



## Victims, heroes honored during 9/11 ceremony in Cape Coral

Young faces gathered Friday morning behind Oasis Charter School to remember a day thousands didn't live through.

The oldest students at the Cape Coral school were just starting grade school Sept. 11, 2001.

American flags were raised in little hands and a solemn crowd acknowledged the colors.

Teachers cried and little ones fidgeted in front of the stage area, listening to middle and high school choirs sing patriotic ballads.

"It's all the school coming together in unity," said Shana Bruggeman, a Spanish teacher at the high school. "It's good for the students to see this and to know what happened."

After practicing for a week, Gabrielle Saring, 9, sang of a day she said isn't mentioned much around her friends.

"A lot of them had family who were there," Saring said. "So we don't talk about it."

Ten years ago, mom Kim Saring, 52, was

still pregnant with Gabrielle. One of their relatives is serving in Iraq; the other is a firefighter in New York City.

"I just want her to remember how great America is," Kim Saring said.

Cadets with the school's JROTC Shark Battalion collaborated with the Cape Coral Police Department Honor Guard in presenting and retiring the flag.

"Even though I don't remember, it still touches my heart," said Brandon Timmerman, a student in the JROTC program.

Twice during the ceremony, Cape police, EMS and firefighters received loud "Thank you!" from the hundreds of students.

"These past years have been challenging times, but you can trust in the people in uniforms," said Cape fire Chief Bill Van Helden, pointing to the public servants behind him. "To me, they are my heroes."

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In returning to their classrooms, teachers had kids reflect on 9/11, inspiring Samantha Esposito to write a poem.

“It’s very emotional,” the 10-year-old said. “All those people that went to work just like any regular day.”

To a lot of the students, 9/11 was just another day in American history they heard about or watched on videos.

Samantha’s mom, Fabiola, 37, of Cape Coral said she had her first conversation with her daughter about the tragedy last year.

“When Bin Laden was killed, she asked me, ‘Who is that?’” Fabiola Esposito said. “And I told her what happened, how so many Americans died at the hand of those terrorists. It was another lesson.”

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