

31 Day Salute Pays Tribute to Military Families

by MELISSA RIVERA

While the rest of the country sets aside one day in May, Memorial Day, to honor military heroes, Fayetteville/Cumberland County dedicates the entire month to doing so with the annual series of events *31 Day Salute*, now in its third year. Our community has joined forces to salute our brave soldiers, veterans and their families, and to show our appreciation for their service through various patriotic performances, ceremonies, exhibits, films and fairs.

As America's First Military Sanctuary, we take our patriotism seriously. Home to Fort Bragg, we have a special connection with those in uniform who have selflessly put their lives on the line abroad to keep us safe at home. Fayetteville/Cumberland County looks forward to May 1 when we begin celebrating our heroes.

May is a special time when our community bands together to show our patriotic spirit and pay tribute to those who have served or currently serve in the Armed Forces. Many local organizations have expressed a desire to demonstrate their support, and the *31 Day Salute* event series gives them a chance to do so. More than 15 community groups are participating this year, from military organizations to cultural and historical associations, each committed to rolling out the red carpet for the military.

31 Day Salute allows us to invite the world to do what we do every day — show our appreciation and respect for those who defend the freedoms we often take for granted.

We encourage and welcome patriots from all over the country to visit Fayetteville/Cumberland County in May to say thank you to those in uniform while enjoying our entertaining events. *31 Day Salute* gives us a chance to show our gratitude and express what soldiers, veterans and their families mean to our proud military community.

This year, *31 Day Salute* features exciting new events and many returning favorites.

The Fayetteville Area Transportation and Local History Museum will allow history buffs to re-live the American Civil War through the *Cumberland County Goes to War* exhibit, which observes the Sesquicentennial of the war, remembers the community's involvement in the war, and includes artifacts, pictures and educational panels.

The Airborne & Special Operations Museum Foundation (ASOM) will host *Movie-in-The Camp*, where attendees will be transported back to the Korean War-era through the film *Jumping Jacks* (1952) starring Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. Prior to the movie, guests can enjoy a performance by The Andrews Sisters Tribute Show featuring choreography, singing, tap dancing, comedy and acting. Also coinciding with *Movie-in-The Camp* will be a care-package drive hosted by the Army's Army, a military support group made up of more than 1,200 citizen and business volunteers. Museum attendees will be able to visit the Army's Army booth and fill care packages with pre-donated items, which will be sent to the troops overseas with the help of Fort Bragg's Family Readiness Group.

The annual *Glory Days* event will take place in historical downtown Fayetteville on Memorial Day weekend. From May 14 through June 11, the breathtaking *Field of Honor* featuring hundreds of flags honoring soldiers and veterans will cover the field near the ASOM and the new impressive North Carolina Veterans Park with red, white and blue.

Those looking to enjoy a true military experience can attend the 82nd Airborne Division's All American week, which returns after a hiatus last year due to the high number of deployments. The week will include a four-mile run, various sporting and social events, wreath laying ceremonies at several monuments and a division review on Pike Field with troopers in formation — something not to be missed. During this time, the 82nd Living History Detachment will be at the 82nd Airborne Division Museum as well.

A living history program, *Military Through the Ages: A March Through History*, will be presented at the Museum of the Cape Fear Historical



Complex. The event will highlight various time periods throughout United States military history with encampments and educational programs that the entire family can enjoy.

Fayetteville author Dr. Michael C. Hodges will visit the Cumberland County Public Library and Information Center to speak about his book *A Doctor Looks at War*. The book chronicles his experience in an Army combat support hospital during the initial year of Operation Iraqi Freedom, giving readers a unique look into the war.

Throughout the entire month, Cape Fear Botanical Garden visitors can participate in a Red, White and Blueberry scavenger hunt. The game will take adventurers on a hunt to identify those plant species that are associated with red, white or blueberries. The Cape Fear Botanical Garden will also offer a discounted admission to members of the military.

Fascinate-U Children's Museum is offering half-price admission to all military families and free admission to families of deployed soldiers all month. In addition, children can create their own Blue Star flag, which symbolizes the sacrifices of families in war and is placed in the window of a home.

Clark Park Nature Center will offer half price admission to retired and active military and their spouses for the Cape Fear River Boat Tour — A Military Historic Passage. The boat takes riders down the river and highlights its military history.

In March, to build excitement across the United States for *31 Day Salute*, the community kicked off the search for America's Most Patriotic Person with PatrioKe or Patriotic Karaoke.

Enthusiastic patriots have been flocking to local spots such as Cross Creek Mall and Fayetteville State University to compete for the title, all performing the beloved American song *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. One patriot was crowned as America's Most Patriotic Person at the Fayetteville Duck Derby. The performances can be seen on a PatrioKe YouTube channel.

For a full listing of events, details and participating organizations taking place during *31 Day Salute* please visit www.31daysalute.com. With diverse events that will appeal to all ages and interests, there is something for everyone. Fayetteville/Cumberland County invites both locals and out-of-town travelers to come out and join us as we salute soldiers, veterans and their families throughout the month of May.

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