

Press Release

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AMELIA ACADEMY REMEMBERS 9/11

By Jean Tremaine

As the sun rose and people began leaving their homes on Monday, Amelia County remembered. Driving down North Five Forks Road, they saw the flags... 2,997 flags placed en masse in front of Amelia Academy. Placed by students to help everyone remember the events of 9/11/2001.

AA leads the community in a celebration of what it means to be an American at their 9/11 "Never Forget" Memorial Service every year. On September 11, 2001, our nation lost 2,997 people in terrorist attacks and nearly 6,000 were injured. We united as one to rescue, recover, mourn, rebuild and protect. And in 2017, we remember that still.

The ceremony wasn't long.

Jason Morris led students and visitors in prayer. Mr. Morris reminded attendees that the world has been challenged since Adam and Eve, but that through it all, Americans have found and created safety and strength. He told us that when we trust in God, we find a straight path.

The Nottoway High School Color Guard honored the flag and the national anthem was sung beautifully by Mrs. Angela Anderson. Then AA's Lower School led everyone in a musical rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance.

As the flags moved gently in the breeze, those gathered recalled all we lost in a moment of silence and the reading of the poem, "The Names" led by AA student, Gregory Harris and the song "Amazing Grace" sung by AA student, Caitlyn Gordon.

The celebration reminded everyone that one of our greatest gifts as a united people is our ability to recall past events—good and bad. As Americans we recall our history often—in celebrations, in protests, in gatherings large and small.

“The Names” helped us remember. We remembered our loss and we remembered that Americans are hardwired to mix and meld and find unity and strength.

Dr. John Eastby, Elliott Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs from Hampden-Sydney College was the special guest speaker. He spoke about how important 9/11 is as a day in the Life of the Nation.

He talked about members of our community who defended us after 9/11, those who first responded and those who attacked us. He emphasized that recalling these shared memories reminds us all of who we are as Americans.

Dr. Eastby reminded us that for many Americans like himself, September 11th in 2001 began as ‘just a normal day’. Most Americans were not in the middle of the turmoil that we all recall as 9/11. But all Americans feel the same horror, the same anger and the same loss. We all saw the plane fly into the South Tower and we all felt we were there. We *all* keep this memory alive.

A few days in America’s history remind us all of who we are as a nation—4th of July, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Labor Day, December 7th, VE Day , VJ Day, the day JFK was assassinated, the moon landing and most recently—9/11.

9/11 isn’t just a piece of American history, it is a day of shared memory. Every American remembers where they were during those attacks 16 years ago. No American life was ever quite the same again.

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...” These are the first American words many people see when they come to the US. Words that define much of what makes the US great.

Americans come from every background and together prize freedom above all. Americans learn to compromise and work together to become one mass that finds strength through their differences and creates shared memories. This is the American definition of ‘one nation’.

September 11, 2001 has become a shared memory for our nation—a nation created by those huddled masses who came here to become one people under God. A nation seeking the straight path Mr. Morris reminded us to seek. A single great nation of many races, religions and ethnicities. A nation that acts and reacts, lives and defends itself as one.

Americans sometimes forget the great accomplishment of melding together as one nation despite adversity.

The ceremony closed with songs sung by the Lower School students and a closing prayer by AA teacher and retired USAF Col. Jerry Wyngaard.

“We all hurt that day and we all remember that sacrifice... We know that Freedom is not free... And we must not take for granted all that has been sacrificed for our freedom,” he said.

He encouraged all generations to share memories and pray for those who have been lost and provide compassion and peace in our world.

As Amazing Grace was played on the bagpipes and drum, attendees remembered that 9/11 is a day of unity, despite great loss. A day Americans remember heroes and our strength as a nation that overcomes all odds.

Regardless of anything that divides us, we are strong because we remember. And we are at our strongest when we protect, defend and act as one people.

Our community is grateful Amelia Academy. We want to remember. To never forget.