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Patriotism shines during Military Appreciation Day

By Allen Mincey

Though the crowd was small, it was enthusiastically patriotic as it welcomed veterans of the Armed Forces at Lee University's Military Appreciation Day on Saturday.

The event was held just prior to the Lee Flames baseball team taking two games from the University of West Florida, and included not only recognition of those veterans but a special flyover by a Black Hawk helicopter.

"What a tremendous day celebrating with our community," Flames coach Mark Brew said. "I want to say a huge thanks to those businesses that sponsored, those that attended, but most importantly to those that served.

"We are honored to celebrate your service and grateful for what you have done for our country," he said.

After veterans walked onto the playing field to sit and stand at home plate, to a large round of applause from the stands and players, Dave Hall, chairman of the Southeast Tennessee Veterans Home Council, welcomed everyone.

Proceeds from the event go to the veterans home.

"Hopefully, by mid-summer, this 108-bed facility, serving veterans from the seven-county area, will be ready for their first occupant," Hall said. "I can't make you a promise on that, but they are trying to get it ready by mid-summer."

The widows of four men who were instrumental in the Bradley County Tennessee Veterans Home becoming a reality were present, and were asked to toss out the first pitches. They were Polly Heidel, wife of Cid Heidel; Judy Davis, wife of Joe Davis; Nancy Dees, wife of Kim Dees; and Kathy Morelock, wife of Jeff Morelock.

Brew also presented special plaques to those who helped in coordinating the special day, including the Tennessee National Guard and recruiters from the Navy and Air Force.

The Bobby Taylor Memorial Scholarship also was presented. That scholarship is given to a Lee student who is a veteran or a student who is a dependent of a veteran who attends Lee University.

This year's recipient is David Priatko, a Lee history education major at Lee, who will graduate in spring 2023. His father served in the Army for 24 years, with three tours of duty in Iraq, was a part of Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and retired as a lieutenant colonel.

The event ended with prayer and the National Anthem performed by veterans Robert Green and Tom Wickes. The Black Hawk flyover ended the ceremony, and veterans and spouses were able to enjoy a special meal at the ballgame.

"We always enjoy this, and I believe our players respect these men and women for what they have done for our country and our freedom," Brew said. He added that the event is a highlight of the year for the team, which will play in the Gulf South Conference tournament this weekend in Oxford, Alabama.



THE BOBBY TAYLOR MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP was presented Saturday to Lee University's David Priatko, the son of an Army veteran. The scholarship was presented at Saturday's Military Appreciation Day. From left are Lee Flames coach Mark Brew; Scott Taylor; Priatko; and Christy Goza, holding Caleb Taylor.