NWACC HONORS Veterans

NorthWest Arkansas Community College honored veterans Thursday with a celebration for the many students on campus who have served in the United States Armed Forces. Todd Kitchen, Dean of Learner Administrative Services at NWACC and a nine-year veteran of the United States Army with numerous military awards, including the Army Commendation Medal and the Southwest Asia Service Medal, was the event’s honored speaker.

“It was a very humbling experience,” Kitchen said. “I was honored to be in the company of such great people and to share my story on what it means to be a veteran and how important service to our country is.” The program consisted of several NWACC students telling their personal stories and selected poetry readings which included “Freedom is Not Free” by Kelly Strong, “Honor our Military” by Joanna Fuchs, and “Thank a Vet” by William A. Predeau. Nathan Hill, president of the Vets on Campus student organization and former member of the US Air Force, emceed the event. He is also working on a business degree at the college. Natosha Mantooth, Clifford Mosier, Michelle Haley, Bobby Beavers and Jeffrey Campbell were the other presenters and all are former or current service members and current NWACC students. Gail Klesen, surviving spouse of Joseph Klesen, U.S. Army retired, spoke of how proud she was of her husband’s sacrifice and service to his country.

“My students are the reason I come to work every day,” said Dianna Portillo, Veterans Resource Coordinator. “The students are the reason we put together the Veteran’s Day Program every year. It isn’t because it’s my job, it’s because it’s my honor.”

According to the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, two million veterans will enter postsecondary education due to the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. The Act improves educational benefits for those who served on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

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