

MEN HONOR LOCAL MILITARY



Sentinel Photo/REANNE PALMER

Local veterans and individuals interested in the local military history gather in the Jefferson County Hall of Honor and Col. R. D. White Veteran's Museum to discuss options for the future and give tours. Those pictured are, FROM LEFT, Wayne Berry, Doug Smothers, George Gifford, Donald Davis, Clarence Duckworth and Cliff Christensen.

Group updates airport military museum, hall of honor

Committee hoping to have 500 tributes for Hall of Honor by Christmas

BY REANNE PALMER
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — It's hard to grasp the amount of time and hard work that is put into the Jefferson County Hall of Honor, Heroes Memorial and Col. R. D. White Veteran's Museum without seeing it first-hand and going on a tour with members of the planning committee.

The three tributes are all located at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport and bring a surprising number of

guests annually to view more than 425 tributes to local veterans and the military as a whole.

Airport Manager Chris Collins said that the Hall of Honor, which extends down the hallway inside the airport's Koziara Terminal, is completely filled with tributes. The tributes list the name of the veteran, along with their dates of service, locations served, squadron or unit patches and logos and medals earned.

"We have about a dozen tributes to do, and only eight spots left in the hallway, but we're not calling it quits. We've ordered another five or six panels to put up in the banquet room," said Collins. "We're not finished. This is just the end of phase one."

The concept of the Hall of Honor

was started by the late R. D. White, a Woodlawn resident and Army veteran.

Since then, several organizations, such as the Woodlawn Veterans Memorial Committee, the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority and the Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 1155 have combined their time to make the vision a reality. Also helping make tributes are Cliff Christensen, Clarence Duckworth, Jona McReynolds and Karen Spieth.

"If we didn't have the time commitments of many people, this wouldn't be possible," said Collins. "It takes a lot of time and research for each tribute. For our volunteers to do this is just great."

One member of the planning committee and veteran Donald

Davis said added that the Hall of Honor is to bring honor to his brothers.

"Amongst ourselves, it's like a brotherhood. We venerate our brothers who have an honorable discharge," he said.

Another committee member and veteran Clarence Duckworth added that they hope to have 500 tributes by Christmas hanging both in the hallway and the banquet room.

The Hall of Honor is open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily.

WHITE VETERAN'S MUSEUM

Another unique aspect of Mt. Vernon's Airport is the Col. R. D. White Veteran's Museum, which is located next to Wilkey's Cafe. The museum features everything

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imaginable from all wars fought by the United States — from the Civil War to Desert Storm.

Included in the two-room museum are items donated by veterans and their families, some as permanent donations and some only temporary. Items such as uniforms and letters to books and photographs and firearms line the walls. Tours are given at the

museum on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and by appointment.

"No body gets paid to be here; we're all volunteers," said Duckworth.

The committee members also said that the museum started in the front room, but eventually ran out of room for all of the pieces being donated, so they moved with the permission of the Airport Board.

"We outgrew the old area and moved to this new space, but we're now about to outgrow it too and we have to move on somewhere," said Davis. "It's a labor of love and

we rely so much on the Airport Board and go with their good graces. Without them, we couldn't do anything."

Missing from the museum are some pieces and individuals that the committee is searching for, including memorabilia from the Coast Guard, and African American and women veterans.

Members of the committee also said that they've traveled to schools, nursing homes and assisted living centers to talk about the museum. Additionally, several schools have brought students to the Airport for first-hand tours.

"There have been a few schools to come through, and

we're trying to get more people to come out here," said George Gifford, committee member and veteran.

Also serving on the committee are Wayne Berry, Cliff Christensen and Doug Smothers.

HEROES MEMORIAL

The last, but certainly not least, veteran attraction at the Airport is the Jefferson County Heroes Memorial. This memorial honors the 268 county residents who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The memorial is located north of the Airport's main parking lot outside.

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