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By MEGHAN PIERCE

*The New Hampshire Union Leader, June 14, 2012*

KEENE — Flag Day came early to Bentley Commons with a visit on Wednesday from U.S. Rep. Charlie Bass, who, in recognition of the veterans residing in the Keene senior living community, presented Bentley Commons with an American flag that has flown over the U.S. Capitol.

"Every day every American should wake up and thank those who have given this country its democracy and freedom and liberty. It's a real honor for me to donate this flag to this community," Bass said.

After the presentation, the community dedicated the recently erected flag pole to the memory of Robert J. Ross, a U.S. Navy veteran who served on the USS Dace submarine. Ross lived at Bentley Commons before his death in January.

Bentley Commons Executive Director Angela Pelletier said the pole was made possible by donations made to the facility in Ross' name after he passed away.

In an emotional speech, Ross' son Robert H. Ross of Keene thanked Bass and Bentley Commons.

"My father was a proud veteran who hung his flag outside his house every day so this is appropriate for him and I appreciate it and my family also appreciates it," Ross said. "As Congressman Bass said, this should represent every veteran in this building. He was so proud of his country and you all are too."

Korean War veteran and Bentley Commons resident Randall Roberts helped Bass and Ross hoist the flag, a duty he was proud perform.

"A lot of people don't know how to handle a flag officially," Randall said. "It's our flag, you got to do it right."

Though one day early, the event was also held as a Flag Day ceremony, staff said.

Flag Day commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States, which occurred in 1777.

President Woodrow Wilson made a proclamation in 1916 that set Flag Day on June 14. In 1949, National Flag Day was established by an act of Congress.

Today in Peterborough, American Legion Cheney-Armstrong Post 5 plans to mark Flag Day by burning retired flags in a ceremony at the gazebo in Depot Square at 10 a.m. The public is encouraged to bring worn-out flags to be retired.