**Bells Across America
Opening**Sept. 27, 2018
*CAPT Schrader remarks*

Thank you, Chaplain Monzon, for the introduction.

Good morning and welcome.

And I would especially like to honor and welcome the Gold Star family members who are here with us today. Today, we will convey our sincere appreciation for the sacrifice you and your family made in the loss of your loved ones while in service to our nation.

The Navy Gold Star Program is proud to honor the fallen Naval Base Kitsap service members and their survivors. This event is a token of appreciation to those who have sacrificed so much.

Gold Star Mothers and Family Day is observed in the United States on the last Sunday of September each year. It is a day for people to recognize and honor those who have lost a son, daughter, husband, wife, mother, or father while serving their nation in times of war or conflict of the United States Armed Forces. It commemorates the contributions, commitments and sacrifices made by our fallen comrades.

We are a nation that is truly grateful for their ultimate sacrifice, so we can genuinely live in the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

Several of you adjusted your schedules and went out of your way to make it here even though memorials and remembrances are the most difficult events to attend.

Your presence this morning proves you are willing to bare your deep emotions in order to honor those whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice.

Sometimes we treat our freedom the same way treat air. We know it’s there. But we seldom acknowledge its presence unless it’s taken away from us. It’s understandable given that we lead busy lives, have families to take care of and get caught up in our daily routines.

Fortunately, people – like you – take time to recognize that freedom comes at an expensive price.

Since our nation was founded, hundreds of thousands of patriotic Americans made the ultimate sacrifice, ensuring the values and freedoms we share endure.

The people of the United States appreciate those who defended our nation and our world. On specific days, we pause to remember those who serve, those who served and those who laid down their lives while serving.

Memorial Day began shortly after the Civil War, and was a time to honor those who died in that conflict which tore apart our country. It was also a way for a nation to come together and heal.

Within just a few generations, Americans were called to action in a different type of war which sent our finest thousands of miles across the Atlantic. At the time, this military action was known as the Great War, since no one could imagine more horrific destruction and loss of life.

To signify the bravery of loved ones serving in that war, families began hanging banners and flags outside of their homes. A blue star showed that the service member was currently serving. If that family member died, a gold star was laid on top of the blue to signify that the loved one had laid down their life in service.

More than 100,000 American families became Gold Star families during that war.

The loss of a son or daughter is a pain most of us are unable to fathom. It’s understandable that some say it’s the worst pain known to humankind.

Losing a child in service to the country adds another dimension, and the family is frequently in need of different types of support while mourning.

It is for this reason that 25 mothers banded together in 1928 to establish the American Gold Star Mothers . . . they worked untiringly to build an organization for others who shared their pain.

In addition to helping one another, Gold Star Mothers also dedicated themselves to visiting and working with service members in hospitals.

In 1936, Congress moved to show respect for the mothers of those fallen heroes by designating the last Sunday in September as Gold Star Mother’s Day.

In 2009, that was expanded to include immediate family members and is now known as Gold Star Families’ Day.

A day for remembrance.

On Memorial Day, we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice in a variety of ways.

Today, we ask that you pay tribute to those family members who grieve for those fallen heroes.

Thank you.