

65th Korean War Armistice observance at Kennedy Park made possible, thanks to support from local community

Thanks to the support of the local community and several sponsors, an event organized by Windy City Veterans, Chicago's 19th Ward and Smith Senior Living drew more than 150 Korean War veterans, other veterans and their families from across Northeast Illinois and Indiana to mark the 65th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice to stop the Korean War. The observance took place on Saturday morning, July 28, at Kennedy Park, 11320 S. Western Ave.

"Kennedy Park, right across the street from Smith Village, is home to the country's first monument to Korean War Veterans. Both Smith Crossing and Smith Village are hon-

ored to recognize all veterans and especially those who call our communities their homes," said Kevin McGee, president and CEO of Smith Senior Living, sponsor of Smith Village, 2320 W. 113th Place, and Smith Crossing in Orland Park.

The tribute to Korean War veterans included a picnic for everyone who attended the ceremony thanks to the generosity of Jewel, Fat Tommy's, Smith Crossing and Smith Village. During the ceremony, a wreath, donated by Steuber Florist & Greenhouses, was placed at the monument, and new flags donated by Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, were raised at the monument.

Smith staff helped produce the event and appreciated all the assistance from the staff at Kennedy Park and the 19th Ward, according to McGee. "Expressing our gratitude for Korean War veterans and all veterans and military personnel was especially important during these times," McGee added.

The observance commenced with the arrival of a motorcycle caravan of Patriot Honor Riders from Alsip's VFW Post 450 escorting Korean War vets from the Illinois State Veterans Home-Manteno. Held in front of a stone monument that is the first ever dedicated to Korean



Veterans salute the American and Republic of Korea flags. Photo by Russ Ingram

War veterans, the observance included raising of U.S. and Republic of Korea flags, laying a wreath provided by Steuber Florist, as well as remarks from an array of dignitaries representing the U.S. Marines, local veterans' organizations and the countries of Turkey, the Philippines and Republic of Korea.

Said Illinois Veterans Affairs Director Stephen Curda, "We're here to salute all who served in the Korean War." U.S. Marines saluted the contributions of the fallen, wounded and veterans from 17 allied nations—Republic of Korea, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Turkey, Columbia, Australia, Philippines, New Zealand, Ethiopia, Greece, Thailand, France, Belgium, South Africa, Netherlands

and Luxembourg—as represented in the ceremony's roll call Flag of Nations.

Curda and several veterans advocated for U.S. Congressional Bill HR-5222 to collectively award the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal to all combat veterans who served in the Korean War.

A Chicago Fire Department hook and ladder truck outfitted with a huge American flag and a Veterans Garage's display of vehicles from the Korean War added to the spirit of patriotism with a bagpiper playing God Bless America and a bugler who blew Taps. And Beverly native Joe Werner, who helped establish Veterans Garage, brought authentic vehicles used in the Korean War to display at Kennedy Park.



Representing local elected officials, Illinois State Rep. Fran Hurlley (D-35th District), right, talks with Paul M. Van Halteren, honorary consul of the Consulate of the Kingdom of Belgium, at the recent Korean War veterans' observance. Photo by Russ Ingram.