

Gallup remembers Sept. 11, 2001

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 16 September 2016 08:11



Indian Capital comes together for remembrance, prayer

Several dozen area people gathered at the McKinley County Courthouse the morning of Sept. 11 to honor those who lost their lives 15 years ago during the terrorist events of Sept. 11, 2001. The free event was put on by the city of Gallup and attended by folks from around greater McKinley County.

Mayor Jackie McKinney delivered a short address and said police officers and first responders work daily under sometimes trying conditions to help ensure the safety of people under their watch. He said the sacrifices made by first responders that day in 2001 must never be forgotten.

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"These are remarkable people," McKinney said.

The mayor and Gallup Police Department Chief Phillip Hart were keynote speakers at the remembrance ceremony.

"There are people in the world who don't like what America stands for," McKinney said.

Hart, a career law enforcement officer, said he was living and working in Spokane, Wash., when he heard the news of the terrorist attacks. He said the men and women who died trying to save people at the World Trade Center in New York City were heroes who should be remembered forever.

"This is the first time that I've attended an event like this," Hart said. "I remember very vividly the events that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001."

Hart said he was especially concerned 15 years ago because his father was an airline pilot for United Airlines. United Flight 93 crashed in Shanksville, Pa., after taking off from Newark International Airport in New Jersey, bound for San Francisco. Hart's father was not flying that plane, but the matter hit close to home, Hart said.

"I tried to stay abreast of the news that day," the police chief said.

Officers, firefighters, deputies, and civilians bowed their heads in silence during intervals of the ceremony as members of the Gallup Fire Department and Police Honor Guards went through the posting of colors and a presentation of wreaths.

Gallup Fire Battalion Chief Michael Hoffman recited the 9/11 events, and a national anthem was sung by Renee Jaramillo. Gallup Councilwoman Fran Palochak, a U.S. Navy veteran, gave an invocation. Gallup Deputy Fire Chief Jesus Morales provided opening and closing remarks, and GPD Officer Kelly Akeson played "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes.

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Each appreciated the ceremony.

“Yes, I remember that day,” Palochak recalled. “I think it’s something that none of us will soon forget.”

Gallup Councilman Allan Landavazo said 9/11 is significant for him, as he has a son-in-law and other family members who currently serve and have served in the military.

“I think it’s a very important date for all of us to remember,” Landavazo said. “And I think ceremonies like this are important in terms of reflecting on what happend.”

Feliz Martinez, a Vietnam veteran, said people should never take 9/11 for granted.

“I don’t like it when I see people bad-mouthing and desecrating the flag,” he said.

The Sept. 11, 2001 attacks were a series of four coordinated terrorist air attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda. Aside from the killings, the attacks caused more than \$10 billion in property and infrastructure damage.

Of the 2,977 people killed, 343 were firefighters, 60 were police officers, and four were medics, according to reports. The death toll is still climbing due to health complications among first responders and victims at Ground Zero.

Morales and McKinney noted that this was the first time the 45-minute remembrance was conducted at the downtown McKinley County Courthouse Plaza and not the city’s main fire station on Nizhoni Boulevard. The location was moved at the request of Palochak, who suggested the Courthouse was a more appropriate and accommodating setting.

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The Sept. 11 event followed another at the El Morro Theatre on Sept. 10 about veterans in film. The documentaries *Homecoming* and *Searching for Home* were shown and band Consider the Source performed.

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