Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Twenty-two years after 9/11, Fort Drum community members still gather to reflect, remember

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- It has been 22 years since the terrorist attacks on 9/11, and the words, “Never Forget” still resonate among Fort Drum community members.

Installation fire and police personnel joined representatives from local agencies today for the annual remembrance ceremony at the 9/11 Memorial in front of Clark Hall. Col. Matthew Myer, Fort Drum garrison commander, said it as important today as it was over two decades ago to remember how that day irrevocably changed America.

“Never forget,” he said. “These two words echo through our units, our community and the entire nation on a day that brings images, sounds, and stories to the forefront of our minds. Two words that we say in reverence of our first responders, our Soldiers and our citizens that perished on this day or after, in New York, Pennsylvania or the Pentagon. We never forget.”

Myer said that he recently visited the 9/11 Memorial in New York City with his family. As hard as it is to see the videos, images, and artifacts – and relive those memories, Myer said the 9/11 Memorial offers a message of resilience and hope in the “Survivor Tree.” In October 2001, a severely damaged tree was removed from the rubble at Ground Zero and nursed back to health. Every year since 2013, seedlings from the tree are removed at the 9/11 Memorial and delivered to communities that have endured tragedy.

“This tree reminds me of another day beside 9/11 that is equally important to remember, and that’s Sept. 12,” Myer said. “9/12 was our response – our coming together and our ability to mourn and move forward … our ability to be steadfast in the protection of freedom. The day after is worth remembering, year after year.”

Myer said the nation will continue to honor the victims and survivors of 9/11, as well as those who continue to answer the call to serve.

“I’m grateful to be a part of the North Country community that has a great history of service, including to our military Soldiers and families,” he said. “We must never forget that we are at best when we work together to help those in need, when we readily seek to build community, and actively help those around us.”

Earlier in the morning, more than 500 runners participated in the annual 9/11 Memorial 5K outside Magrath Sports Complex. Some Soldiers ran with their units, while others ran with family or friends. Many of them ran holding American flags, which were distributed by Fort Drum Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation staff before the start.

Members of the local chapter of Team RWB, a veteran service organization, showed their support in the morning’s run. Bill Van Orman, who serves as Fort Drum Suicide Prevention Program manager, has been involved with Team RWB for several years.

Van Orman was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, when the events of 9/11 transpired.

“I remember sitting around that night with friends at a restaurant after we finally got released for the day,” he said. “We just sat around processing our thoughts, and we met just for that reason – to make sense of everything.”

In the years that followed, Van Orman deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Our lives changed so massively,” he said. “Before 9/11, the deployments were mostly Bosnia and Kosovo, and maybe somebody you knew had deployed. After 9/11, it seemed everybody you knew was deploying. The whole Army changed, and the op tempo of our lives, in general, changed.”

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Photo Captions:

9/11\_1 & 3- Fire and emergency services personnel from Fort Drum and the local community participate in the annual 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony at the 9/11 Memorial outside Clark Hall on post. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

9/11\_2 - Col. Matthew Myer, Fort Drum garrison commander, addresses the audience during the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony at the 9/11 Memorial outside Clark Hall. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

9/11\_4 - More than 500 runners participate in the annual 9/11 Memorial 5K hosted by the Fort Drum Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation staff on Sept. 11. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

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