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Vets Day celebration to be 'huge'

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Local residents who want to honor and remember those who served in the U.S. military have a variety of options scheduled in both Bryan and College Station this weekend.

Events kick off Friday and last through Tuesday and include a parade, military history displays, entertainment, a reading on the effects of the Iraq war and a barbecue benefit.

Robin Silva, who organized a number of the events this year, said the celebration has grown as more people have expressed interest in making Veterans Day an event to remember.

"This year is huge compared to last year," Silva said. "People have stepped up out of nowhere."

Veterans Day is Tuesday.

Among the highlights of the weekend events are a military convoy down Texas Avenue on Saturday, a military equipment display in downtown Bryan on Saturday and Sunday and an Air Force fly-over to kick off Sunday's Veterans Day parade.

More than 60 "units" and about 800 people will participate in the parade this year, Silva said.

Silva said the events were designed to salute the service of veterans and "to make the community aware that their freedoms are here because of the veterans."

Many young people aren't familiar with their parents' and grandparents' sacrifices for their country, she said.

The Veterans Day events and activities will help educate them, said Silva, a U.S. Army veteran.

All proceeds from the weekend celebrations will benefit the planned Museum of the American G.I., which is raising money for an Iwo Jima island display.

"There will be a tremendous amount of history in here," Silva said, adding that many events would be kid-focused. Residents who join in the fun won't be disappointed, she said.

"There's an excitement in the air," she said.

Veterans Day events this year begin Friday and continue through Tuesday

Friday

* 6 to 8 p.m. in downtown Bryan: Live entertainment.

* 8 to 10 p.m. at the Palace Theater: A showing of the movie *Forrest Gump*.

Saturday

* 9:30 a.m. A convoy of military equipment traveling from the Museum of the American G.I. will enter Texas Avenue around 9:30 a.m. and arrive in Bryan around 10 a.m.

* Noon to 6 p.m. in downtown Bryan: The equipment will be on display, and veterans history museums will be open at the Masonic Lodge and Downtown 202.

Sunday

* Noon to 5:30 p.m.: Equipment display in downtown Bryan and veterans history museums will be open at the Masonic Lodge and Downtown 202 on South Bryan

Avenue.

* 12:30 p.m. at the Palace Theater: Presentation of the colors.

* 1 p.m. at the Palace Theater: A patriotic performance by the Brazos Valley Troupe.

* 1:45 to 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the Palace Theater: Karan Chavis will perform.

* 2:30 p.m. Air Force fly-over will kick off the Bryan Rotary Club Veterans Parade.

Monday

* 6 to 8 p.m. at Friends Congregational Church: A public reading of personal reflections on the war's impact will be held at the church, 2200 Southwood Drive in College Station.

Tuesday

* 11 a.m. at VFW Post No. 4692: An 11-11 service will be held at the post, at 14475 Harvey Mitchell Parkway in Bryan. For more information, call 823-0550.

* 3 p.m. at the College Station Middle School performance gym: Retired Army Ranger Capt. and former National American Legion Commander John Brieden will speak at a ceremony with performances by the band, choir and orchestra, followed by a reception for all veterans, service members and their families.

* 6 p.m. at Veterans Park in College Station: A Veterans Fellowship Barbecue will raise money for the Museum of the American G.I. and Brazos Valley Veterans Memorial. Tickets are \$8.

The Brazos Valley Veterans Memorial board of directors will dedicate 171 names to the wall of honor. The addition brings the number of names to 4,103.

U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards will provide the keynote address. The event includes a memorial program with members of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band and Ross Volunteers and a military equipment display.