



USA KIA/DOW Family Foundation

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation
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Begun by KIA families,
for USA KIA families;
Every day is Memorial Day!

Board of Directors:

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V.P. Community Relations



New KIA Annual Memorial Event Helps Families of the Fallen

USAKIA held its first "Annual Memorial Ceremony" or "KIA Thunder Run" over Labor Day Weekend. Over a hundred people attended Saturday's event at the new memorial in Moss Landing, California. With some of those they left behind present, participants honored all those who died as a direct result of combat in our nation's military. The new memorial, right off of Highway 1, will be free and open to the public year round.

Moss Landing, CA (PRWEB) September 6, 2005 — The USA KIA/DOW Family Foundation held its "2005 K.I.A. 1st Annual Memorial Ceremony" or "First Annual KIA Thunder Run" on September 3. The event dedicated a new memorial that may still represent a work-in-progress, but private donors have already done major construction at the site. The nonprofit's Web site accepts tax-deductible donations, or they can be mailed to USAKIA, P.O. Box 720123, San Jose, CA 95172.

Over a hundred people attended Saturday's event which also hosted other nonprofits for veterans, food and vendors. The USA KIA/DOW Family Foundation held a raffle for a signed KIA "battle flag," autographed by U.S. troops in Iraq, as first prize. J&S Surplus & Outdoor Store provided second and third prizes consisting of \$100 and \$50 gift certificates respectively, and the raffle had a "K.I.A. Jacket with embroidered emblem" for fourth-place prize. The organization currently plans at least one annual free event on the first Saturday in September.

USAKIA wants to help families of killed in action, and one of its surveys indicated memorials as one of the best approaches. State and federal authorities approved memorials as a purpose of the tax-deductible and tax-exempt organization, and so far, private donors have graciously paid for the work and donated the use of the land at Moss Landing. The new site, along with a "battlefield memorial," has automatic flag polls and is open to the public year round at no charge.

First to speak at Saturday's event, Vincent Bartning, USAKIA's president dressed in his Civil War private's uniform, stated near the end of his speech, "I believe today we step in the right direction of a [good] society." Vincent's grandfather, John Wallace Rich (1924-1944), was KIA in the ETO during World War II, and his close cousin, Louis Bartning (1931-1951), was KIA in Korea.



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Pastor Gary Williams of Twin Lake Church in Aptos came second, followed by Amalia Gonzalez, mother of LCpl Victor Gonzales who died of his wounds in Iraq last October 13. She said of Moss Landing during her speech, "This is heaven," as she also described visiting Iraq after her son's death. There she saw misery along with average temperatures of 125 degrees Fahrenheit. Though it was a bit overcast at the memorial, much of the coast experienced sunshine Saturday.

George Payntar, president of the California Chapter of the American Legion Riders and Joy Jeannette, president of Chapter I of California's Rolling Thunder, also spoke, and Joy talked about her brother, 20-year-old Donald Walters, KIA in Vietnam in 1967. A guest speaker honoring the sacrifices of the fallen from the unit of a Gilbertson family member in Iraq came next. Last to speak was USAKIA director and founder of America Remembers KIA, James Ortolani. He also discussed the design of the new KIA flag.

As Old Glory went up as the first flag, 18-year-old Ms. Gabby Cribland performed a meaningful rendition of the Star Spangled Banner. Participants raised service flags, a POW/MIA flag, the American Legion flag, and the new KIA flag. Mrs. Gonzalez helped raise the U.S. and Marine service flag in honor of her 19-year-old son who came from nearby Watsonville.

A D.J. played mainly patriotic music continuously from 10:30AM to about 3PM, and the flag raising ceremony followed the speakers along with the Pledge of Allegiance. Participants then held a moment of silence to honor all our nation's armed forces who died as a result of combat. At the end of the ceremony, many well wishers waited in line to hug Gold Star Mother Amalia Gonzalez with heartfelt sorrow, honoring a family that has made a priceless sacrifice for freedom.

Memorial Location: J&S Surplus & Outdoor Store, a division of Eagle Emblems, is located right off Highway 1 at the intersection of Highway 1 and N. Struve Road in Moss Landing. The street address is also known as 1956 Highway 1. The zip code is 95039. The store's phone number is (831) 724-0588.

The USA KIA/DOW Family Foundation (USAKIA), based in San Jose, California, is an IRS-approved, tax-deductible and tax-exempt nonprofit. KIA families incorporated the 501(c)(3) organization in the fall of 2003 to benefit families of those killed in action and died of wounds while in the U.S. armed forces. Current services include memorials and membership, and it also sells products honoring U.S. KIA. See the organization's Web site at www.usakia.org for further information.

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