



‘It’s time to get patriotic’

“I pledge allegiance to the flag...”

Those were the words of David Cuellar as he led the guests at Courthouse Square in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance Nov. 11 at Gallup Courthouse Square.

The Gallup McKinley Veterans Committee concluded a morning of remembrance of both past and present veterans with a ceremony at Courthouse Square.

Cuellar, founder of GMVC and Veterans Helping Veterans, voiced his appreciation for all the guests in attendance.

“It’s time to get patriotic,” Cuellar said in his introduction.

The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by the Rehoboth Christian School Choir singing the National Anthem.

Then, Cuellar introduced Mayor Jackie McKinney as grand marshal explaining that he was chosen because of his involvement with and support of veterans in Gallup. He talked about McKinney's background growing up in a military household, which gave him a strong sense of respect for troops and veterans.

"[McKinney] has done more for us veterans and this town than a lot of people," Cuellar said. "We are who we are with Veterans Helping Veterans because of his support and guidance."

McKinney spoke about the personal significance of the holiday and its meaning for the City of Gallup. He began his speech by welcoming the veterans in the crowd back home.

"I stand humbled by our veterans and all of you today in honor of the men and women who've served our country," McKinney said. "This passion is deeply rooted from my wife and I into this city council, and I'm sure it's in every one of you, also."

McKinney's father was in the army, and his uncle was declared missing in action and then killed in action in World War II.

While McKinney was not able to enlist in the military due to health issues, he eventually returned to Gallup and graduated from Gallup High School and then Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Ariz. He has served as mayor of Gallup since March 2011.

"It is basic human instinct to give of ourselves, which in turn grants us peace and happiness," McKinney said. "Our families' futures are dependent on honoring our past and never forgetting the many sacrifices of those whose appointed time came too early."

It is because of the efforts and sacrifices of veterans that we are able to gather free and unafraid of evils in the world, McKinney continued. This is why we must continue to support veterans, he said.

McKinney talked about why it is important to come together, not in fear, but in remembrance.

“Our coming together today is tradition, keeping together is progress for our nation, and working together is teaching our history to our children,” he said. “The values and Christian beliefs our forefathers inserted into our DNA will keep us humble, respecting our history, and always reminding us of our duty to remember the wars, tragedies, and injustices suffered by so many. We must never forget.”

The ceremony ended with a commemoration of the life of Joe F. Gonzales, a Korean War veteran who was killed in action Oct. 28, 1952.

Gonzales was a Private First Class in the 224th Infantry Regiment of the 40th Infantry Division in the U.S. Army. He was born in Gallup on May 15, 1930, graduated from Cathedral High School, and was drafted into the army in February 1951.

After Gonzales’ family accepted a plaque in his honor, Veterans Helping Veterans provided a 21-gun-salute and played *Taps* for the fallen soldier. The Rehoboth Christian School Choir closed the ceremony with a rendition of *Amazing Grace*.

By Cody Begaye
Sun Correspondent