Honors for all veterans, on and off campus

Bri Wingfield, Reporter | Posted: Monday, November 14, 2016 12:41 pm

The university honored all veterans - and specifically the 812 veterans enrolled as students - on Nov. 8 at an event that featured music, presentation of colors and speeches.

“Veteran’s Day is a celebration for those who have served or are willing to serve their country and are willing to give anything for it,” said Josh Weingartner, a Cal Poly Pomona senior and Army Private First Class.

Speakers included Lt. Col. Ron Coley of the Marine Corps, the spouse of University President Soraya M. Coley. ASI Vice President Gabriel Smith and Jay Swartz also spoke.

“Veteran’s Day is our day, a well deserved day,” said Ron Coley, after praising CPP’s observance of “this special occasion.”

He spoke proudly of the way the military has been an instrument to break down varying forms of discrimination throughout the years, and promote diversity within its ranks—lending itself as an example for the rest of the country to follow.

Smith, not coming from a military family, shared his reason behind joining the army.

“[I had] a desire to defend those who couldn’t defend themselves,” said Smith, stating that this characteristic was evident even in his youth. Smith is still guided by the core values of the military today and uses tools he gained from the army in his current leadership roles.

The final address to the audience was made by Swartz, a 33-year army veteran who gave an emotional account of the life of his uncle, a humble hero who received five Purple Heart decorations for the sacrifices he made while in combat.

“Veteran’s Day is significant because people forget all that they have given us,” said Elke Azpeitia, founder and coordinator of the CPP Veteran Student Services.

Azpeitia’s father and uncle are both veterans, making Veteran’s Day an important event in her family.

During the event, the CPP Wind Ensemble gave tribute to each branch of the military by playing their respective songs and asking all of those with a connection to that branch to rise while their song was
Students, veterans, faculty and staff gathered in appreciation for those who have served and continue to serve the United States.