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Flags fly in quiet salute to the fallen

Banners mark deaths in Iraq, Afghanistan

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Just around the bend in the road that leads to Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township, rows and rows of American flags greeted visitors Tuesday.

"It's absolutely breathtaking," Beth Gambino of Royal Oak said.

The 203 flags along the road were placed there to symbolize the number of Michigan military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Unfortunately there's one to be added to the list ... We lost a Michigan soldier last week," said Steve Glass, a family services counselor for the cemetery. He helped post the flags and about 50 others lining fences and driveways.

A banner proclaiming "Field of Honor" hung in Resurrection's new Veterans' Section, which was dedicated Tuesday in tandem with its annual Veterans Day ceremony. The event was one of dozens recognizing Veterans Day across metro Detroit.

In Detroit, members of the 102nd U.S. Colored Infantry, which dates to 1863 and included former slaves, were honored at Elmwood Cemetery.

Veterans in Warren shared war experiences over a lunch and before local cable TV cameras.

In Livonia, state Sen. Glenn Anderson treated veterans to a showing of the movie "Flags of Our Fathers," followed by tours of a mobile exhibit on funeral customs called "Reflections". The Livonia AMC 20 provided free food at the concession stand.

Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly hosted its annual memorial service amid the graves of military men and women from across the region.

The hour-long ceremony at Resurrection Cemetery attracted 200 to 300 guests, many shuttled on golf carts. It started with two F-16s cutting through gray skies and included an ear-piercing rifle salute and Patriot Guard Riders circling a new veteran's memorial on rumbling motorcycles. The sad wail of bagpipes followed.

A new circular memorial contains seven pillars representing each branch of the military, prisoners of war and those missing in action. The tallest pillar is inscribed with the Pledge of Allegiance.

As a flag was raised next to each pillar, the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra played military anthems.

"These are turbulent times -- politically, socially, economically ... It's more important than ever we stop and take a moment to reflect," said Luis Betanzos, chairman of the Mt. Elliott Cemetery Association and owner of Resurrection.

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