



Field of Honor reveres servicemembers

By Cpl. Jessica M. Kuhn

49th PAD

As the colors of red, white and blue danced in the wind at the Field of Honor, a little girl wandered across the field in search of just one flag. An American flag among hundreds of others, but for Autumn Rodgers this particular flag had her daddy's name on it.

"She would much rather be standing next to her daddy, but at least she can stand next to his flag in memory of him," said a teary-eyed Casey Rodgers, remembering her late husband Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Rodgers, who was killed in action in Afghanistan shortly after Memorial Day in 2007.

Members of the Fayetteville, Fort Bragg and surrounding communities gathered outside the grounds of the Airborne and Special Operations Museum to witness the opening ceremony of this year's Glory Days Field of Honor display Saturday in Fayetteville.



Photos by Cpl. Jessica M. Kuhn/49th PAD

Autumn Rodgers, 6, is blanketed by the American flag placed in honor of her deceased father during the opening ceremony at this year's Glory Days Field of Honor outside the grounds of the Airborne and Special Operations Museum Saturday in Fayetteville. "This is my daddy's flag," said Autumn as she wrapped the flag around her, hugging it as if it was her father.

The display of flags, called the Field of Honor, is a symbol of those who sacrificed their lives, those who served, those who are serving and those who absolutely believe in what they do and are passionate enough to serve in the future, said Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, the commanding general of the United States Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, to the crowd. This is the third year the Field of Honor has been sponsored by the Downtown Alliance of Fayetteville and the ninth year for their support in the Glory Days celebration.

During the ceremony, the remainder of this year's flags were placed into the ground by their sponsors and the USASOC color guard.

One of those sponsors was Melissa Helmick, wife of Lt. Gen. Frank Helmick, the commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps, who sponsored a flag in remembrance of Maj. Tom Bostick. "Major Tom Bostick was a Soldier's Soldier, a strong leader and extremely dedicated Soldier," Melissa said. "Not only did he leave a legacy about his soldiering, he and his Family together left a legacy to our Army community of kindness, humor, mentorship and an open door and welcoming hand to all who crossed their paths."

The Annual Glory Days Festival is a 31-day celebration where the city and community honor the strong military heritage with Family activities including live music, a movie night, arts, crafts and the Field of Honor presentation.

“Those great men and women who serve don’t come out of thin air; they come from Families and communities who help them make their decision to take on and battle the enemies of our country,” Mulholland said.

The Field of Honor is an example of how we honor our military in a time of war, said Elizabeth Ramos, spouse of a retired servicemember who makes the trip down to the Field of Honor every year to show her ongoing support for our fallen heroes.

Besides giving the community a chance to show their appreciation for its servicemembers, the Field of Honor also provides Families with the chance to reconnect with their passed loved ones. “Every time around May 30, just when I think I’m getting over him being gone, it gets real hard again but stuff like the Field of Honor really helps me to get through it,” Rodgers said as she and her three daughters stood next to her husband’s flag.

“This is my daddy’s flag,” said Autumn, 6, as she wrapped the flag around her, hugging it as if it was her father.

“The Field of Honor is important because it’s too easy for us to forget; we get too busy with our lives and we don’t remember those who have died for us,” Ramos said as she walked through the field with her husband and granddaughter.

The flags will remain on display until after the Glory Days celebration concludes Memorial Day weekend.

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