

## Pearl Harbor Vet at LPMS, Dec. 1



**Above:** Retired Navy Lt. Jim Downing was greeted by the Colorado Patriot Guard Riders, a volunteer, nonprofit organization that created a flag corridor on Dec. 1 at Lewis-Palmer Middle School to honor the presence of this 103-year-old veteran and Pearl Harbor attack survivor. *Photo by Lisa Hatfield.*

*By Lisa Hatfield*

On Dec. 1, retired Navy Lt. Jim Downing told students, teachers, and parents at Lewis-Palmer Middle School about the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941 by the naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. Downing's main theme for the students was, "You are the generation of leaders. My message for you is to keep America strong! The lesson we learned from the Pearl Harbor attack is that, as Ronald Reagan said, 'Weakness invites aggression.' So be strong in space, in cyberspace, on the seas, on the ground, and under the sea, so that no tyrant and his government will ever be tempted to attack us." He said it was not until 50 years after the attack on Pearl Harbor that its significance was even mentioned in history.

Downing said there were 27 clues warning the U.S. of the impending attack, including radar signatures showing the Japanese planes coming, but they were ignored. "Leaders who have not been in combat are too optimistic and think it can't happen," he said.

Downing, who is now 103 years old, said he joined the military during the Great Depression to leave his life in a rural small town. He was 28 when the Japanese attacked the naval base at Pearl Harbor. During the attack, with a fire hose in one hand as he tried to keep the ammunition from catching fire and exploding, Downing said he memorized the name tags of the bodies all around him on the

USS West Virginia so he could write letters to their families about their last hours of life. He reminded the students that there were seven other attacks across the Pacific on the same day.

"War is caused by greed," he told the audience. "Greed keeps the world in a state of unrest."

Downing wrote *The Other Side of Infamy*, which tells his account of Pearl Harbor. He has been interviewed by *Time* and *The History Channel*. He said he appreciates all the attention he gets, but he wanted to remind everyone about all the veterans who are physically and emotionally disabled or homeless, and about the disproportionately high suicide rate among veterans.

His favorite part of the military was the amount of responsibility it gave him that helped him grow stronger. By age 39, he was the commanding officer of the USS Patapsco during the Korean War. He said one of the greatest scientific advancements since the nuclear bomb is Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology.

At Lewis-Palmer Middle School, he was greeted by the Colorado Patriot Guard Riders, a volunteer, nonprofit organization that ensures dignity and respect at memorial services honoring Fallen Military Heroes, First Responders, and honorably discharged veterans.

*Lisa Hatfield can be contacted at [lisa-hatfield@ocn.me](mailto:lisa-hatfield@ocn.me).*

## Christmas Concert, Dec. 10



**Above:** The Tri-Lakes Handbell Choir was part of the 15th Annual Christmas Handbell Concert was held Dec. 10 at the Monument Community Presbyterian Church. The free concert included bells, chimes, organ, vocal selections, and accompanists Leanne Rubinstein and Barbara Taylor for some of the selections. Musicians who would like to participate next year should contact Betty Jenik at 488-3853. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

## North Pole Fair, Dec. 3



**Above:** Barbara Hadley, left, and Jean Wetjer welcomed shoppers to the Cookie Walk at the 11th Annual North Pole at Tri-Lakes Arts and Crafts Fair held at the Grace Best Education Center Dec. 3. Featuring 80 vendors, the fair was attended by about 1,200 people. As the price of admission, the fair collected 300 pounds of food and \$623 in cash to benefit Tri-Lakes Cares. One generous individual donated a box of toys. Shoppers were entertained by a number of vocal groups from local schools and by Miguel Dakota. The Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church's Cookie Walk was sold out by 3 p.m., as were other food vendors. The church will give the proceeds to local charities. The fair is sponsored by the Monument Hill Kiwanis. Project Manager Bob Nissen reported that some vendors have already committed to participating next year. Proceeds from the booth rentals support D-38 programs such as therapeutic riding. *Photo by Harriet Halbig.*

## Small Town Christmas, Dec. 3



**Above:** Children and adults tried out ice skating all afternoon at Limbach Park during Monument's Small Town Christmas, Dec. 3. The event also included Santa and Mrs. Claus and their reindeer, crafts, hayrides, open houses, and special activities at many local merchants. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

## John Adams at TLCA, Dec. 9



**Above:** On a crisp and clear Dec. 9, John Adams and his John Denver tribute band performed their Rocky Mountain Christmas Show at the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA), bringing the holiday spirit to the sold-out show. This performance by Adams, a perennial favorite, was his seventh at the TLCA and perhaps most memorable. In the first set, Adams and his band performed a variety Christmas songs that Denver performed including *Alpenglow*, *Christmas for Cowboys*, and *Silent Night*. The second set included Denver standards as *Rocky Mountain High*, *Back Home Again*, *Leaving on a Jet Plane*, and *Take Me Home*, *Country Roads* with an encore of *White Christmas*. The evening included more than a song or two with the audience singing along. Adams has a full 2017 schedule, with perhaps a return to the TLCA, then a European tour in 2018. *Photo by David Futey.*