

America's Most Military-Friendly City Shines With Patriotic Memorial Day Celebration

by STEPHANIE CRIDER

Not too many places can beat Fayetteville when it comes to celebrating patriotism. Unfortunately, we are right up there when it comes to sacrifice in the name of duty, honor and country, too. Our community is filled with the proud, selfless soldiers who serve and their families who serve just as proudly and selflessly. The widows, orphans and families of those who have given their final measure stand firmly in our midst — many continuing to give as they volunteer, advocate, heal and embrace the military lifestyle that permeates the community.

As Memorial Day draws near, the community is preparing their grand finale of 31 Days of Glory which has honored those who have died while in military service. Memorial Day weekend is packed with activities that will remind us of the price that has been paid for our freedoms, but also with events that are aimed at helping us enjoy those freedoms and a showing appreciation to the heroes and families that walk among us, and mean so much to this community everyday.

The Field of Glory will fly not just on Memorial Day, but through the end of June at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum. Each of the hundreds of flags has been dedicated to a soldier.

On May 28, the Pilot Club of Fayetteville is honoring military heroes past and present with the lighting of luminaries at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum from 8-10 p.m. Each luminary will be lit in honor of a service member. A list of the honorees will be available on the evening of the event. To honor your soldier in this ceremony, contact the Pilot Club at 850-7433.

Sunday evening, May 30, the Downtown Alliance is hosting a movie and a picnic in the park — Festival Park. "Last year it was bigger and better than the year before," said Chris Villa the marketing chairperson. "We expect it to be that way again this year." With a crowd of about 200 or so last year, the park should be full of

folks coming to watch the award winning feature — *The Blind Side* starring Sandra Bullock.

The park opens at about 6:30, but the movie won't be shown until it gets dark. Villa encourages folks to bring a picnic and a ball or frisbee to toss around. There will be food vendors there too if you'd rather buy your dinner or snacks for the movie. She promises that the atmosphere is fun and family friendly, so go ahead and bring the kids.

"We all hang out and chit chat and wander around and play and whatever," said Villa. "They can bring frisbees, balls or whatever and just hang out in the park. It is a fun time and I think we should be in for really good weather this year."

Don't stay out too late though, Monday is packed with things to do and the fun starts early! The pancake breakfast is back and it starts at 7 a.m. It costs \$5 a plate and will last until 11 a.m.

If you time it right, you can come downtown for breakfast and head right on over to the Memorial Day festivities. "It is a full day and we are really excited about it," said Villa. "I was able to secure general Al Aycock. He is going to be out there to do our kick off."

At 8 a.m. the Patriot's Criterium, hosted by the Cross Creek Cycling Club, will take place on Hay Street.

"Patriot's Crit is like NASCAR on bicycles," said Villa. "It is bike races. It is a lot of fun.



Fields Of Glory shown at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum.

It goes really quickly, too."

Check out www.CrossCreekCyclingClub.org if you are interested in participating.

A new event this year called "A Walk in Their Boots" takes place at 9 a.m. "You can come down and walk in your dad's boots, your mom's boots, your own boots, your boyfriend's, your husband's — whatever — and we are walking from the Festival Park Promenade at 9:15 a.m. over to the 10 o'clock ceremony at Veterans Park."

The ceremony will pay tribute to veterans past and present. There will be a guest speaker along with other events like the posting of the colors, a toast to the flag, wreath presentations and patriotic music.

Back at Festival Park, the activities range from static displays of military equipment from different times in history complete with military re-enactors to bouncy houses and more.

An old favorite, the Classic Car Cruise, will showcase cars (pre 1989) from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Ray Avenue and Maiden Lane. It's free, too.

The stage will be rockin' through out the day with a variety of musical talent. In One Accord, Fayetteville Symphony Brass Quintet, Kenny Huffman, The Robbie Reid Band and The Stephenson Brothers and Linda are scheduled to perform.

To find out more visit www.glorydaysnc.com or 31daysofglory.com.

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