

Hall of Honor wins Hometown Award

Hall of Honor and Military Museum earned award under the "memorials and monuments" category

BY EMILY ROTH

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

SPRINGFIELD — Last week, Gov. Pat Quinn announced that the Hall of Honor and Military Museum at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport won a Governor's Hometown Award.

The Hall of Honor was one of 15

groups awarded in the 32nd Annual ceremony at the Illinois State Library in Springfield.

"We worked with Bonnie [Jerdon] and the mayor," said Chris Collins, airport director. "And we went through the applications process ... in August."

Jerdon, Mt. Vernon Convention and Visitors Bureau director, Mayor Mary Jane Chesley, Collins, and Hall of Honor Committee member Don Davis traveled to Springfield for a judging committee in early September.

"We thought we had a really good chance because all the visitors that come out to the airport tell us that there's nothing like that, nothing like our Hall of Honor in the entire country," stated

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Collins. "Nothing's ever seen anything done like the way we do it where we do individual tributes and every one of them is completely different."

Collins reflected that R.D. White, a World War II veteran and Hall of Honor organizer who died in 2012 would have enjoyed seeing what he worked on earn prestige from Springfield.

"It feels really good to win," said Collins, "and like we were all saying in the van on the way home, every one of us that was in there knew R. D. White really well. Wouldn't it have been great for him to see it?"

According to the governor's office, award recipients are selected by volunteer judges who review and rank applications based on a variety of factors, including local need, volunteer participation, use of resources and the results achieved. The projects are judged within their population categories as well as within their assigned project categories. The project categories

include services and mentorship, beautification and sustainability, parks and recreation, memorials and monuments, and history and historic preservation.

The Hall of Honor was submitted under the memorials and monuments category.

"We knew that [the Hall of Honor] is a great remembrance for the veterans," continued Collins, "but the way the community took hold and got involved was very surprising, and what I mean by that is how fast it grew. At one point there were five of our tribute

making volunteers, and we were cranking out anywhere from five to 10 tributes a week when it was really going strong. And we're still doing one to two a week."

Collins reported that the panel of judges asked if those involved would be willing to spread their Hall of Honor idea to other towns and counties.

"That was one of our main focuses when we started this," said Collins, "we hope that our efforts might be copied somewhere else."

12-11-14

eroth@morningsentinel.com



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AWARD ACCEPTANCE — Mt. Vernon Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Bonnie Jerdon, Hall of Honor Committee member Cliff Christiansen, Airport Director Chris Collins, Hall of Honor Committee member and World War II veteran George Gifford, Mt. