Written by By Melinda Sanchez Sun Correspondent
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Beloved program honors veterans

The Gallup community has a long-standing reputation for supporting and remembering their veterans and the American Legion Post #8 is no exception to this tradition.

The Hometown Heroes banner program was introduced in 2011 by Reverend Dennis Gardner who was inspired by a similar display of respect he witnessed when visiting his hometown in Pennsylvania. Along with other members of Post #8, Gardner petitioned the city council to allow the display.

“It has been received real well and is growing,” he said.

This program functions as a way to recognize and celebrate the soldiers from McKinley County who have served or currently serving in the military.

Mary Ann Livingston, lifelong Gallup resident, said, “I love the banner program. It means so much to me and my family.”

The Hometown Hero program has allowed her family to honor her seven brothers who served in the army and air force at the same time during World War II. All seven brothers are featured on one banner, she said.

The Kezele and Mesich brothers are the only family with seven sons in the service at the same time, according to Livingston. Livingston also honors her late husband, Doc Livingston, with a banner at the county courthouse.

The banners are printed on both sides with information including a picture of the soldier, branch of service, and hometown in McKinley County. More than 45 banners will be hung in the McKinley County Courthouse Square from May 2 through June 13 and again from Oct. 31 through Nov. 28 this year.

Applications for Memorial Day 2015 banners are due by April 17. Donations are welcome and tax deductible.

If you would like to participate with the Hometown Heroes program please call Reverend Dennis Gardner at (505)879-2193, Commander Roman Herrera (505) 870-9619, or Bill Martinez (505) 863-3886.

The American Legion meets every first Wednesday of the month in the basement of the old McKinley County Courthouse. This institution has been active in the United States since 1921. Post #8 of McKinley County is active with Memorial Day and Veteran's Day parades and offers an educational presentation to elementary schools regarding the history and meaning of the flag.