

Lehr to have patriotic farewell with 2,000 flags; volunteers needed

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Medora Fire Chief Kenny Lehr will have a patriotic farewell with thousands of U.S. flags lining the streets for his funeral route and an array of local and nationwide firefighters in attendance on Saturday in Medora.

Lehr died last week in an unfortunate accident on a call. The funeral will begin at 10 a. m. at Southwestern High School. He will be buried in Mable Lawn Cemetery, about 6.5 miles northwest of the Southwestern High School.

In preparation for the funeral, volunteers are needed to set the approximately 2,000 flags along the funeral route. Anyone wishing to volunteer should arrive at Tri-County Auction & Banquet Center, at 518 St. Main St., Medora, at 3 p.m. on Friday afternoon.

Larry Eckhardt, otherwise known as Larry The Flag Man, is the person coordinating the flag distribution.

“We were contacted Sunday by Larry The Flag Man, and he is coming down to line both sides of the route every 35 feet the whole way,” Medora Police Chief Tommy Ruyle said. “He said it will take an hour and a half to two hours to get it done if we have enough volunteers. There is no requirement to help, even youngsters can help with adults present.”

One of the reasons the time was set at 3 p.m. on Friday was both the elementary and high school students will be dismissed at that time, Ruyle said.

The Medora Police Chief described Lehr as someone who devoted much of his life to serving the community.

“He was fire chief there and on the fire department in Medora for 22 years,” Ruyle said. “He was associated with the ambulance service for 18 years and started out as a driver. He lived in fidelity with his wife. He had just retired at the end of last year from Olin, so he hadn’t been retired for very long.”

Ruyle said Lehr was simply a take-charge type of person and extremely personable.

“He was good to work with,” Ruyle said. “He was the kind of person who would say something to someone out of line, but five minutes later everything was fine and he would work through it. He was always in good spirits. I worked with him the entire time he was with the fire department. I have been there 26 years.”

The Lehr funeral will be held at the Southwestern High School gymnasium because of the anticipated amount of people expected to attend.

“It will be a full honor funeral,” Ruyle said. “The Illinois Fire Chiefs Association runs these and have a funeral detail. We had three area chiefs here Friday afternoon to start the planning process. They are expecting hundreds of firefighters from all over the country to attend. We won’t know that day how many fire apparatuses will be present until departments start showing up.”

For more information, contact Ruyle at (618) 729-3818 or be available at the Tri-County Auction & Banquet Center at 518 S. Main St. at 3 p.m. Friday.

