

Memorial fit for a warrior

Written by Naomi Mercedes Chan Sun Correspondent
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Houston James Largo laid to rest

REHOBOTH, N.M. – Nearly a thousand people packed the auditorium at Rehoboth Sports Center in Gallup March 16 to witness the memorial service in honor of Officer Houston Largo of

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the Navajo Nation Police Department, who succumbed to injuries after being shot while on duty March 11.

Family members spoke fondly of Largo, saying he wanted to be a police officer at a young age, even going on ride alongs with police.

He worked for the Gallup Police Department and McKinley County Sheriff's Office before heading to the NPD to become an officer, to serve his own people.

Three of the officers who had worked closely with Largo were called up to speak.

Sgt. Custer Bryan who trained him at the NPD said, "Houston was always very intelligent, very honest, and courageous. He was always smiling.

He was a very outstanding officer. He just had that leadership quality in him. He always stood by my side. I was always close to him. My brother, my best friend, watch over me as you rest in peace."

Officer Joe Luke spoke next.

"Strength, brotherhood, family, friends. He would have made a great sergeant. He was a leader." Luke, as well as the entire auditorium was very emotional and he his voice quivered as he closed the speech.

Officer Christopher Sloan came to the podium after him, saying, "Not only was he a great officer, he was a great friend. As a police officer we both knew the responsibilities of the job. He would call me in the middle of the night just to tell me something funny. When he called or texted me his personal ringtone was 'Houston, we have a problem.'"

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The auditorium crowd chuckled.

"I long to hear that ringtone again," he said, choking up a little. "He was like a little brother. I was honored to have witnessed greatness. I will always be honored to have served with him. We will take over from here. Rest in peace, brother."

President of the Navajo Nation Russell Begaye took some time to honor Largo.

"Thank you for allowing him to serve," he said. "He always wanted one of those code talker dolls. This morning at 6 o'clock we found the Navajo code talker doll for the family donated by a member of the community."

Begaye then presented the doll to the family.

"It is a devastating thing to go through this because, every officer is precious to us. Underneath the uniform, behind that badge, there is a person, loved by a family, with a big heart, and they deserve to be respected," Begaye said.

The audience applauded. The president continued, "Next time you're pulled over, or see an officer, say, 'thank you'. We want to make that a habit on the Navajo Nation."

The President gestured towards the floor of the auditorium at a woman in navy.

"Governor Martinez thank you for being here and accompanying the family of the fallen officer," he said.

The auditorium roared with applause as Martinez stood up and joined Begaye on stage.

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“Serving his neighbors was a way of life for this young man,” she said. “He worked hard to make his dream a reality, pushing himself through school. My heart breaks for you. Having had family members in the service, I know that you never know when they walk out that door if they will come back.”

Martinez continued, with emotion in her voice, “I can’t imagine how you feel. They laid their life on the line for a complete stranger. I hope you find healing and comfort in his legacy of decorated service.”

The governor ended her talk with a reading of “The Policeman’s Prayer” by an unknown author.

Chief Phillip Francisco of the Navajo Nation Police Department said he’s had a trying week, dealing with the death of the young officer.

“Being a police officer on the Navajo Nation is pretty unique because we are all Navajo, protecting Navajo, protecting family,” he said. “This is the second time during my watch this has happened. I have not yet been able to take the steps I want to take to prevent this from happening, and I regret that. To my officers at Crownpoint, I know this is difficult. I know you are hurting. I am here for you. Lean on your brothers and sisters and lean on me. I am here for you.”

Over 100 hundred officers from many different departments were present from the four corners region to pay their respects. Largo, 27, was laid to rest at the Sunset Memorial Park in Gallup.

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