

Veterans tribute initiative completes phase one

The Jefferson County Hall of Honor celebrates the completion of its first step in commemorating local veterans

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MT. VERNON — Phase one has been officially completed for The Jefferson County Hall of Honor's initiative to honor and preserve the service of local veterans.

The first phase of the initiative consists of grand display of framed individual tributes to local veterans lined along both sides of the hallway between Wilkey's Cafe, the Colonel R.D. White Veterans Museum and the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Offices in the Koziara Terminal at the Mt. Vernon Airport.

There are 435 individual tributes proudly displayed in the first phase of the project.

The original aim of the project

was to honor local veterans; however, Airport Manager Chris Collins stated that The Jefferson County Hall of Honor "will refuse no veteran."

Collins elaborated that about 95 percent of the veterans honored are from Jefferson County, with the remaining 5 percent being from all over the country. He explained that sometimes the mother or father of a veteran will live here and their children will have moved away, or veterans that aren't originally from here will settle down in Jefferson County later in life.

The tributes are arranged simply in the order in which they were received. Collins stated that "a veteran is a veteran," and

remarked how interesting it is that veterans of all different generations can appear next to each other on the wall.

There are several graphic designers that work hard to create an individualized memorial of each soldier's service. Graphic designers Cliff Christensen, Karen Spieph, Jona McReynolds and Clarence Duckworth all contributed their creative craft to the project.

The design of each tribute is up to the graphic designer, but there is a general method that they follow.

The tributes always have at least one professional photograph, and it is encouraged to submit additional photos as well. The Tributes exhibit medals or ribbons the veteran received. There is also a section at the top that lists the veteran's rank, branch, unit or vessel, years of service, and locations served.

The Jefferson County Hall of Honor started putting up tributes in early 2010 and has blossomed due to support from the community.

The Woodlawn Veterans Committee has financed many of the panels for the tributes, which cost around \$100 a piece. Collins also stated that Bob and Brenda Laughlen played an integral part in the success of the memorial. Collins also said that they have received significant donations from the community.

A new feature of the Jefferson County Hall of Honor is their recently launched website: www.veteranshallofhonor.com

Collins was very excited about the website, and explained that all of the tributes are uploaded online. This allows family or friends to find them even if they don't reside in the area.

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The next step in the project is phase two, which will consist of installing approximately 750 new panels in the Koziara Terminal Banquet Room.

Phase three of the initiative is still in development. Collins informed that after phase two is complete, there will not be any room left for more tributes. He said that a lot of people are thinking about the future of the project, and alluded that a stand alone museum could be the third step.

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