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Members of the Vermillion American Legion stand at attention outside the W.H. Over Museum Monday morning during the 2012 Veterans Day Program.

(Photo by David Lias/Plain Talk)

Local soldiers share experiences during 2012 Veterans Day program

By Travis Gulbrandson
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Each year, Veterans Day offers people across the country a chance to contemplate the sacrifices and stories of the men and women of the armed forces.

In Vermillion Monday morning, two local veterans shared their own stories during the 2012 Veterans Day Program at W.H. Over Museum.

Sgt. Marty Nygren and Staff Sgt. Neil Wallin offered the main addresses of the annual ceremony, during which they recounted their experiences in the Middle East.

Nygren enlisted in the Army National Guard when he was only 17, joining the 665th Maintenance Company out of Mitchell. His first two-year activation started in 2003, and his most recent deployment began in 2011, during which he served with the 139th Brigade Support Battalion as part of Task Force Shadow.

“Our first week in (Iraq) was spent training wit the soldiers we would be replacing,” Nygren said. “My job on the deployment was to serve as the NCO in charge of maintaining the shop office. I was tasked with ordering, receiving and shipping of all parts of tactical and non-tactical vehicles.

“Our task force supported units at four operating bases throughout the entire theater of Iraq,” he said.

As their time there drew to a

close, Nygren’s task force was responsible for shutting down operations bases in Iraq.

“Our unit had to arrange for all personnel and equipment to either be flown or hauled from Iraq to Kuwait, and then flown back to the United States,” he said.

He later transitioned to a receiving unit for equipment coming out of Iraq.

“Another soldier and I were tasked to locating all missing cargo in Kuwait that belonged to us. We spent a month going from base to base searching for equipment,” Nygren said.. In those 30 days we discovered \$2.3 million worth of equipment that was either dropped off at the wrong location by the driver, or the shipping documents had gotten lost. After locating our equipment, I would arrange to have it shipped back to our base and escort the convoy.”

Neil Wallin has served as a medic and X-ray technician with the South Dakota National Guard for more than 16 years. He served with the 730th Area Support Medical Company from 1996-2008, with one deployment to Iraq from 2003-2004, and transferred to the 211th Engineer Company in 2009, and was deployed to Afghanistan from December 2009 to September 2010.

After Wallin arrived in Iraq, his unit operated out of Bagdad



Sgt. Marty Nygren (top photo) and Staff Sgt. Neil Wallin (bottom photo) offered the main addresses at the 2012 Veterans Day Program held at the W.H. Over Museum Monday morning in Vermillion.

(Photos by David Lias/Plain Talk)



Vermillion High School social studies teacher Lenni Billberg receives an American Legion Teacher of the Year Award from Clint Meadows, adjutant of the legion in Vermillion, during the Veterans Day program at W.H. Over Museum Monday.

(Photos by David Lias/Plain Talk)

Billberg honored with American Legion Teacher of the Year Award

By Travis Gulbrandson
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A Vermillion High School social studies teacher was among the honorees at the 2012 Veterans Day Program at the W.H. Over Museum Monday.

Although Lenni Billberg never served her county in the armed forces, she was presented with the American Legion Teacher of the Year Award for a project she started in 2008 that encourages local students to interact with veterans.

“Students had to do the following: They had to find, interview and write ... a

pictorial biography of a veteran in our community,” Billberg said. “They could find somebody that was a relative, a friend, a neighbor who had served at some point in their life, whether it was in a war or whether they were still serving today.”

The Veterans Project has since become Billberg’s favorite project.

“They’re due Dec. 20, so truly, my Christmas present to myself is to take them home and read them each Christmas break,” she said. “As I read these stories, each year I get a wonderful (piece) of history about you guys, about you

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