

Annual Butterfly Release Honors Gold Star Mothers and Families

September 27, 2018 Alexandra Snyder SoundOff Cover Story 0

Hundreds of butterflies filled the sky above Burba Lake Sept. 22, as residents and Fort Meade leadership gathered in recognition of Gold Star Mothers and Families Day, and to pay tribute to Service Members who made the ultimate sacrifice.

This year marked the fourth iteration of the release, sponsored by the Fort George G. Meade Survivor Outreach Services program. Voncile Farmer, Fort Meade Volunteer Program manager, organized the ceremony that was attended by approximately 150 members of the Fort Meade community.

“It’s very important to keep that memory [of a lost loved one] alive,” said Farmer. “Even if someone dies, you have them in your heart and memory.”

Garrison Commander Col. Erich Spragg attended the event and spoke about what the day means and why it’s recognized each year.

“On the last Sunday in September, America celebrates this important day in our culture,” said Spragg. “A day that was created to recognize and honor those that have lost their son or daughter while serving our country in the United States Armed Forces.”

Janice Chance, president and chaplain of the Maryland Chapter of American Gold Star Mothers was the ceremony’s guest speaker.

Chance lost her son Marine Capt. Jesse Melton III on Sept. 9, 2008, when his Humvee hit a makeshift bomb in the Parwan province in Afghanistan.

Melton took the place of another Marine in a convoy on the day he lost his life, said Chance. The Marine’s wife was expecting a baby and he didn’t want to miss the call announcing the birth of his child.

“Two days later, that Marine’s baby was born. So that young lady has her daddy and her mommy,” said Chance. “I believe Jesse’s earthly mission was complete because of that.”

The American Gold Star Mothers organization was founded before the end of World War II for mothers whose children have died during military service. The group regularly volunteers with veterans and military service groups. More than 200 Gold Star Mothers and Families have been identified in the Fort Meade area.

“We’re determined to carry on the legacy of our children’s service,” said Chance. “The pain is there and it’s real, but we have chosen to move forward from that pain. It’s therapeutic when you’re out serving. You cannot stay depressed when you’re out serving.”



Gold Star Mothers Maryland Chapter President Janice Chance of Owings Mills consoles Irma Robinson of Severn as she speaks about her late husband Army Sergeant 1st Class Tommy Robinson Jr. at Saturday's Butterfly Release.



Eshana Singh, 3, of Severn, carefully lets her butterfly out of the box at Saturday's Butterfly Release for Gold Star Mothers and Families.



Voncil Farmer leads the butterfly release with Garrison Command Sgt. Major Brian Cullen, center, and Garrison Commander Col. Erich Spragg during Saturday's Gold Star Survivors event at Burba Lake



Garrison leaders Command Sgt. Major Brian Cullen and Col. Erich Spragg open envelopes to release butterflies during Saturday's butterfly release.