



**CITY OF BALDWIN PARK**  
**Department of Recreation & Community Services**  
**PRESS RELEASE**

---

4100 Baldwin Park Blvd. · Baldwin Park, CA 91706 · (626) 813-5245, Ext. 268 · Fax: (626) 814-2998

---

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**Date:** November 22, 2016  
**Contact:** Yuriko Ruizesparza, program supervisor  
**Phone:** (626) 813-5245, Ext. 268  
**Fax:** (626) 814-2998

**Officials recognize local military heroes**

*Unique stories, honors shared during community celebration*

**BALDWIN PARK, Calif.** – During her early adult years, Lillian Mower was determined to serve the United States as a member of the armed forces. Had she enrolled based on preference, Mower could have been the first woman to serve in the United States Army, according to one of her sons. However, Mower was – and continues to be – petite in frame, so she was turned away because she did not meet minimum weight requirements.

It wasn't until she resorted to eating lots of bananas and drinking plenty of water that Mower was able to put on some extra pounds and was finally accepted to the United States Coast Guard. She served with the branch during World War II as an operator.

On November 11 of this year, the Baldwin Park resident was among several military veterans honored as part of Baldwin Park's annual Veterans Day celebration. Mower, who is now 100 years old, was recognized by various state and local dignitaries during the event.

Baldwin Park commemorated its 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day ceremony on November 11 at Morgan Park. It joined numerous cities nationwide who hosted similar celebrations in their

respective communities to honor those who have served in the armed forces. Yuriko Ruizesparza, a program supervisor with the city, said Baldwin Park is one of only a few entities to host an aerial show, via The Golden Stars Skydiving Team, as part of its Veterans Day program.

Last year, a 67-year-old Golden Stars skydiver was injured when a large American flag he was carrying got tangled in a tree and forced him to crash into the ground. That veteran returned for Baldwin Park's event this year as part of the aerial jumpers' ground crew, according to organizers. He is expected to make a full recovery.

This year's Golden Stars Skydiving Team showcase featured demonstration jumper Jay Fragoso, who completed his 2,771<sup>st</sup> career jump during Baldwin Park's celebration. Fragoso, himself a U.S. Army veteran, officially marking his retirement as a skydiver as he glided into Morgan Park to great fanfare.

Ruizesparza described the local Veterans Day celebration as a "momentous occasion [that] recognizes all of the brave men and women who have served in our military."

A national holiday since 1938, Veterans Day marks the anniversary of World War I's end. The national holiday is often commemorated with special honors or ceremonies that pay tribute to United States veterans from all military branches, as well as victims of all wars.

Baldwin Park's event was filled with various military rituals, including the Presentation of Colors and a 21-gun salute. A special POW-MIA remembrance table was also set up to honor those military personnel who never returned home.

Anthony Castañeda, a U.S. Army veteran, said the local Veterans Day ceremony is memorable for military veterans such as himself, but it also serves as a celebration for honorees' family members and friends.

"This is a good thing to do for the community, especially for those older veterans who didn't have parades and other celebrations to welcome them back when they came home," said 47-year-old La Puente resident.

"It's important that people recognize the sacrifice that these men and women are willing to make, and it's at the cost of their life. It's important for people to remember that," he added.

***About Baldwin Park***

*The City of Baldwin Park Department of Recreation and Community Services provides yearround recreation activities and community services to residents of Baldwin Park and surrounding communities. For additional information, please contact the Department of Recreation and Community Services at (626) 8135245.*