

RACK



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THOMASVILLE TIMES

More from Memorial Day

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Chair City salutes veterans like no other

Rain no damper for annual celebration

BY ERIN WILTGEN
Staff Writer

As Miss Thomasville 2010 Mallory Honeycutt's voice peeled the high notes of the National Anthem and thunder rumbled a deep accompanying percussion overhead, those who braved the Memorial Day rain saluted or covered their hearts in pride of their country.

Residents, visitors and dignitaries alike huddled under a tent to honor those who fought for the U.S., especially those eight North Carolina soldiers who died this past year in the line of duty. The families of the fallen soldiers were honored with plaques and applause.

"The rain today symbolizes the collective tears of a nation that honors you," Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton told the assembled families. "Your loved ones are the ones for whom those 24 notes of taps were played."

And though the eight fallen soldiers were the only ones mentioned by name during the day's festivities, participants in Thomasville's Memorial Day Freedom Celebration took the opportunity to honor silently not only other soldiers who have died in the line of duty but also all people who have served in the military in one form or another.

"We celebrate because of the sacrifices for peo-

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Above, local veterans participate in the march of 100 flags to kick off the annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony in Thomasville. At right, a veteran walks with his two grandchildren after the ceremonies at Cushwa Stadium. Below, a veteran waves a small American flag as they ride through the parade, which attracted thousands to the chair city.

TIMES PHOTOS/ELIOT DUKE/ERIN WILTGEN



Dignitaries join to honor those who sacrificed

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

Thomasville's National Guard Armory serves as a pit stop during the annual Memorial Day parade, a place where local and state dignitaries share a meal with family and friends of veterans who partake in the event. It's also a place where organizers of the parade pay special tribute to honorary guests, like High Point Police Officer Ken Leonard.

On Dec. 30, 2005, Leonard worked for a private security firm in Iraq, training local police in unison with American military personnel, when the vehicle he was riding in got struck by an IED bomb. The explosion shredded Leonard's feet, resulting in a double-amputee. Leonard wouldn't let the accident keep him down, though, as he eventually returned to his job at High Point Police Department.

When Leonard's name was announced at the armory during lunch, the crowd rose as one with a standing ovation that nearly left the officer in tears.

"It was overwhelming," Leonard said. "I nearly broke down. I'm just honored to be a part of this special day. These people truly are role models for all of us."

Congressman Howard Coble (R-NC) received one of the biggest surprises

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County jobless rate falls to lowest mark since 2008

BY ELIOT DUKE
Staff Writer

Davidson County's unemployment rate got some good news last month for the first time in years.

County unemployment, according to Friday's statistics released by the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, fell by a percentage point to 12.1 percent in April, the lowest it's been since 2008. Davidson joined all but one of the state's 100 counties that experienced a decrease in unemployment last month — a sign that perhaps the economy is showing some recovery from the two-year long recession. Davidson County's unemployment is still above the state rate of 10.8 percent, and 59 counties in North Carolina remain in double-digits.

"The positive news in the April county data is that there has

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Wayside hospital key to city's history

BY ERIN WILTGEN
Staff Writer

Nestled along the North Carolina railroad, Thomasville grew in size and name largely because of its shoe and furniture industries.

At least initially. During the Civil War, however, Thomasville put itself on the map, becoming an important hospital site for Confederate and Union soldiers alike. In March, 1865, the wayside hospital — a hastily set up makeshift hospital site — was built, with facilities in a tobacco warehouse, a depot and the

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local Baptist and Methodist churches. Soldiers who died in the hospitals were buried in Thomasville's City Cemetery side by side.

"The people volunteered in the community, and the churches made the places available," said Bill Colonna of the Thomasville Historic Preservation Committee. "Basically, the community came together to help out in lots of ways."

Thomasville sent hundreds

of soldiers off to war to fight for the Confederacy. As the war went on, Thomasville became important as a shoe supplier for the Confederate cause. The Union invasion of North Carolina's coast in 1862 caused the first influx of civilian refugees and wounded soldiers, and Thomasville's smallpox hospital attracted those fleeing war-torn areas searching for medical assistance.

"I think it was the fact that it was a well-thought-out, established town and already had a smallpox hospital," said

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