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Patriots remembered at school, center ceremony

BY MATT MANNING
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FREMONT -- Flags waved in the wind during a sunny Sept. 11 remembrance ceremony Friday that took place on a strip of grass between Otis Elementary and the Bethesda Care Center on Brush Street.

A crowd of students, parents, Bethesda staff and residents, law enforcement and military officials gathered for the event.

The keynote speaker was Dennis VanWey from the Fremont Police Department, who also spent time serving in Iraq.

His main message was anyone can be a patriot.

"Patriots are not just the men and women in uniform," VanWey said. "We can all be patriots by helping each other whenever we can."

He remembered the feeling the morning of the attacks eight years ago.

"September 11, 2001, was a day very much like today," he remembered. "People were going to work, kids were going to school. It was a wonderful day."

He said then a number of "bad people" damaged the Pentagon and destroyed the World Trade Towers.

"Police and firemen did what they always do. ... protect people," he said. "Every day they work to keep us safe. Americans rush to help."

After the keynote address, a group of Otis Elementary students presented cards and thanks to the uniformed law enforcement and military officials.

One of the those students was first grader Cody Culbert.

"I'm definitely proud of him," mother Carrie Bruggeman said as she stood and watched the ceremony behind the students. "He felt honored."

Cody made the card he presented to the uniformed man. He won the drawing contest out of all the other first graders at Otis.

Commissioner John Rettig was also in attendance.

"These people put there lives in harm's way to save the lives of people," Rettig said. "It takes guts. ... You don't really appreciate 9/11 until you realize what happened."



Students from Otis Elementary school thank law enforcement and military officials during Friday's remembrance ceremony. (Matt Manning | News-Messenger)