

## Coventry High School JROTC Unit Celebrates 40th Anniversary

An afternoon ceremony commemorated the milestone with speakers, cake and a (very) airborne brief visit by a RI Air National Guard C-130.

Posted by [Lauren Costa](#) (Editor) , September 20, 2013



A group of students, faculty and several distinguished guests gathered at the flagpoles in front of Coventry High School on Tuesday afternoon to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the school's Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) program. The 81st AFJROTC unit, activated in September 1973, was commemorated during the ceremony which also took place on the 66th anniversary of the United States Air Force.

Among those in attendance was [Mr. James DiPrete](#), who served as Coventry High School's fourth principal from 1972 until his retirement in 1993. DiPrete played an integral role in the establishment of the JROTC program at the school which boasted more than 50 students in its first year, led by instructors Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Fierro and Master Sergeant Robert Kreyssig.

Since its inception, more than 3,000 students have enrolled in the JROTC program at CHS, and provided more than 10,000 hours of community service.

At the start of Tuesday's ceremony, the school's Color Guard performed the Presentation of the Colors, followed by the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for the 13 individuals killed in a mass shooting at the Washington D.C. Navy Yard on Monday.

JROTC Cadet Katelan Steinhour spoke of how far the program, now instructed by Colonel Steven Buteau and Sergeant Marc Boulay, has come and how it has changed.

"The 81st has come a long way in 40 years and has evolved along with the high school," she said. "By the late 1980s, new instructors Major Kornicke and Master Sergeant Labelle took the reins, enrollment increased and a drill team was established. By 2002 the unit had nearly 150 cadets and had repeatedly [earned national drill championships](#)."

"Many cadets enlisted following high school or were commissioned after college and have gone on to excel as officers and non-commissioned officers in the Marines, Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard," Steinhour continued. "Coventry JROTC alumni have defended our national interests throughout the globe and continue to defend our nation today. They carry with them a piece of Coventry High School and a piece of the Cadet Corps in their rucksacks, aircraft, Humvees and ships."

On behalf of the cadets, Commander Mason Raposa presented a \$150 check to Principal Michael Hobin, to be donated to the Wounded Warrior Project. Cadets raised the money by creating and selling handmade bracelets.

"We are the future of this unit, and the cadets we have today will be the leaders to tomorrow," Raposa told his peers. "Remember to be the best you can be and never stop achieving your goals."

Principal Hobin expressed his gratitude to DiPrete, saying that the JROTC program at the high school has benefited from his wisdom and continues to serve as a model of excellence for all students.

"You always bring pride to our school," Hobin told the cadets. "Congratulations on your 40th anniversary and we look forward to many more years of having this program in our school."

Hobin then joined DiPrete and Raposa in a ceremonial cake-cutting. The anniversary celebration was further commemorated as a C-130J aircraft from the 143rd Airlift Wing, RI Air National Guard in Quonset passed over the crowd during a training flight.