



MEDIA CONTACT: Laura Soll, Parade Communications (860) 688-4499, cell (860) 833-4466

Students Win Statewide CT Veterans Parade Essay Contest Wednesday, November 3 Public Ceremony at State Capitol Building

HARTFORD, CONN., October 25, 2010 – **Kaitlin Huber, an 8th grader from Vernon, Conn.**, is the **First Place winner** in a statewide contest which asked students to write an essay addressing “I Want to Say THANK YOU to a Veteran Because...” The 2010 Connecticut Veterans Parade essay contest is presented by The Navy League of the United States – Hartford Council and the State of Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs.

As the First Place winner, Kaitlin, a student at Vernon Center Middle School, **will ride in a vehicle in the Connecticut Veterans Parade on Sunday, November 7 at 1 p.m.** in Hartford. In recognition of her achievement, she also will receive an American flag that has flown over the State Capitol Building.

Two Runners-Up were selected for this contest. They are **Morgan McDonald of Granby, Conn.**, a sixth grader at Wells Road Intermediate School and **Bridget Smith of Stamford, Conn.**, an eighth grader at Turn of River Middle School.

All three winners will be honored at a ceremony on Wednesday, November 3 at 4 p.m. in the Connecticut State Capitol Building’s Hall of Flags. Local radio host Brad Davis, a champion of the Connecticut Veterans Parade since its establishment in 2000, will emcee the ceremony and be joined by officials from the Navy League of the United States and Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz of the Connecticut Department of Veterans’ Affairs. During the awards ceremony, Kaitlin, Morgan and Bridget will read their essays.

The **Navy League of the United States – Hartford Council and the State of Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs** sponsored this special project to encourage middle school students to learn more about the heroism and importance of American servicemen and women throughout our nation’s history. The contest was open to all Connecticut 6th, 7th and 8th graders. A panel of judges selected the winner and the runners-up.

The **Connecticut Veterans Parade – one of the largest veterans salutes in the entire nation** will take place in **Hartford on Sunday, November 7**. The 11th annual parade will step off at 1 p.m. near the Connecticut State Capitol Building in Hartford and proceed for 1.26 miles through the Downtown area.

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The colorful annual Connecticut Veterans Parade honors the dedication and sacrifices of servicemen and women from all U.S. conflicts, and offers the state's residents the opportunity to express their thanks in a meaningful way. Connecticut residents who is an active, retired or honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces including commissioned officers, warrant officers and enlisted personnel of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Reserves are welcome to participate, as are Veterans groups, patriotic commissions, and local municipalities.

This year's parade will feature **marching bands** from the **University of Connecticut and Central Connecticut State University**, and high school and middle schools, pipe & drum and fife & drum corps from all over the state. **Special parade features** will include a **tolling of church bells and Moment of Silence** when the parade will pause in observance of veterans who died while serving their country, followed by the **singing of the National Anthem. Volunteers will hand out American flags** to spectators, and sell **2010 commemorative Parade lapel pins** at \$4 apiece to pay for parade operations.

The **parade will be preceded at 12 noon** by a **Wreath-Laying Ceremony** to remember veterans at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch at Jewell St. and Trinity St. in Hartford's Bushnell Park, featuring the Manchester Regional Police and Fire Pipe Band, a color guard, and a bugler.

For more information about the Sunday, November 7 "Connecticut Veterans Parade", go to www.ctveteransparade.org or call the Parade Info Phone at 860-986-7254.

-Winning Student Essays Follow on Next Pages-

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First Place Winner – KAITIN HUBER of VERNON
8th grader at Vernon Center Middle School

“I Want to Say THANK YOU to a Veteran Because...”

I want to say “Thank You” to Veterans because they have risked their lives for other countrymen whom they may not even know. I want to say thank you because of what they have been through: seeing what they did not want to see, hearing what they did not want to hear. While we civilians take so much for granted, our military experienced so much discomfort so that we didn’t have to.

Veterans are brave soldiers who have finished their service time. They are the reason why the United States of America is so strong. We sleep safely at night because of these selfless heroes. We have eaten breakfast oblivious of their efforts, while one of these soldiers would have done anything for a bite of pancakes, instead of shivering in a cold, muddy trench. We have the luxury of being clean and warm, when they have been covered in mud from head to toe, or fighting a hopeless battle against the grime and sweat of the desert sand. We don’t appreciate how lucky we are to be alive, while they might’ve been an inch from death. We turn off a movie on World War II which depicts how our military might have lived. We ridiculously complain about something as minor as a paper cut, when one of our heroes may be missing his legs. How naïve we may seem when we complain of working all day, when veterans on the front lines and behind the lines worked all hours of the day, separated from their loved ones for months or years at a time. They have known things we don’t want to know; things maybe they don’t want to know, either; things that they may never share with another living soul.

