



## Orlando helping Orlando

Blogging about charitable organizations and events in the Greater Orlando area

### Memorial Day tributes in Oviedo

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“Memorial Day is where you can take some time to honor our country’s fallen veterans,” Jovanna Nelson, “Proud” Gold Star Mother of SPC Brenden N. Salazar, OEF KIA 7-22-12 Bronze Star & Purple Heart, said. “There are some amazing ceremonies to attend, whether you have been affected personally or just are compelled to honor our fallen we share these moments to remember, give thanks and honor our fallen.”

Nelson said that her family has always attended Memorial day events. She admitted that since their son was killed in action July 22, 2012, attending these events have an even deeper meaning.

The City of Oviedo and The Lawton House are providing the public opportunities to remember the fallen soldiers again this Memorial Day. Special family events will take place throughout the month of May including a special tribute to the 370 Florida military members who gave their ultimate sacrifice while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On Friday, May 16, there will be a wreath laying ceremony and cross tribute for fallen military members. Jim Vanderbleek built more than 370 crosses – one for every military member from Florida who died while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each cross holds a wreath created by 17 year old Conner MacFarlane, and refurbished by his 14 year old sister, Chloe.

One of the crosses is in honor of their father, who died in Afghanistan in 2012. Chloe and her Girl Scout Troop 538 will lay the wreaths. In addition, there will be a special flag ceremony and prayer vigil. The event starts at 6:30 pm and will be held at Lawton House, 200 West Broadway in Oviedo.

Then on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26, there will be a Memorial Day ceremony to honor all U.S. service men and women who lost their lives protecting our freedom. The ceremony starts at 9:00 am and will also be held at the Lawton House.

Additionally, from May 17 – May 27, the public is invited to walk the grounds of Lawton House from 10 am to 8 pm daily and see the 370+ crosses.

The Memorial Day events are a joint effort of the First United Methodist Church of Oviedo's Military Support Team, area churches, Jim Vanderbleek and Girl Scout Troop 538.

Jim is the creator and builder of the crosses at Lawton House honoring Florida soldiers. For more on the project, watch the video below.



Nelson said that they go to these events celebrating the lives of our fallen, honoring them as heroes. “Looking around at all those that attend fills your hearts with love and thankfulness.