Belmont commemorates Memorial Day

By TIM CAMERATO | May 26, 2014   **1**

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AMERICAN LEGION POST #58 members salute as the flag is raised over the Veterans Memorial in Belmont on Monday.

2014 Belmont Memorial Day Parade

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BELMONT — As the 1 p.m. start time to Belmont's Memorial Day parade drew near, people gathered along Main Street and huddled on the grass outside of St. Joseph Catholic Church to ensure they wouldn't miss a thing.

Members of the American Legion Post #58, the Belmont Police Honor Guard, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Belmont High S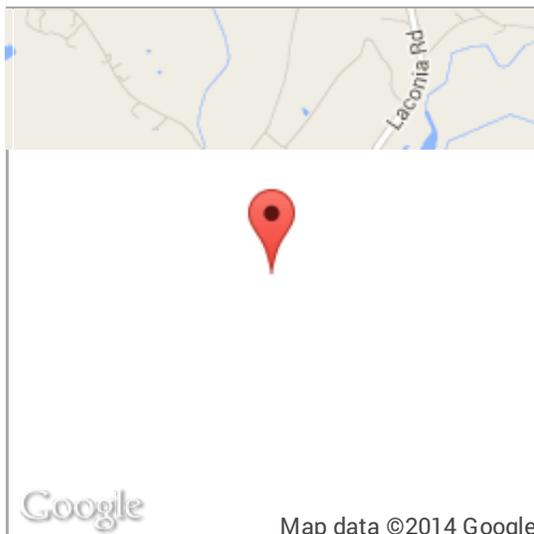chool Marching Band, and the fire department began this year's parade in the Belmont Middle School parking lot before walking down Main Street towards the Veterans Memorial.

On arrival, the crowd regathered and Legionnaires William Firth and Howard Brown raised an American flag over the memorial before the marching band played the national anthem.

Rev. James Smith of the First Baptist Church offered the opening prayer. In it, he asked that service members' families feel God's peace.

"May we give our lives in such a way as to honor those who allowed their lives to be interrupted to answer the call to arms," Smith said. "And may we continually give thanks because the flag flies today because of them."

The names of Belmont residents who have given their lives during wartime were then read as a bell was struck to memorialize each one.

A wreath was then laid by local Boy Scouts at the memorial, followed by a moment of silence, the playing of taps, and a gun salute given by the Tilton American Legion Drill Team.

This year's speaker was Lt. Col. Earlon Beale of Laconia, a retired Army veteran and past commander of the American Legion Department of New Hampshire. Beale said Memorial Day is meant to honor and pay tribute to heroes that served in harm's way.

"They gave of themselves so that their families and friends could live in relative safety," Beale said.

He said more than 1 million men and women have paid the ultimate sacrifice to preserve the nation's freedom during wartime.

"They gave so much to bring greater security and safety to our country and to so many other places around the world," Beale said. "They are the few to whom we all owe so much."

Beale asked that people keep the country's soldiers, airmen, and sailors in their prayers.

"Together we must ensure that our government, via Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs, keep their promise to our families who have given so much to grantee our freedom," Beale said.

He said that veterans organizations conduct the majority of commemorations on Memorial Day to make sure people don't forget service members' sacrifice.

"Our ranks are thinning due to the ravages of time. We have hip and knee replacements, heart surgery, arthritis," Beale said. "We are hoping the next generation of veterans will pick up the torch and continue in our footsteps, but as long as we have out health, we will be here to help you remember."

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