

JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER

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MEMORIAL DAY | COLES COUNTY



BOB STROUD, JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER

'It's all about respect'

Communities gather on Memorial Day to honor the fallen

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MATTOON — After the Mattoon VFW completed its Memorial Day ceremony Monday at Dodge Grove Cemetery, 12-year-old Gabby Cline greeted them as they filed away from the veterans' monument there.

"Thank you for your service to our country," Gabby said as she saluted them.

Her father, Dave Cline of Mattoon, said moments later that he and his daughter turn out every year to watch a Memorial Day ceremony and personally express their gratitude to the veterans.

"There is a price that has to be paid for the freedom we have gotten and we can't let that go. It's all about respect," Cline said. Gabby added that, "It would be wrong to not show up for people who died for our country."

The event at Dodge Grove was part of a series of 13 ceremonies that the VFW and the Mattoon American Legion held Monday at local cemeteries and monuments. From Dodge Grove, the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary convoy of vehicles headed across North 19th Street to the Calvary Cemetery monument.

"For ages, they've preserved the nation's freedom and ensured national security in the face of continuous threats," said Mattoon VFW Commander Wayne Cox of veterans at Calvary Cemetery. "It is these men and women whom America can never forget and never fail to honor."

"It's a chance for everybody



ATHENA PAJER, JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER

Rachel the Comfort Dog, in her Kare 9 vest, attends the Charleston Memorial Day ceremony with veteran Chuck Lowell.

that lives here to show their patriotism and conservative values," said David Watson, the VFW commander of Charleston's post.

In Charleston, the local VFW and American Legion, started the morning at 10 a.m. in Roselawn Cemetery, where they held a ceremony. Next, they moved on to Ashmore to hold a similar service.

Among the attendees of the

ceremony in Roselawn was Rachel the Comfort Dog from Immanuel Lutheran Church.

"She's a working dog, and she provides comfort to people in need of comfort," said Chuck Lowell with Immanuel Lutheran Church, who was handling Rachel.

"There's eight handlers in the church and I'm the only one who's a veteran of the eight," said Lowell. "So, because I'm a

veteran, Rachel's able to wear a veteran's vest. It's a 'Kare 9' vest. With me being a veteran, I'm also able to take her to veteran's hospitals and those kinds of things and provide comfort for them. That's why we're here, today."

Rachel, who was trained since she was 18 weeks old to be a comfort dog, goes to many different places where people might be in

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need, including disaster sites. She played a role in comforting those impacted by the tornado in Taylorville three years ago.

Rachel's services are available free-of-charge to those who call 217-345-3008.

After both ceremonies, the VFW held lunch at its building in Charleston.

"Last year (the ceremony) was basically eliminated, but this year it's been more special — all years are special, but this one is just a lot more because we didn't do it last year," Detail Commander of Charleston VFW Mike Zimmerle said. "It's an honor to give for the veterans who passed away."

Along with the Charleston VFW marched Boy Scout troop 141 and Cub Pack 41, who marched with flags and later fired a saluting gun at noon. Boy scouts and Cub scouts fired one blank every minute for twenty minutes.

According to Boy Scout Committee Chairman Keith Kohanzo, this has been a tradition of troop 141 for nearly ten years. It is a military custom to fire 21 rounds at noon before raising the flag back up to full-staff.

"We also send maybe five or seven scouts and we send them around with cards to veterans' graves to honor when we fire our rounds," said Kohanzo.

Troop 141, which is 21 years old, has been accompanying the VFW and American Legion on Memorial Day services for several years.

The VFWs and American Le-



ATHENA PAJER, JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER

Members of Charleston Auxiliary stand in a line, preparing for the ceremony at Ashmore cemetery



ROB STROUD, JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER

The Mattoon Veterans of Foreign Wars post's firing detail takes part in a Memorial Day ceremony Monday morning at Calvary Cemetery in Mattoon.

gions of Coles County posts continue to hold honor guards and celebrations on national

holidays to honor the troops that have served the United States military.