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American Legion partners with City of Guymon to honor TXCO veterans

By April Coble
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Last week, former Guymon Mayor Jim Norris spoke before City Council to discuss a banner program created to allow families, friends, neighbors and the community at large the opportunity to honor Texas County's veterans.

On display at the meeting and now on Main Street in front of the Texas County Courthouse at 319 N. Main St. in Guymon was an example of what the banners will look like once completed and ready for display. The banner hanging in front of the courthouse honors Captain James H. Darden. Cpt. Darden was killed in action in December 1945 in service with the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. The banner also displays two medals awarded to Cpt. Darden: The Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart.

"The American Legion would like to honor veterans past and present that have served the country," Norris said.

The banners, Norris noted, are 30"x47" - the correct size to place at the lamp posts running down Main Street in Guymon, in the place where 'Welcome To Historic Guymon' banners typically fly for most of the year. The banners will be brought out and placed along Main Street when work crews with the city head out to hang the American flag, six times a year.

The American Legion Post 31 and its members are the main contacts for those interested in purchasing a banner, which requires filling out an application to be returned to the legion along with the service member's DD214 or Certification of Military Service.

Families will also receive a yard banner to keep at home that comes with the price included on the application at TroopBanners.com/Guymon. The only medals currently included on the banner image are the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Silver Star, Medal of Honor, Distinguished Flying Cross, Distinguished Service Cross/Medal and Legion of Merit Medal.

"The Purple Heart is always on there," Norris said. "If they were KIA, MIA, POW, they type that



Family of Captain James H. Darden is on hand Friday morning at the Texas County Courthouse as the first troop banner is hung on Main Street in Guymon. Family of veterans are given the opportunity to purchase one of these banners through TroopBanners.com/Guymon. A displayable banner to be hung up and down main several times a year and a yard banner for the family to keep at home will be sent by the company. The program is brought to Texas County by the American Legion Post 31. An application with a DD214 or Certification of Military Service is required. Legion members include Jim Norris and Chet Krone, who can be contacted for more information. Texas County Boy Scouts were also on site to salute and honor the flag and service of Cpt. Darden. Banners can be purchased to honor fallen, deceased and living veterans. (Staff photos/April Coble)

in there."

There is also an option to purchase additional banners at an additional price. A quality photograph must also be included with the application, or a scanned image of at least 600dpi can be emailed to an address listed on the application.

Norris noted there is one other requirement to be able to purchase one of the banners.

"You do have to be honorably discharged," Norris said.

"We prefer a picture that's from your graduation from boot camp (basic training), but some people don't have that," Norris continued.

He noted that the company does not do Photoshop work to brighten or clean up images, and those with photos that are difficult to view may have to pay someone independently to improve the images.

"This company has done about 30,000 banners so far. It's mainly on the east coast and is working its way (over). As far as we know, we'd be the first city west of the Mississippi to do it (with this company)," Norris said.

Norris stressed that the banner program is open for all veterans of Texas County and is not exclusive to Guymon.

American Legion Post 31 member Chet Krone also wants to bring to light a program the legion post is taking on thanks to a generous donation from Guymon's Walmart Supercenter - several hundred green incandescent bulbs.

The green bulbs are being offered for free to allow the community to pick up one or two to take home and put in their outdoor light fixtures to 'Green Light A Vet' - a movement put together by the Walmart corporation to openly show support for veterans. The program has moved grant funding into programs to assist veterans with finding jobs, training programs for veteran spouses, and keeping the conversation moving forward on how to help those who have served and returned home. Those interested in obtaining a bulb may contact any member of Post 31 to help green light veterans in Guymon.



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