

'It's Important to Have That Bond'

VFW Member Accompanies JROTC Group to Normandy

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In continuing an eight-year relationship between an Oregon VFW Post and Junior ROTC program, one VFW member recently accompanied her son's JROTC group to Normandy in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

Shannon Ferreira, a member of VFW Post 1324 in Oregon City, Ore., served as a chaperone to the group of 13 cadets.

The cadets participated in two ceremonies, one on June 6 at Brittany American Cemetery and the following day at Normandy American Cemetery.

"My favorite part was being able to talk to the veterans," Ferreira said, "and while I was there made a point of speaking to as many of them as I could – the WWII veterans – and taking pictures with them. And getting their names and a little piece of their stories. To me, it was amazing. It was also emotional because many of those men were the same ages [when they deployed] as my son. Or within the same age frame."

Ferreira, who served two tours in Bosnia (December 1995-November 1996 and June-September 1998) in the Army's 501st MI Bn., 1st Armd. Div., as a signals intelligence analyst, said the cadets were invited about a year and a half ago. She said she joined them because it was a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience.

"While I was in the Army, I was in 82nd Abn. Div., as well, but I never deployed with them," Ferreira said. "But I know they played a huge part in WWII. And I love the history of it and my son is a huge WWII history buff."

The biggest takeaway from the trip, according to Ferreira was the opportunity itself.

"That generation is dwindling, and it's so important to be able to take young kids, the high schoolers, over there to interact because they are the future generation," Ferreira said. "And so to be able to chaperone and go with those kids and have them interact with that

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

generation, it was impactful for the kids.”

Ferreira said the Post and Oregon City’s JROTC program have worked together prior to this trip.

Post 1324 Public Information Officer Shawn Dachtler said the relationship between the Post and the Oregon City High School JROTC was initiated by two past Post commanders who reached out to Major Doug Thomas.

“Essentially, the conversation was that we should work together,” said Dachtler, who served in the Navy from 1993 to 2002 in electronic warfare and was with the Armed Forces Expeditionary Service aboard the USS Normandy in the Persian Gulf in 1998. “We see your kids doing good things and we want to help support them.”

The Post, Ferreira said, supports JROTC financially every year and offers the Post for fundraising events at no charge, while the JROTC provides a color guard for various events.

“Our post and our JROTC are supportive of each other,” Ferreira said. “To me, it’s important to have that bond.”

The relationship between the Post and JROTC gives the cadets, who could also go into the military, a chance to meet the older generation of veterans and learn from them.

Dachtler said the Post’s work with JROTC is similar to its outreach at the college level.

“We are doing our best to make sure we’re engaged in all age groups,” Dachtler said. “The local JROTC currently has four students that have committed to the Army. We see that as being right in line with our missions and goals.”

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