

Linden Public School (Linden, NJ) –

As you entered the large room of the JTG Recreation Center in Linden NJ, right by the entrance, first eyes were on, and everyone noticed a special table. This table was round, smaller than the others, reserved, and had a candle burning, A simple plate with a slice of lemon and salt. This one lonely table was empty, it was reserved to honor our missing men and women, the empty chair represents Americans who were or are missing from each of the services. The slice of lemon reminds us of their bitter fate, and salt is a reminder of the tears that have been shed. The significance of this lonely, small table is called to attention, the NJROTC cadets stood at attention, and we were reminded of the strength of those who fight for our Nation. Cadet Gonzalez had command of the room, as she stood solemnly up on the podium, with a deep breath she effortlessly projected her voice, full of emotion, she captivated the audience as she read a poem thanking the Veterans.

Every year the residents of Linden have gathered to pay tribute to the brave women and men of our great city who have served in the armed forces during our Hometown Heroes event. This will be the 10th year for the hugely successful program that displays banners with the names, images, and dates of service of active military and veterans on the city of Linden streets. Everyone in the

community of Linden as well as the Linden Public Schools family agree that our Hometown Veteran Heroes are the backbone of Linden and through this honorable event, we are giving back to them for going above and beyond the call of duty and we are also supporting the future of Linden through our Linden High School NJROTC.

Linden High School Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) students had the opportunity to celebrate the Veterans at the City of Linden's Hometown Heroes Program held on Sunday, November 12th 2023. The Linden High School NJROTC unit was established in 1986 and originally had approximately 90 cadets in the first years of its establishment. Currently, the Linden High School NJROTC has an impressive number of about 480 cadets enrolled in the program.

The Linden High School NJROTC cadets paid a special honor to all of the Veterans in our great city of Linden by presenting them with a plaque, banner, and a salute. The cadets had an opportunity to speak to the Veterans who were being honored and had a hands-on learning experience about one of the most demanding and rewarding occupations in our nation. Superintendent of Linden Public Schools Atiya Perkins, the wife of a Navy Veteran, acknowledges the sacrifices and all of their

contributions to protect our freedom. Under the leadership of Superintendent Perkins, she advocates for the support of the Veterans who work in the Linden Public School system. She understands the training of the military to have self-control over your own emotions and she recognizes the importance of interpersonal relationships as a key to success on the team of Linden Public Schools. The cadets of the Linden High Schools NJROTC shared their own experiences on being a unit, taking on leadership roles, and attending staff meetings where they discuss what needs to be done for the week and plans for upcoming events. Many of the Veterans in attendance shared their own experiences of staff meetings, promotions, and the food that is served. One of the cadets said the food sounded like the cafeteria food. You can hear the laughter as the stories from the youth of Linden to the Veterans were relatable. The most important lesson that was captured is about the community and the family bonds you build here in Linden and Linden Public Schools.

Mayor Derek Armstead said, “It’s good to see our younger generation, the veterans, and their families that represent our city form a bond together, we know there is not anything free in the word freedom.” “Bringing the NJROTC and our Veteran family together is strengthening our Linden Community as a whole.”

“As an educator first, and the leader of the schools, with a Veteran in my family, teaching our students structure, discipline, and accountability is very important. Under my leadership, we will always recognize, understand, and honor those who fought for our country.” Stated Superintendent Atiya Perkins

Thanksgiving is about practicing gratitude. We encourage our entire Linden Public School community to continue to be a service to others.