

# Hearty turnout at rainy parade

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By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — Amid scarecrows and raindrops on a cool and drizzly Sunday at the Branford Green, West Haven's Sharon Eleazar and Deborah Brooks-Rodriguez, both military veterans, took in the ceremonies preceding the town's Veterans Day parade on Nov. 5.

Prior to the parade, Veterans Day parade chairman Bill O'Brien voiced concerns about the paltry attendance in recent years, maintaining the turnout would have a bearing on whether the town would continue with the parade.

Despite the weather, spirits were high. Parade marshal Elliott Hastings had the enthusiastic crowd smiling with his pronouncement that "I've shortened my speech to one hour because of the rain," before eloquently



Contributed photo

**Rainy weather did not dampen spirits at Branford's Veterans Day parade.**

recognizing those "affected by the war, whether in injuries, missing limbs, or in being mentally affected for the rest of their lives."

Walsh Intermediate students Michael Loomis and Christina Pepe, winners of an essay contest, delivered stirring speeches on the importance of thanking veterans for their service. And the Stony

Creek Fife & Drum Corps performed spirited patriotic selections.

Parade Chairman O'Brien declared, in a voice that carried across the Branford Green, "We're gonna march!" Everyone cheered.

A few days later, he sounded an even more confident note. "It's safe to say the message got out,"

he said. "If people will stand in the rain to recognize our veterans, we're going to go ahead with the parade for at least another year."

That's news that will almost certainly please Eleazar, who served with the Navy from 1980 to 1983, and Brooks-Rodriguez, an Army veteran at Fort Bragg from 1979 to 1981.

"This makes me feel proud to be a veteran," said Eleazar, as she prepared to join the parade as part of the Take A Vet Fishing contingent.

"It's a way to be remembered," Brooks-Rodriguez said. "Not just us, but all those who made the ultimate sacrifice."

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*For information on Take A Vet Fishing, visit Take A Vet Fishing on Facebook or contact Jeff Buggee at 203-488-7201.*