

Memorial Day time for families, remembrance in Gallup

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Folks around greater McKinley County observed Memorial Day in a variety of ways. For some May 29 was a day for reunions, including a family gathered at Ford Canyon Park in Gallup.

A lot more families, friends and couples made their way downtown to get a glimpse of the 11th annual Memorial Day Celebration put on by the Gallup-McKinley County Veterans Committee. The event is a Gallup mainstay that draws locals and tourists alike.

“I thought it was a very wonderful day,” Gallup City Councilor Fran Palochak said. Palochak, a Gallup native and a U.S. Navy veteran, served as the grand marshal in the parade. “It was an honor to participate in the festivities, and I was honored to recognize fellow veterans,” Palochak said.

The day’s events were full of short speeches and recognitions by area veterans and lay people. Dave Cuellar of Veterans Helping Veterans led a pledge of allegiance at the event. Joe Zecca, also a U.S. Navy veteran, provided introductory and closing remarks.

Mayor Jackie McKinney, McKinley County Board of Commissioner Bill Lee, City Councilor and veteran Fran Palochak, and State Sen. George Munoz, D-Gallup, spoke at the event.

“I have been attending this function even before I was elected mayor,” McKinney said afterward. “It’s a great city tradition and a great way to honor the people who served this country.”

Monday’s festivities featured a 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps. And, there was a flag

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retirement ceremony and a flag presented to the family of Van Etsitty.

Jimmy Sanchez, who lives on Gallup's north side, said his late grandfather served in the Vietnam War. He said he and his grandfather were close and that's the primary reason why he comes downtown for the annual affair.

"I don't think people respect veterans enough," Sanchez, 59, said. "They take our veterans for granted. I think our veterans should be respected a lot more than what they are."

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