

Southwestern High School Club Plants 115 Flags, Raises Over \$1,000 for Veterans Day

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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PIASA - Members of the Military History Club at Southwestern High School have planted a field of 115 flags for the Disabled American Veterans nonprofit in honor of Veterans Day.

Jeff Eldred, history teacher and advisor of the club, said he researched the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization and suggested the club could take part in their annual Veterans Day fundraiser. For every \$10 collected by the students, the club received one flag to plant in front of the school. They set a goal of \$300 and raised \$1,150 for DAV.

“The kids were really excited to do it. And next year, now that we know what’s really going on, we hope to do even more,” Eldred said. “There were 208 organizations, schools, community organizations, etc. that were part of this, and we raised the 25th most. We’re pretty proud of what we did.”

The students set up tables at volleyball and football games to collect donations. They also contributed themselves when possible, as many of them became passionate about DAV’s mission.

DAV connects veterans with programs to fight homelessness, provide medical care, assist with the transition to civilian life and more. They also have trained advocates throughout the U.S. to help veterans access their benefits. The money donated through Southwestern’s fundraiser will help fund these programs.

“I was impressed by our students,” Eldred said. “They come to me and say, ‘What can I do?’ Or at the football game, they say, ‘I got one dollar left over from the concession stand, here’s my dollar.’ That kind of stuff. I was really, really impressed by our students and how they contributed to the fundraiser.”

The Military History Club was started at Southwestern in the 1970s, then restarted in 2015 when a few students approached Eldred about revamping it. The club invites guest speakers — usually Southwestern alumni or community members — to talk about their military service, and they regularly host movie nights to watch war movies and discuss the history of the U.S. military.

These days, the club is going strong. Eldred noted that it’s a great opportunity for students who aren’t interested in other extracurriculars to get involved at Southwestern and go a step further in their education about military history.

“What’s really good about this club is you capture a group of kids that don’t do other things, and so that gives them a way to be a part of the extracurriculars and the school community, and not just sitting in class,” he added. “It hits a different group of people, and I think that’s probably the most important, the biggest thing that we get from this: the people that wouldn’t have the opportunity to participate in things that they do with this.”

Eldred hopes the club can raise enough money to double their field of flags next Veterans Day. Until then, to learn more about the Disabled American Veterans nonprofit and how to donate, [visit their official website at DAV.org](https://www.dav.org).