

Color Guard participates in Concord Patriot's Day Parade

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The annual parade to observe the beginning of the American Revolutionary War took place in Concord, Massachusetts, April 17. The celebration is one of many events in the Concord-Lexington area to mark the war that started in 1775. Members of the New England District Color Guard joined re-enactors, military, local law enforcement, bands, wreath-layers and scouts to march in the three-mile parade route that runs through the town and stops at the historic Old North Bridge for a wreath-laying ceremony before returning through town.

The New England District Color Guard has been representing the New England District annually since the District moved to Concord in the late 1990's. All of the current Ranger Color Guard have been marching in the parade for many years. Jennifer Samela and Bradley Clark have been part of the Color Guard since 2007. Both feel it is important that the District be a part of the parade because of the agency's and the town's close historical ties. "There is a link due to the creation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Col. Richard Gridley as General George Washington's first Chief Engineer which stemmed from the Revolutionary War, which began in the Battle of Concord and Lexington," said Samela.

Clark agreed. "I feel this particular parade celebrates the direct connection of the beginning of our nation's independence as well as our nation's army," he said. "This parade takes place at the epicenter of this nation's fight for freedom."

Jason Robinson also has been part of the Color Guard since 2007 and took over the lead role in 2014 when Joseph Faloretti retired. He believes that the Concord Patriot's Day parade allows attendees another opportunity to see the District's Park Rangers. "The only time most people see a Corps Ranger is at a park," he said. "This is another event to get exposure for rangers and the Corps of Engineers in a positive way."

Matthew Coleman, a member of the Color Guard since 2011, said the parade is a good way to connect with the Concord community. "I feel it is important for the District, as a locally-based organization, to show support for this important community event," he said.

Samela said that the gathering of people in one place for that special, historical event is her favorite part of the parade. "It still gives me chills to watch people salute or honor the flag as we pass by," she said.

For Coleman, Clark and Robinson, marching in a parade where they pass a significant piece of history at every step, particularly going over the historic Old North Bridge, is the highlight of the event. "I have been participating in this parade for almost 10 years now and my favorite parts about the Patriot's Day parade are the spectators and the historical location," said Robinson. "I love seeing the spectators along the parade route clapping for the flag, standing at attention and saluting the flag as it passes. I also love the historical location because of a honor it is to carry the flag of our nation over the Old North Bridge where our fight for freedom began. I love the feeling of pride when we as a unit, representing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, crest the top of the Old North Bridge in step and see the crowd on the other side, all there to commemorate what happened at that place, that lead to the birth of our free nation. It really is one of the greatest parts of our job!"