By Stan Stamper

FORT TOWSON — Though just 10-years-old, Alicen Hickman said she wanted to do something special to honor the town's veterans as this year's Veterans Day holiday approached.
She went door-to-door in Fort Towson, seeking out the town's veterans. She wanted to invite them to a special gathering at which she was going to provide cupcakes and cookies that she had prepared.
She also asked each veteran she discovered to tell other veterans they might know about her special event.
She wanted to have the event on Saturday at Fort Towson's City Hall, because some of the veterans had jobs or other priorities during the week.
Out of 30 veterans she was able to locate, 10 of them were able to attend her event. After they gathered, her mother asked her if she wanted to write down some words so she could make a speech to the men.
"I don't need to write anything down," Alicen replied. "I'm just going to speak from my heart."
With a great deal of composure, she asked each of the veterans to stand, one-by-one, and tell what branch of the service they had served in, and if they wished, to tell a little about their service.
One veteran, in particular, stood out to her.
"One of the men said if it wasn't for Christ, he would have never returned home from the war. He said he had been hit with machine gun fire, and as he and the men of his unit lie wounded, enemy soldiers tossed a grenade onto them to finish them off. He was the only man in his unit to survive, and come home to his family," Alicen recalled.
She also said she was touched when another of the soldiers commented after his remarks, "Welcome home, brother." And then, he said the same thing, "Welcome home brother," after each of the men spoke.
"I was also surprised that most of these men were not career military men. They were just common American citizens, and most of them said, they didn't do anything special—they just fought for their country," Alicen said.
"Before it was over, most of them were teary eyed, and I don't think there was a dry eye in the room among the adults who came to honor these men," she added.
So what would cause a 10-year-old Fort Towson girl to want to host a special event for veterans?
"I just thought it was something God would want me to do," she replied. "I think it's important to let our veterans know how much we appreciate the sacrifices they made, to keep our country free."
Veterans who attended Alicen's event included: Johnny Smith, Charles Collier, Nathan Carroll, Larry Booth, Danny Daniels, Leslie Post, Ray Noble, Arnold Rech and William Vandever.
So just as the efforts of America's brave touch the hearts of many on this Veterans Day and throughout the year, we are touched as well by a young patriot from Fort Towson, who showed us all how with a little effort and a big heart, we too can touch America's finest—the men and women who have made it possible for us to be free.
God bless our Veterans, and patriots like Alicen Hickman, who not only appreciate their service and sacrifice, but have the fortitude to make a touching expression of thanks.

Editor’s Note: Alicen is the daughter of Tray and Melissa Hickman, who live on Lake Raymond Gary.