

Students enjoyed guided tours of the campus on Thursday and Friday, and were presented with facts and demonstrations about the programs available at the Pineville Campus.

"We are delighted to be able to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary on the Pineville Campus and we are equally delighted to have so many folks visit us," said Dr. W. Bruce Ayers, President of SKCTC. "This campus has meant so much to the area and so much to the college for a number of years."

The southeast division of the University of Kentucky was launched in 1960, and has been an important facet of the Bell County community since the birth of the Pineville and Middlesboro branches of the college.

At the open house, Dr. Ayers shared some of the history of the institution. The Pineville campus, he explained, joined the SKCTC family in 1998, but had been in the area for some time.

"This particular campus actually began as an LPN nursing school down in Pineville, and moved here after they were flooded out in the 1970s. They moved up here, got a new building and expanded the curriculum. They've been doing a splendid job here in allied health since that time," said Dr. Ayers.

Although the building situated on Log Mountain is relatively small compared with many other campuses, it is able to house a number of programs in the medical field. Each year, students begin programs in Respiratory Therapy, Radiologic Technology, Surgical Technology, Clinical Lab Technology, or enroll in a nursing program to become a Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse.

The Pineville campus is a vital part of the SKCTC family, serving as a main location for many medical programs.

"We train probably about 50 percent of our allied health students for the entire college here," remarked Dr. Ayers of SKCTC Pineville.

The majority of those students leave the school with a medical license. Ayers reported that the campus boasts "remarkably high pass rates" on licensing exams, and that several programs maintain a pass rate of 100 percent.

Those numbers serve as proof, he says, that students in the area are as bright and capable of success as students anywhere in the country.

SKCTC's anniversary was celebrated in Middlesboro in December.

REPEAL OF DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law. Today marks the end of the 60-day waiting period following notification to Congress that the necessary certifications were made by the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding this change in policy. I am pleased that this discriminatory law was relegated to the past early this morning at midnight.

I am proud to have played a role in this repeal, and I thank my colleague Senator LIEBERMAN who, when prospects seemed most dire, worked with me to develop a strategy to pass a stand-alone version of the bill that ultimately resulted in repeal of DADT.

It was almost 4 years ago when I first asked ADM Michael Mullen, then

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. That was the first, but not the last, time that Admiral Mullen courageously testified in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee about the need to debate and evaluate the DADT policy.

It seemed to me then—as it does now—that our Nation should not refuse the service of patriots who willingly answer the call to arms, simply on the basis of their sexual orientation. If individuals are willing to put on the uniform of our country, to be deployed in war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan, to risk their lives for the benefit of their fellow citizens, then we should be expressing our gratitude to them, not trying to exclude them from serving or expelling them from the military.

Since 1993, more than 13,000 men and women have been dismissed from service and countless more have been barred from serving. Society has changed a great deal in the last 18 years since President Clinton signed the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law, and I am proud Congress took the lead to repeal the law.

I thank the LGBT community for their outreach and support of this effort. I especially was honored by the number of servicemembers both active duty and retired who have thanked me for this effort, or who have shared their personal story of how the law was affecting their lives. I recently received one of those stories on a postcard with a stamp from overseas that was signed "An Army Soldier." I would like to have his message printed in the RECORD because his words represent the sentiment of so many other brave men and women of our fighting forces.

His postcard says this:

Dear Senator Collins, I will still be deployed in Afghanistan on 20 September when [Don't Ask, Don't Tell] is finally repealed. It will take a huge burden off my shoulders—a combat zone is stressful enough on its own . . . I will repay your courage with continued professionalism.

With a spirit of service such as this, is there any doubt we should be welcoming this warrior into our military? I want to thank this anonymous soldier for taking the time to share this important message with me and with my colleagues. Because of soldiers like him, our country remains strong and our military united in a common cause with the freedom of individual expression guaranteed by the liberties they fight to preserve.

TRIBUTE TO ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to Mike Mullen who is retiring as the 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff after more than 43 years of distinguished service to our country.

Admiral Mullen began his rise in the Navy as a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, where he became a

proud graduate in 1968. Upon graduation, then Ensign Mullen reported aboard the USS Collett, deploying to the Western Pacific and participating in combat operations off the coast of Vietnam. Eventually, his career at sea would include serving aboard six other warships, including command of three, as well as command of the George Washington Carrier Strike Group and U.S. Second Fleet.

He supplemented his systems engineering degree from Annapolis with a master of science degree in operations research from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA, and a business degree from the advanced management program at Harvard.

Ashore, he similarly distinguished himself with tours at the U.S. Naval Academy, the Bureau of Naval Personnel, the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations as well as in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

With an already exemplary career of service at sea and ashore, Admiral Mullen became the Navy's 32nd Vice Chief of Naval Operations in 2003. During the first half of 2005, he served as Commander of NATO's Joint Force Command Naples and Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, leading the Alliance's peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and its critical training mission in Iraq.

In July of 2005, he became the top uniformed leader in the Navy as the 28th Chief of Naval Operations. With the Nation fighting two wars, he oversaw the service's efforts to man, train, and equip our Navy to fulfill its traditional missions at sea. Facing innovative and nontraditional enemies, Admiral Mullen conceived and championed the Navy's vital contribution to the fight on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dedicated to keeping the sea lanes free, deterring aggression, and maintaining our Nation's maritime superiority, he also led efforts to stabilize the Navy's shipbuilding program to support a 313-ship fleet.

On October 1, 2007, Admiral Mullen assumed duties as the 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Facing a myriad of challenges, and with ongoing conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, he worked tirelessly with our Nation's leadership to oversee multiple, sustained joint military operations. Admiral Mullen's efforts played a vital role in disrupting terrorist networks, providing humanitarian assistance at home and abroad, and improving the security and stability in Iraq.

Recognizing the danger of an Allied failure in Afghanistan, he became an early and vocal proponent of resourcing the war by expanding counterinsurgency capabilities and fostering closer ties with strategically vital Pakistan.

Never forgetting that those who return from war often continue to bear scars—both seen and unseen—Admiral Mullen and his wife Deborah passionately represented the interests of the