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Bella Vista hosts Memorial Day

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NWA DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

BELLA VISTA — Resident gathered at the Veterans Wall of Honor to recognize Memorial Day.

The event's keynote speaker, Arkansas Senator and retired Air Force Col. Jim Hendren said he was glad to be speaking here.

"I represent the greatest district in the state of Arkansas," he said.

Hendren said believes it's important to avoid making the holiday about oneself or even living veterans, but to honor the roughly 1.4 million people who served and did not make it home.

He shared stories of two veterans, including a paratrooper pathfinder from Fort Smith who was gunned down after his parachute snagged in the trees in France and a more recent individual from Missouri who was among the first U.S. casualties in the fight against Islamic State militants.

"These are two stories of the 1.4 million," he said.

But while it's important to recognize these sacrifices, he said, the holiday shouldn't be negative, either.



Jim Hendren, Arkansas senator and retired Air Force Colonel, speaks to the crowd.

(NWA Democrat-Gazette/Keith Bryant)

"Our holiday should not be about moping," he said.

While a lot of people are angry about a lot of things, he said, this is a good chance to recognize what people have in common and come together, he said.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Jim Parsons, who helped organize the event, said he was pleased with the turnout.

"Have we ever had a bigger one of these?" he asked.

It's not surprising, he said, because Bella Vista has a lot of older folks who knew ser-

vice members as well as veterans, he said.

He was also glad to see people bringing children, he added.

"The future generations will be the one to carry on," he said.

One couple in attendance, Susan and Nels Olson, said they came eager to celebrate patriotism and they were very pleased with the event.

"It's about paying respect," Nels Olson said.

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