Veterans live out their lives like we do; only they remember. They remember who didn’t come back, who lost their arm, or leg, or even their mind. They remember the guilt they felt for living, and the relief they felt for not dying. Sometimes these memories are so vivid that a veteran relives a horrifying moment of battle in his dreams and daily life over and over and over again. They may not know whom they saved, but they know that they did save many; and we know, too. They know they are heroes and an inspiration. They know they came back to their families, and they must be grateful. They must be proud that they helped to save our country.

I can’t possibly know how or what veterans think or feel to the fullest degree. I can only speculate, but I’d like to think that they are proud of all they have done for our country, for us. Veterans are the bravest Americans. They are the ones who stepped forward to protect us when we didn’t dare to think of it. They are an inspiration to our young soldiers. I want to thank the Veterans of Vietnam, Korea, World Wars I and II, The Gulf War, Desert Storm, and all other wars. We owe a great debt to these Veterans, and they deserve our appreciation and highest regard; so “Thank You” heroes, from the bottom of our hearts.

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Runner-Up – MORGAN McDONALD of GRANBY
6th grader at Wells Road Intermediate School

“I Want to Say THANK YOU to a Veteran Because...”

Veterans are more than just the people who fought in wars or battles. They are our nation’s heroes. Many people will forget all what our veterans went through. They left their families and lives behind to fight for our nation’s and other nation’s freedom. Some might not have fought in the war but they did something just as important.

Every day you should thank them for what they did. Some of our veterans experienced the unimaginable. They fought through the most unbearable weather and watched their friends and enemies die. Others helped build some of the most advanced and remarkable machinery or provided medical care and other support to our soldiers and others affected by wars.

Even though our veterans have made sacrifices, Daniel Zwerdling from NPR radio recently gave two news reports on recent research claiming that soldiers were coming back from Iraq with serious mental health issues such as depression, suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, and post traumatic stress disorder. Administration officials have promised to help these soldiers with their emotional injuries but research Mr. Zwerdling has done on Fort Carson, Colorado Springs, Colorado, found that it isn’t happening.

Soldiers who have tried to get the care they need are kicked out of the Army and sent back home. They send this newly mentally troubled veteran home to their families or even home to live by themselves. This doesn’t just affect the veteran it affects the families too. They could physically and emotionally hurt the surrounding people. This isn’t just going on now it also happened during Vietnam. Soldiers came home emotionally scarred. They would have terrifying flashbacks of the war. In the past and today they helped us, but what are we doing to help them?

There is a day for them, a day where you can celebrate them and all they have done. This day is Veteran’s Day. On this day people recognize the men and women who served our nation. In the Revolutionary War, amazing men fought for our freedom from Britain. In the Civil War again they fought to free slaves and to keep the United States together. In World War II they fought for the Jewish so that they could freely celebrate their religion. They didn’t just fight for our nation, they fought for other people who were treated with no respect because they were different. Our soldiers fought because they thought what they were doing was right. They should be thanked every day. So I wrote this paper not to win any award, but because I know many veterans did amazing things and I want to thank every one of them for what they sacrificed.

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Runner-Up – BRIDGET SMITH of STAMFORD
8th grader at Turn of River Middle School

“I Want to Say THANK YOU to a Veteran Because...”

I want to say thank you to a veteran because veterans have given up so much for their country. They have sacrificed time with friends and family to serve our country. They are required to leave on a moment's notice if needed, and must truly love their country to serve in the Armed Forces. But, the most important reason I want to thank veterans is that veterans are prepared to sacrifice their lives for their country.

My grandpa was a veteran of World War II. He graduated from West Point on D-Day in 1944 and was a civil engineer in the Army Corps of Engineers. Many times during his career, he had to leave my grandmother and his small children to go on assignments, sometimes on very short notice. My aunt, Barbara, recalls when she came home from school one day in 1961. “Your grandpa's duffle bag and trunk were at the front door.” My grandma explained to her that Grandpa had just received orders to command a battalion in Wildflecken, Germany, an Army post on the East German border. His unit was needed to defend against the potential threat of Soviet expansion during the Berlin Wall crisis. My aunt remembers “he left the next day”. This is an example of the sacrifices veterans make for their country. My grandpa did not know how long he would be gone (a year), or what sorts of danger he would encounter, but it was his duty to leave behind his family and respond to orders. He probably didn't want to leave, but he had an obligation to serve his country. For that, I thank all veterans who put their country in front of everything else, including their families.

Another reason I want to say thank you to a veteran is that, not only must they sacrifice time with family, they go out into the field knowing that they might not come home alive. Regardless of what task or job they have, veterans are willing to sacrifice their lives for the United States, which is very noble. Veterans must, without a doubt, love their country, and love it enough to put their lives in its hands.

When called upon to do their duty, veterans have sacrificed so much for the United States. Many people don't realize what lengths veterans have taken to protect our country. There is a reason we have had only one attack on the U.S. mainland. As I think about all that veterans have done for us, I can't think of many words to describe my immense gratitude, but “**Thank you**” is among them.