

This Past Saturday morning, Veterans' Day was celebrated with a very traditional commemoration ceremony at the Veterans' Memorial across from Evergreen Cemetery on North 18th Street.

There were the usual and appropriate remarks from veterans and other dignitaries, but what made the event so poignant was the presence of the family of a young, local man, very recently killed in action.

This family reminded everybody that those dying for us in Iraq and in other active duty around the world are our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, neighbors and friends and not some strangers that we've enlisted to do the business of freedom.

We owe our veterans everything. Let's make sure we take care of them.

Why don't we go to the rumor mill for a moment?

If you caught my blog, you may have already noted that Lowes is not closing. The Charcoal Grill is not closing either. Nor is Newey's. The Hobby Lobby is also continuing along nicely in business. And so is Family Dollars.

The unfortunate news is that Big Lots is closing. We appreciate what the store and it's employees have done for all of us who shop the Lakeshore, but in an apparent effort to boost profits, my understanding is that several store in the Big Lots family are being shut down.

Obviously, there is lots of competition out there in the retail world, and we can all count on these types of operations coming and going as buyers make their decisions about where to shop.

On the shopping front, as you may have heard by now, Starbucks will open on December 8th joining our amazing culture of coffee shops here in the Port Cities.

Joining them in Harbor Town will be US Cellular and possibly a Kinko's/FEDEX and a Jimmy Johns.

In the larger building under construction will be a PETCO and a Quiznos Sub Shop. There's no word right now on the opening of the other stores just mentioned.

One of the more interesting items to be acted on in this past Tuesday's general election was the referendum question, "Should the Wisconsin Legislature pass a bill by 2008 that will assure access to quality and affordable healthcare coverage for all Wisconsin individuals and families?"

Voters in the City of Manitowoc joined voters in the cities of Racine, DePere, Lodi and Green Lake, and the counties of Dane, Eau Claire, LaCrosse, Wood, Dunn and

Jackson in overwhelmingly voting “YES” to this question regarding the “out of control” nature of healthcare delivery in our state.

Eighty three per cent of those voting in Manitowoc supported this referendum that did not specify a solution, but strongly indicated to our state representatives that enough is not being done to solve this tragedy haunting all of Wisconsin’s employers and citizens.

Together, let’s hope that our state will begin to focus on this issue of grave importance to its citizens.

It is my honor to have been asked to serve our state as a member of a Legislative Council Committee that is examining whether or not the fresh water of Lake Michigan should be allowed to be shipped to areas outside of the Great Lakes Basin.

It would seem to me to be a mortal sin to risk the future of the greatest source of fresh water in the world for the purpose of profit, but apparently somebody has enough influence in Madison to have the legislature reexamine this already answered question.

By the way, the folks in Brown County that are going to be the beneficiaries of Manitowoc’s water live in the Lake Michigan basin.

I think it was Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus who said that if someone outside the state of Wisconsin wants our water, tell him or her we sell beer. The governor was a little simple in his summary, but not too far off the mark.

Manitowoc Mayor Kevin Crawford may be reached at 920-686-6980.