

LaGrange

U.S. Army Reserve Lt. Col. Mark Baaden knows firsthand about the importance and meaning of Memorial Day. Baaden, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan,

is the recipient of four Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart Medal. At LaGrange's annual ceremony, held at the town hall, Baaden spoke about what it means to "earn the sacrifice" of the soldiers who died in combat.

The day is difficult for Baaden, "but I'm proud I can still serve," he said. "I'm sort of emboldened by those losses to continue the fight."



Lt. Col. Mark Baaden (center), poses with his son Michael, wife Selena and daughter Samantha on the right at the LaGrange Memorial Day ceremony. *(Photo: Courtesy photo)* Ceremony attendees at the LaGrange Town Hall "were very much aware" of why they were there, Baaden said. "The people who go to those ceremonies totally get it. They know it's not just an unofficial start to summer."

Baaden, a married father-of-two, will embark on yet another tour in July, this one set to last about a year. At the end of the deployment, his time away from his family will amount to about six years, he said.

"My wife is an absolute saint," Baaden said. "I've missed so many baseball games and chorus concerts," but his children "don't resent me for it and that was a huge thing I always worried about. They're proud and that comes from their mother."

- Nina Schutzman

Alan Bell said "This year's attendance was, again, better than last year. The participation has been growing for this event, which I am pleased about and grateful for. A special thanks for the assistance of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and appreciation to all the public officials who attended as well as the large number of veterans. I thank them for their support and for their service to their country."

Alan Bell

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