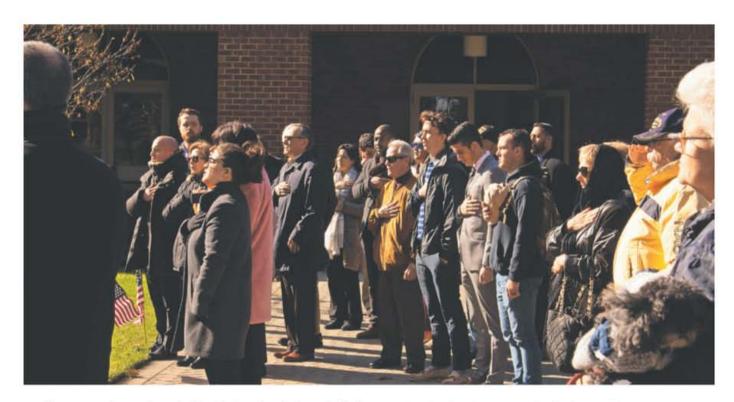WAGNER COLLEGE

Veterans honored for their service

Audience members salute the flag during the Pledge of Allegiance. *Victoria Ifatusin, Staten Island Advance photos*

Congressman Max Rose (D-Staten Island/South Brooklyn), himself a veteran of 10 years, addresses the audience.

Wagner College senior Shawn Tellekamp sang the National Anthem and "Amazing Grace" during the ceremony.

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Staten Island veterans and local officials gathered at Wagner College Friday to celebrate and honor veterans who have served this country.

"We have so many veterans today who gave their time and their service to this country in the name of peace and in the name of freedom," said John Iasparro, a graduate of Wagner College, Class of 1972, who welcomed approximately 30 guests to the 10th Annual Veterans Day Remembrance.

It was members of Iasparro's fraternity, Delta Nu, who started the event a decade ago. Iasparro also unveiled the symbolic "Chair of Honor," which remains empty awaiting the return of soldiers taken prisoner, or missing in action.

Rep. Max Rose addressed those in attendance, and talked about the importance of Americans respecting and acknowledging veterans. "Thanking them is just the beginning," he said. "Acknowledging them is just the beginning. What's important is that we try to live up to that standard."

Rose, who served in the military for 10 years, addressed himself as a veteran rather than a congressman when thanking the veterans.

David Martin, director of Wagner College's Planned Giving, College Relations, and Institutional Advancement, spoke about his own 27 years of military service and the Wagner alumni who served. "It is an opportunity to celebrate those who have made service to America a choice for them by choosing something else more important than themselves," Martin said, referring to Veterans Day, which is Monday.

Various Wagner students performed at the event, including Teresa Lynch, who played "Ashokan Farewell" on the violin, which was followed by a moment of silence for fallen soldiers. "This means that the vets are not forgotten on Staten Island, at least," said Joseph J. DiGiovanni, referring to Friday's ceremony. He was wounded in 1968 during a term of service.

Another veteran, James Haynes III, said he served his country for 21 years, and agreed with DiGiovanni, stating, "It's an honor to see how they respect the veterans."