

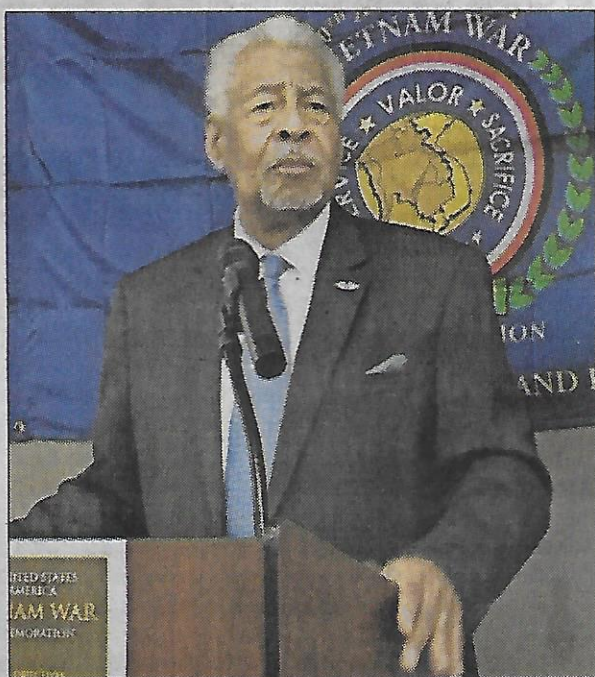
# City celebrates Vietnam War service members

## Contributed Report

PETERSBURG — Anyone driving down Washington Street in Petersburg on the afternoon of Friday, March 30, would have been struck by the unmistakable flurry of activity in the downtown corridor. On that day veterans, their families and friends, local and state dignitaries and others from the Tri-Cities and beyond gathered at the Freedom Support Center, 32 W. Washington St., to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. The event was part of a commemorative partner program to thank and recognize veterans of the Vietnam era, including surviving spouses, personnel who were held as prisoners of war and those listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice.

In 2010, the Virginia General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing March 30 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, to celebrate the service and numerous contributions of the commonwealth's Vietnam era veterans and to coincide with the national observance.

Guest speaker for the Petersburg commemoration was retired Major Ruben Barkley Jr. During his remarks, Major Barkley commented on the significance of the welcome greeting bestowed upon them years after returning home from what, at the time, was considered an unpopular war. He talked about "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of his Vietnam tour of duty.



**Retired Major Ruben Barkley Jr. speaks at the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony in March at the Freedom Support Center in Petersburg.**

[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

The presentation of the Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin with symbolic design detail intensified the ceremony's significance. One by one, veterans came forward as their names were called and were pinned by Senator Rosalyn Dance, 16th Senatorial District of Virginia; Colonel Carlos Hopkins, Virginia secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs; Kathleen Jabs, deputy secretary, Virginia Department of Veterans and Defense Affairs; Leslie Frazier, assistant secretary, Department of Veterans and Defense of Affairs; Steven Combs, deputy commissioner, Department of Veterans Services; Valerie Keffer, veteran service representative, Department of Veterans Services; and Command Sgt. Major Henry Motley, United

States Army.

The ceremony was coordinated through partnership of the Freedom Support Center and Department of Veterans Services (Benefits & Virginia Veteran and Family Support).

On behalf of the staff and management of the Freedom Support Center, in addition to ceremony participants already mentioned in this article, sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to Rolling Thunder Virginia Chapter 5, Virginia State University's Trojan Warrior ROTC, Boar's Head, Mark Matthews Chapter of the 9th and 10th Horse Cavalry Association of Petersburg, City of Petersburg, D19 Transportation and Disabled American Veterans Chapter 47.