

Unveiling is a success

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member of the 82nd Airborne Division in Normandy to receive one.

"After serving 33 years in military service, I have seen many of the tributes to him, but it is great to see this one in our hometown," Conboy said to a loud applause.

Ellen Trainham sang the national anthem and Kevin Rustowicz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

A tribute to Gold Star Mothers was read, and a wreath for the Civil War veterans was presented by chaplain Philip G. Cook, Camp No. 223 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War; and Lodema Strickland, of Tent 56 of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

Representatives of the families of the 17 KIAs or members of the military read the short bios of each amazing story of valor and heroism. The 18th station around the KIA monument is for the Unknown Soldier and its artwork was drawn by Morgan Schaefer as a Girl Scout project. She read a heart-felt story about the Unknown Soldier.

Alan Lee, vice chairman of the committee and commander of the DeGlopper VFW Post, presented the prayer to the fallen. Fife and drum players led the post's color guard into position for a rifle salute before Mark Hughes performed taps.

The ceremony also included comments from United States 1st Lt. Adam Arata, who serves with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He spoke of the impact DeGlopper still has on the soldiers French Honorary Consulate of Buffalo Pascal Soares spoke about how DeGlopper's action will never be forgotten, and how DeGlopper is memorialized at the site of his death in Normandy.

Grand Island Boy Scout Troop No. 630 was present providing water and greeting guests with a program.

Erie County Clerk Michael Kearns, whose office sponsors the county's "Thank A Vet" program, was touched by the entire presentation.

"This was like a national event today," he said afterward. "Charles DeGlopper was a Medal of Honor recipient and was so heroic. To me, this program should be shown in every



single classroom in the United States of America. It is an opportunity to witness the brave patriotism we see every day from the men and women who serve our country. Today's program recognized all veterans who served from Grand Is-

land and, as the French representative said, 'We will never forget.'

Lt. Col. Terry McGuire, the Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park's board chairman, said DeGlopper's heroism has inspired him since he was a reservist at the Army Reserve Center in Tonawanda: "I read his plaque over and over because it is such an amazing story of heroism and bravery. When I was at Fort Bragg in 2004 awaiting my deployment to Iraq, I would walk on DeGlopper Road and see all of the tributes to my hometown hero there. It gave me further inspiration to serve our country.

"What a great tribute this is to Pfc. Charles DeGlopper – and to have the entire community of Grand Island come together like this is impressive."

Paul Marzello, president and CEO of the Buffalo Naval & Military Park, added: "It is important for people in our generation to know there are heroes among us and they stand on the shoulders of these men who sacrificed everything for our freedom."

Former Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Gen. Anthony Caruana (Ret.) read the biographies of three veterans. He said the ceremony brought back so many memories of the two years he was assigned as the assistant casualty officer for Army headquarters, responsible for providing assistance for families who lost loved ones in service, and for notifications to families of KIAs and MIAs in 14 Midwest states.

"I know what each of those KIA families felt at the time they were notified," he said. "To see the spirit of everyone coming together on Grand Island to recognize these brave veterans is impressive."

Boy Scout Troop 630 leader Scott Swagler added: "For Scouts, this is important for them to realize this is an important part of the history of the United States of America. This is what made our country great, and it is important to be a part of that history."

Drexelius stood with other members of the DeGlopper Post Expansion Committee during a reception afterward at the VFW, and summed it up best when he said, "It was truly awesome!"



Ariel Photos by Kevin Cobello.

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