

DDSP remembers America's POW/MIA

By Sherre Mitten-Bell, DDSP Public Affairs

Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa., paid tribute to America's prisoners of war and missing in action when it hosted a POW/MIA Recognition Day observance Sept. 21.

"My heart goes out to those who still wait for answers," said Ruth Stonesifer, the keynote speaker for the celebration and president of the Pennsylvania Department of Gold Star Mothers "I know that the six days waiting for my son's body to land on U.S. soil seemed like an eternity. I cannot imagine a lifetime of not knowing."

Stonesifer's son, Spec. Kristofer Stonesifer, an Army Ranger, died in a Black Hawk helicopter crash the first night of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2001. Gold Star Mothers became one of Stonesifer's lifelines after her son's death.



Keynote speaker Ruth Stonesifer shares the story of her son Army Ranger Krisofer Stonesifer who was one of the first military personnel killed in action in Afghanistan following the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

"I realized I was one in a long line of mothers from the American Revolution to the present—mothers who have watched their sons and daughters go into harm's way to protect our freedom," said Stonesifer who will become the national president of Gold Star Mothers in 2009. "I knew I was in excellent company, the mothers of the American Soldier."

The American Gold Star Mothers was established to recognize the mother of a U.S. pilot who was missing in action during World War I. The organization supports many veteran-related services and projects. A local "Hometown Heroes" project, coordinated by Stonesifer, was exhibited in Harrisburg, Pa.. Large street banners displayed the names and faces of 137 service members from Pennsylvania, indicating when and where they were killed in action.

In addition to employees and tenants of the New Cumberland, Pa., installation, several family members of

military personnel who have been listed as missing in action attended the ceremony. Among them was Nancy Kiefel, the wife of a local Air Force lieutenant colonel who has been missing in action since 1966. During the ceremony, Kiefel was presented with a white rose by Army 1st Sgt. Wade S. Greene. Kiefel's tears reflected the emotions of many in the crowd.

Navy Cmdr. Emery Kutney, executive officer, DDSP, presided over the ceremony. During the ceremony, Kutney and Colleen Freedman, the president of the local American Legion Auxiliary, laid a wreath near the installation's POW/MIA memorial stone. The ceremony ended with "Taps" played by a local bagpiper.



Navy Cmdr. Emery Kutney, executive officer, Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa., and Colleen Freedman, president of the local American Legion Auxiliary, place a wreath next to the installation's POW/MIA Memorial Stone.



The POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony begins with the Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa., Army Riggers presenting the colors while employee Brenda Cammack sings the National Anthem.



A long-stemmed white rose is presented to Nancy Kiefel by Army 1st Sgt. Wade Greene in memory of her husband. Kiefel's husband, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, has been listed as missing since 1966.