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Bells Across America Honors Fallen Sailors

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Melinda Larson, NSAM Public Affairs and MC2 Brian Abel | September 21, 2017



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A bell tolled for each of the 182 Sailors who died while on active duty over the past year during the second annual “Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members” ceremony Thursday, Sept. 21. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Monterey and the Naval Postgraduate School joined Navy installations throughout the continental United States during the simultaneous memorial for the fallen.

“The names represent just a few of the many who have given their lives for our great nation. The names we read include our brothers and sisters who left us too soon,” said Navy Capt. Rich Wiley, NSA Monterey Commanding Officer, during his opening remarks. “Among the names are those of our shipmates who died at sea on USS John S. McCain and USS Fitzgerald.”

Following the commanding officer’s opening remarks, a mix of 15 civilian and active-duty military staff members took turns reading the names of the 182 Sailors who died from Sept. 1, 2016 to Sept. 1, 2017. After each name was read, Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class John Koback rang a bell. A final succession of four bells was rung for all fallen service men and women who have served in the armed forces of the United States.

“The Navy Gold Star program designed the ceremony to recognize and deliver on the Navy’s commitment to surviving families of fallen service members. The event coincided with Gold Star Mother’s and Family Day, which is observed the last Sunday in September,” said the event’s organizer, Amanda Keesee, educational services facilitator at the NSA Monterey Fleet and Family Support Center.

Two Gold Star Families attended the event in honor of their loved ones, the parents of Chief Special Boat Operator Zacharias E. Buob from San Jose; and the sister and niece of Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Albert J Sarkis III who traveled from Sacramento.

The Navy Gold Star program was established on Oct. 1, 2014, to help provide continuing support for surviving family members of fallen service members. The program honors Gold Star Families throughout the year by hosting events that pay tribute to their lost loved ones, providing resources and opportunities to connect with one another and to their Navy family.

For more information on the Navy Gold Star Program, please visit <http://www.facebook.com/navygoldstar> or www.navygoldstar.com.