

KNOX NEWS, THE MEDAL OF HONOR

Medal recipients laud area teachers, students

By Les Neuhaus

Special to the News Sentinel

A dinner event on the club level of Neyland Stadium was held Tuesday to recognize the teachers and students who have successfully implemented the Character Development Program in conjunction with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

With several Medal of Honor recipients on hand a day before their annual convention officially kicked off, students and teachers from area schools, along with Knoxville community leaders, had the chance to mingle with men of different generations who have been awarded the nation's highest military decoration.

One of the teachers was Stephen Shedden, a retired 20-year veteran of the New York Police Department who now works in various capacities at Bearden Middle School. He was a first responder on Sept. 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center was brought down by passenger planes flown by terrorists. Many



Harold Fritz, president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society and a recipient of the award, thanks the crowd for welcoming Medal of Honor recipients to Knoxville during a reception for the society's Character Development Program at Neyland Stadium on Tuesday.

of his students at Bearden were born after those events.

"Obviously character is a big thing for me and I like to tie together what I've learned with the (Character Development

Program) lessons and the students," said Shedden, who taught the program to students two years ago and has taught math in Knox County Schools since 2006. "Some of the big lessons we try to

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Video: Scenes from Tuesday night's event

teach are strength and diversity."

Another teacher who has implemented the program in the classroom is Hardin Valley Academy educator Seth Rayman, who has been teaching math at Hardin Valley since it opened in 2008, but has been in the Knox County school system for 14 years.

"When we found out that we were going to get a visit this Friday by two Medal of Honor recipients, I had my students research them, and that has actually been implemented throughout the whole school," Rayman said Tuesday night. "The personal connection that you can make and apply to real life — it's all there. So this convention is special and exciting. The kids are really looking forward to seeing and meeting them."

Several Medal of Honor recipients spoke to the crowd on hand,

which numbered somewhere around 200 and was catered by Calhoun's.

"This is the part of America that really makes the difference — we're surrounded by it tonight," Harold A. Fritz, one of the Medal of Honor recipients from the Vietnam War era, said to the crowd, signaling toward the children present. "Every person I'm looking at in this room has that spark that can burst into a flame when the occasion arises."

The character program is used by public and private schools, home-education individuals and associations, Boy Scout troops, athletic programs, churches and even correctional institutions.

The four-day convention begins today and includes a concert by the Charlie Daniels Band and Air National Guard Band, an autograph session and the South Patriot Award Gala, featuring Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito Jr., golf commentator David Feherty, CNN's Jake Tapper and actor Mark Wahlberg.

Michael Collins
East Tennessee History Center
Knoxville, Tennessee