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Milford honors veterans with parade

MILFORD —

Andrew Garozzo used to play the saxophone with Milford's middle school marching band on Veterans Day. Yesterday, the 21-year-old watched the annual parade, proudly wearing a U.S. Air National Guard uniform.

"That guy we don't even know said, 'Go Air Force,'" said Garozzo's mom Marie as war heroes, Boy Scouts, Brownies, antique cars and dignitaries went by. "The veterans look him right in the eye and wave - it's overwhelming."

A large crowd of patriotic townspeople lined Rte. 16 for the parade, wearing red, white and blue and cheering for the veterans.

Stepping off from the Stop & Shop plaza, the parade went down Rte. 16 to Draper Memorial Park, with a solemn ceremony at Calzone Park's Doughboy Monument with salutes to the American flag as two young trumpeters played taps.

"We always love it - we look forward to it," said Joe Baer, 79, of Uxbridge, a member of Milford's chapter of the Disabled American Veterans.

Baer did two tours in Korea as a 2nd class petty officer with the Navy, and later served as a staff sergeant with the U.S. Marine Corps.

He called the crowd "very gracious" for honoring all the veterans.

Parade participants included U.S. Rep. Richard Neal, D-2nd, state Rep. John Fernandes, D-Milford, Milford selectmen, police, the Fire Department's Color Guard, Police Explorers Post 29, and Grand Marshal Anthony M. Pasqualone.

Also marching were: Cmdr. Joe Guidi and the Italian American War Veterans Post 40; the Montgomery Lodge of Masons; Cmdr. Ray Richards and the Lawrence J. Heron Disabled America Veterans; Cmdr. Joseph Derderian and the Panagian-Ohanessian Post; Cmdr. Ralph Boccasile and the American Legion Sgt. Powers Post 59; and President Mary E. Morgan with the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Milford High School and Middle School and Nipmuc Regional High School's bands played songs including, "When the Saints Go Marching In."

"I think it's a really good thing that the town's able to do this every year," said Andrew Garozzo, who just finished his guard training in Texas.

Police Officer Dustin Testa and his 3-year-old son Joseph watched the parade from the bed of a blue pickup on Main Street, waving flags and videotaping.

"We're honoring our veterans," said Testa, who marched in last year's parade as a veteran Marine Corps sergeant.

Local immigration attorney Jim Hentz watched the parade with his kids, Annabelle, 9, and Kiara, 5, teaching them to respect the men and women who serve our country.

Hentz served in the Gulf War; his dad did two tours in Vietnam.

"My favorite part is when I see all the Army people go by, and all the rifles," Annabelle said in front of her dad's office at 35 Main St.

Exactly 27 years ago, Jenny-Ann and Raymond Luchini bundled up their son Jamie in camouflage and brought him out in the snow to watch the parade.

Yesterday, the Milford couple bundled up their granddaughter Olivia, 3, to pay respects to Milford's veterans and watch her 7-year-old cousin, Jordan Gulino, march by with the Girl Scouts.

"Here's the next generation, following tradition," Jenny-Ann said.

Raymond Luchini, a retired heavy equipment operator and street-sweeper for the Highway Department, served as a radio-teletype operator during the Vietnam War.

Oliva's great-grandfather was a cook in the Philippines during World War II.

"I think it's a nice thing to have for them," Luchini said of the parade.

Neal, who lives in Springfield, said he was delighted to be here to help commemorate the "very important" national holiday.

"There's a great sense of enthusiasm and patriotism," the congressman said of Milford's parade. "And I think the number of young people being encouraged to participate is a good idea because that means that, for a lifetime, they'll know what Veterans Day means to all of us."

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