

SENIOR SCENE

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Veterans Chuck O'Donahue (l) and Joe Zelazny (r) are coordinating the Veterans' Wall of Honor project at Tacoma's War Memorial Park. They are pictured at the park's POW/MIA wall, dedicated last year.

Judith Jones

Memorial project honors Pierce County service members

Judith Jones
Senior Scene

"You honored us with your service, now we honor you from our hearts."

It's a beautiful sentiment, carved in a memorial from family members for their granddad who went down on the USS Arizona.

A local veterans' committee is working on a project that will make it possible for other families to honor their loved ones in similar fashion, creating a Wall of Honor for Pierce County veterans from all branches of the military. The wall will be located at War Memorial Park in Tacoma.

The project's goal is an ambitious one: to honor all service members from Pierce County. "There's no distinction," says project chairman

Joseph Zelazny, himself a retired Army lieutenant colonel and former POW. "We want to represent anyone and everyone who was in service. These people served honorably."

The Wall of Honor project is being organized and promoted by the Veterans' Memorial Committee, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Elks Lodge #174. Last year, the group dedicated a similar wall at the War Memorial Park to honor prisoners of war or those missing in action.

Chuck O'Donahue of the VFW points out that the memorial represents a valuable history lesson. "There's so much history that doesn't get covered in classrooms. This park, dedicated to veterans, shows who they are and what they did. It keeps the memories alive. We are trying to preserve these memories without the

distinction of all the various organizations, to honor all those who served proudly and fulfilled their obligation."

The Veterans' Wall of Honor dedication ceremony will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 14, 2009. The War Memorial Park is located at 6th Avenue and McArthur Streets.

The wall holds about 100 tiles, and at press time, there were still a few spaces left. When those spaces have been filled, applications will be accepted for the next section of the wall, scheduled for dedication on Memorial Day, 2010. Long-term plans call for the walls to eventually be joined.

Each tile is a six-inch square of black granite, engraved with whatever information the family wishes, typically name, rank, service branch, service dates and any other submitted detail. Any veteran, living or deceased, who served honorably and resided in Pierce County is eligible to be included. A \$50 fee for each tile covers the costs of material, engraving and installation.

Those wishing to make a contribution to the project or apply for a tile should contact Joseph Zelazny at (253) 752-8266 or Chuck O'Donahue at (253) 759-0817 or vfwpst10018@netzero.net.

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