

The Harlan County Black Bear Football Team and senior member Austin Caudill were honored for their display of patriotism prior to the start of the Bell County game on Friday. Mountain Trail Veteran of Foreign Wars Auxiliary 5171 in Cumberland presented certificates and photos to the team. Presenting the awards were Deb Burke VFW Auxiliary president, Americanism Chairperson and 14th District Patriotic Instructor Joyce Heck Treasurer and Legislative Chairperson Tammy Cole, Conductress and Ways and Means chairperson.



The awards presented read "For

your exemplary display of patriotism. Your actions and deeds are appreciated and commended by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary."

Burke said the group's common goal is "serving veterans, their families and our communities in honor of the sacrifices and commitment of every man and woman who has served in uniform. We also strive to educate our youth about the American Flag and Patriotism. When I think of Patriotism the following words come to mind. Love of country, loyalty, Pride, honor, service, freedom, liberty, sacrifice, integrity and courage. Patriotism inspires us. It unites us. It fills our hearts with pride and optimism And sometimes it brings us to tears. Simple acts of Patriotism occur every day, They rarely attract headlines but these are the actions that strengthen our great Nation. These are some of the words we look for when awarding the Patriotic Youth Award."

She said that following the last home game she wanted to publicly recognize the team.

Black Bear Coach Eddied Creech said "We take pride in our family atmosphere within our football program. Part of that family culture includes taking pride in being an American. Our young men aren't shy about their love for the red, white, and blue."

While the American flag has been a part of the Black Bears entrance from the large helmet for several seasons, this is the first season Caudill carried it onto the field prior to each game.

"I do it because it's my job to support the veterans and the current members of the military," said Caudill. "Without them, I would not have the freedoms to carry that flag out onto the field. I say thank you to all that have served, and especially to those who gave all."

Burke noted that her unit has a Facebook page.

"I borrowed two pictures of the team going on to the field," she said. "I posted them on our page with the following comment: Our Harlan County Black Bears run onto the field, waving our banner high. You kind of get a lump in your throat. As the National Anthem plays, standing tall and at attention. Hands held over hearts. A feeling of pride starts to swell up inside. That is what I saw on the Black Bears football field at the last home game."

Burke said when talking about patriotic youth "this is what I think of. Young men and women proudly displaying our American flag and showing respect for our great Nation."

Caudill is the son of Jessie and Jennifer Caudill.

"Children learn by example," added Burke. "I would like to say thank you to the parents who have taken the time to raise these patriotic young Americans. Thank each and every one for your unwavering support for our uncommon heroes and our great country."