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Senate

RECOGNIZING THE VETERANS CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to the Veterans Celebration Committee, which has been together since 1999 to honor and support veterans throughout northwest Louisiana.

Every year, the Veterans Celebration Committee puts on a veterans honor ceremony in Shreveport. This past year, they held a program at the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium on Veterans Day. At that event, they honored specific veterans who make enormous contributions to their country and community. One such veteran was Mr. Sam Archie Mattox, who turned 104 years old last September. He served in the 642nd Company Army Field Organization and in Australia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Japan for 26 months during World War II. He was awarded two Bronze Stars, among other medals, and worked as a brick mason until he was 92 years old.

The Veterans Celebration Committee also honored veterans who served in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and in other theaters and now support churches, businesses, nonprofit groups, and other veterans in northwest Louisiana. One overcame homelessness to help homeless veterans in Shreveport. Another organizes fundraising events for Toys for Tots. Yet another serves as the assistant medical director for Overton Brooks VA Medical Center. The Veterans Celebration Committee ensures that northwest Louisiana knows about their accomplishments and service to the community, by publicly honoring them.

They also hold a veterans parade on the day after the veterans honor ceremony to give the community another opportunity to show their love for veterans. This year's parade will be the 13th to take place. Moreover, they hold an annual event close to Memorial Day that supports the family members of veterans and honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

When the Veterans Celebration Committee started its work in 1999, one of its cofounders was retired Air Force Colonel Steve dePryssler, who is the only known American to serve in World War II, Korea, French Indo-China, and Vietnam. He helped veterans obtain disability benefits, hosted annual POW-Purple Heart veteran's luncheons, established the Northwest Louisiana Veterans Home Trust Fund, and volunteered for 47 years at the Barksdale AFB retiree center, without pay. He passed away in 2020 at the age of 101, and every year, the committee gives an award in his name for outstanding service to veterans.

Today, the Veterans Celebration Committee carries forward the legacy of Colonel dePryssler to support and honor veterans in northwest Louisiana. I want to specifically thank Caddo Parish Commissioner Ken Epperson, Sr., for chairing the committee, and everyone who supports their efforts, including American Legion and VFW posts, Active and Reserve military units, Barksdale Air Force Base, and elected officials throughout the region. Thanks to them, our veterans are not forgotten and never will be.