

## Veterans Day 2011

By David Shaffer

Brown County Schools will celebrate Veterans Day on Friday, November 11, 2011 with a program in the Larry C. Banks Memorial Gymnasium at Brown County High School. We annually invite all of the Veterans in our area and any other interested community members to attend this very special program. We will involve a number of student groups in this program including the Brown County High School Band and Chorus. Students from each of schools will also attend.

This year our speakers will include two men who have been associated with Larry Banks. Private First Class Larry C. Banks was the only Brown County High School graduate to make the ultimate sacrifice in giving his life during the Vietnam Conflict on November 7, 1967. Yesterday was the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Larry's death. In 1994 the Board of School Trustees of Brown County Schools accepted a recommendation to name our Brown County High School Gymnasium in honor of Larry C. Banks. One of our speakers will be Steven Simms. Mr. Simms has authored a book entitled, Common Valor: Ambush at Srok Rung which recounts the incident in which Pfc. Banks was killed, while attempting to hold off the enemy making it possible for other members of his unit to reach safety.

The other speaker will be Michael O'Hara. Mr. O'Hara and Larry Banks were friends and graduated together in 1967. They were a part of the first class to attend all four years of their high school at what was then the new Brown County High School. Mr. O'Hara was the leading advocate in a citizen's committee who persuaded the School Board to name the gymnasium. We look forward to both speakers in our program. We are also expecting Larry Banks' sisters to attend our program.

For his actions of valor Pfc. Banks was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star. As we gather to recognize veterans from conflicts dating back to World War II, we also remember those who served in all of the conflicts involving our country. We remember those young men and women from Brown County currently serving in military branches stationed around the world including many who serve in Iraq and Afghanistan. We believe this program will help our young people learn that freedom and our way of life comes at a high price in terms of human commitment. Learning about the history of Veterans Day and those millions of people who have served is a vital part of our mission as a public school.

Veterans Day was originally celebrated on the date of the armistice or the end of combat in World War I. The Armistice went into effect at 11:00 a.m. on the eleventh day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918. This date, November 11, 1918, became Veterans Day in 1954 and has since been a day to honor all American veterans of all wars. President Dwight Eisenhower, the victorious General who led the Allies through World War II signed the legislation changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day.

Brown County Schools' celebration of Veterans Day has become an important event in our school year. It is a day in which our students and staff can formally honor veterans and reflect on contributions known and unknown which veterans have provided. The opportunity for a public school education in a country that guarantees freedoms for its citizens are among the reasons for these contributions made over the history of our nation.

I want to invite members of our community to attend our event. It will begin at 9:45 a.m. on Friday. We certainly want to invite any veterans within any distance to attend and encourage any who have not previously attended to come. It is our honor to recognize all of these persons who have contributed so much to our way of life. With thanks and gratitude we think you will find this to be a solemn and moving program and we hope the community will join us in honoring our veterans.