

Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony set again at Alton's National Cemetery

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Each year, the annual Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony at Alton's National Cemetery grows under the direction of Richard Baird.

The touching ceremony will be held again starting at 6:30 p.m. this Monday, May 25, at the cemetery.

When a person walks into the cemetery, they see a breathtaking site of flags by every grave marker. There are 548 grave markers in the cemetery, Baird said.

“It humbles me beyond belief to have this ceremony when you put in the perspective that there are less than 150 national cemeteries in 39-plus states,” Baird said. “A Scout troop will put out the flag at each grave probably Saturday. There is no other national cemetery that puts on a sunset program on Memorial Day like we do.”

Alton Mayor Brant Walker will be the keynote speaker at the ceremony.

The program features music, discussion and presentations by middle school and high school students.

“It almost makes me speechless thinking about it, and each time in the midst of the program I am always overcome with emotion at what we are recognizing and the quality of words and voices during the ceremony,” Baird said.

Phyllis Banks will be the featured vocalist; and the Alton High School Junior ROTC will also participate. Kathy Croxton will play dulcimer before the ceremony begins.

Baird encourages residents to come out and join the ceremony.

“My hope is one day we will look out and see the hillside filled with people,” Baird said.