to safeguard the liberty of all Americans.

And as the rain fell steadily on Friday afternoon, The Flats at Kennett delivered gift bags tied with a patriotic red-white-and blue balloon to all the veterans living in the luxury apartment community on Millers Hill Road in Kennett Township.

Still not just on Veterans Day, but many people take a moment to thank a veteran for his or her service when passing by them on the street in Chester. The words “thank you for your service to our county” take mere seconds to utter.

Veterans Day brings veterans together in a way that is meaningful. They hold solemn remembrance together, of their memories while in service including away at war, and in tribute to the fallen.

The Downingtown Area Chamber of Commerce held its annual Veterans Day flag raising public ceremony Friday at Kerr Park in Downingtown. People gathered in attendance to honor the community’s hometown heroes.

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On Nov. 2, Chris Pielli, the Chester County Recorder of Deeds, hosted a free breakfast for all county veterans at the Laborers’ District Council Education & Training Center, Exton, in East Whiteland Township.

Pielli announced a special recognition of 100-year-old World War II Army veteran, Sgt. Francis “Frankie” DiSanti, who served in the Pacific theater, fought in the Battle of Luzon, and was awarded the bronze star.

“We host this breakfast every year to give thanks for the service and sacrifice of roughly 25,000 veterans residing in Chester County whose service range from World War II to today’s conflicts around the world,” Pielli said.

For the first time, the Recorder of Deeds recognized someone as the Veterans’ Advocate of the Year.

Pielli gave this year’s award to Fred Ries, a Marine Corps veteran and Local 654 member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He attended the special event alongside his wife, Beth.

Pielli said the annual breakfast also serves as a networking opportunity for veteran organizations and individuals to continue a collaborative, county-wide conversation about related services.

Furthermore, he said, everyone comes together to “explore ways in which we can learn from each other, and share ideas that successfully support our veterans.”

In Kennett Square, the American Legion Post 491 will host a rededication of the World War I Monument at Mary D. Lang School at Center and Mulberry streets at 4 p.m. Nov. 19. The ceremony is slated to include a wreath laying and 21-gun salute.

Chris Pielli, left, hosts a breakfast for all veterans Nov. 2, 2022, in Exton where he awarded the first annual Chester County Recorder of Deeds Veterans’ Advocate of the Year to Fred Ries, who was accompanied by his wife, Beth Ries. (COURTESY OF CHRIS PIELLI)