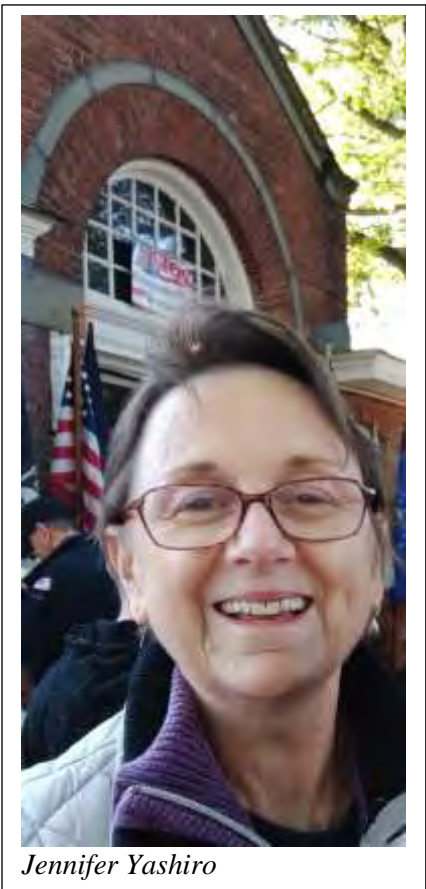


Memorial Day Service Activity

Christine Libon  
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It's so great to have brothers and sisters and friends living nearby. Jennifer Yashiro is a Clifton, New Jersey resident who found an ad in the Clifton Journal requesting volunteers to set up and take down 2300 US flags for the upcoming holiday in honor of the Clifton military personnel who have served our nation. She wanted to volunteer and asked everyone in our small group if they might be interested. I definitely was interested and inspired to honor the veterans and participate in a service project beyond the confines of our church community.

On the brightest, most beautiful, cool morning of Sunday, May 25, at 5:30 AM, the two of us drove to Clifton City Hall. Clifton is a beautiful city with many lovely trees. Joe Tuzzolino, one of the main organizers, along with other veterans and representatives from the Clifton City Council, headed up the project. It was very well organized, indeed. Inside the barn, color-coded flags were placed on carts. Then they were taken to a specific section. The KIA (Killed In Action) Field of Honor, which pays tribute to veterans killed in action, was divided into five sections, each one dedicated to the heroes of a specific war. Designating sections in this way enables family members to more easily find the flag of their loved one. A small metal plate engraved with the name of one veteran is affixed to each flag; and the memorial itself is engraved with all of the veterans' names.

After signing in, we were grouped into small teams to work in designated areas. There were a few simple tasks such as locating and removing the cap covering an inground sleeve, lifting a flag from the cart, unfurling it without letting it touch the ground, positioning the pole into the sleeve and thus erecting the approximately seven-foot-tall flag. Tony led our team that consisted of several ladies. Tony often cued our group by calling out "Sarah" who was the elder teenager daughter of the Muslim woman in our group. We affectionately nicknamed our team "Team Sarah." Sarah had heard about the service project from Sgt. Tom who spoke at PTCL, her school.



I found volunteering to be a special opportunity to make new acquaintances, work together side-by-side, and establish connections of heart. This activity, which was not without tears, met my expectations as a valuable spiritual activity. And I hope to participate again in the future. On a lighter note, the coffee and

donuts offered were much appreciated by the young volunteers and those who hadn't yet had breakfast.



To conclude the morning project, Joe (both a police officer and a former US Marine and police officer) gave an informative and heartfelt talk to the entire group of volunteers and thanked us all for honoring the veterans. Joe mentioned that the last two memorial days had been rained out. He also said their team was very impressed by the great number of volunteers who came out, including the firemen. One man was asked to offer a closing representative prayer. Jennifer procured applications for two of her neighbors whereby they would be able to get memorial flags for their family members. We departed feeling a sense of fulfillment.

*Photos by Christine Libon*