Raising the Flag In Memory Of 9-11

On Monday, September 11, 2006, a large crowd gathered near the entrance to Eisenhower Medical Center to pay tribute to those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. The occasion included the raising of a 30-foot by 50-foot American flag on the highest flagpole in the Coachella Valley, standing 101 feet tall. The raising of the tallest American flag in the Coachella Valley was the vision of G. Aubrey Serfling, Eisenhower Medical Center's Chief Executive Officer. "I drove by and admired the large flag and tall flagpole at one of the large car dealerships, and it struck me that the most appropriate place for the tallest flag to fly in the Coachella Valley was at Eisenhower Medical Center." The dedication included a large gathering of guests including Congresswoman Mary Bono, Assemblyman John Benoit, Rancho Mirage Mayor Richard Kite and very special guest, United States Army Captain Monica Whalen who had just returned from a tour of duty in Iraq.

Before introducing Congresswoman Bono, Foundation President Michael Landes read the inscription engraved on the brass plaque at the base of the new flagpole. "Through blurred eyes, we find the strength and the courage to soar beyond the moment. We look to the future knowing we can never forget the past. God bless America."

Bono praised the ongoing work at Eisenhower before reflecting on her memories of September 11. "I was preparing for work that morning in Washington and I felt the impact of the plane as it hit the Pentagon, as I live two blocks away. And while my building shook, it was as if the soul of our nation was shaken to its very core. It was at that moment that I knew our world had changed forever," said Bono.

"Today, we dedicate one of the most magnificent American flags in our region," Bono continued. "I want to thank the team at Eisenhower Medical Center for bringing us together today to remember. This flag reminds us of the liberty and opportunity our nation offers to all who yearn to be free."

Following a few words from Assemblyman Benoit and the flag dedication from Mayor Kite, Landes introduced Captain Monica Whalen, a 2003 graduate of the United States Military Academy, West Point, and past graduate of Cathedral City High School. "I have the privilege of serving our country in Iraq where I witness first-hand the continual support that our country gives to the soldiers in my company, as well as the many other service members in Iraq," Whalen shared. "This support not only encourages and sustains us, but it makes us remember why we fight…. I am honored and proud every time I see the flag of this great nation raised for everyone to see." Congresswoman Bono, Eisenhower President and Chief Executive Officer G. Aubrey Serfling, and Captain Whalen then walked to the flagpole, and raised the flag, for the very first time.

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