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Memorial Day 'glorious' in Fayetteville's Festival Park

Fayetteville, N.C. — Fayetteville residents and officials did a little celebrating on Memorial Day, hoping to make a merry welcome for the tens of thousands of new residents that base realignment is expected to bring.

The concerns of those new residents was a theme at the city's Glory Days, an eight-year-old Memorial Day tradition at Festival Park.

"We'll do everything we can to make you welcome, appreciated and safe in Fayetteville and throughout Cumberland County," Mayor Tony Chavonne said.

Up to 25,000 service members and their families are to move to the region by 2011 as a result of the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure. Their presence is expected to spur housing and business booms, as Fort Bragg becomes the country's largest Army base.

Dozens of civilian volunteers also got sworn at Glory Days in a program called the Army's Army. They pledged to promote Cumberland County as the Cape Fear community that best caters to military residents.

Veteran Lisa Ellis said she joined the program, because she wants others to feel as home in Fayetteville as she does.

"Fayetteville, I have made my home, (because of) the military," Ellis said. "Love the military. Love the troops."

That love of the troops carried through the rest of the Glory Day events, from carriage rides to a car show to live music.

Full-sized American flags – 1,500 of them – covered a field at Festival Park. Each billowing banner had a yellow ribbon attached with the name of a soldier written on it.

Mary Blackhorse said she honored her ex-husband, a service member, as she walked among the rows of American flags.

"He's withstood so much. He was in Afghanistan," Blackhorse said. "I just wanted to come here for him."

Other festival-goers expressed that same sentiment.

"We have so many friends that are deployed, and a couple that have lost their lives," resident Christi Riggs said. "And we just honor them and appreciate them for all they do."

* Reporter: Bryan Mims

* Photographer: Michael Joyner

* Web Editor: Anne Johnson

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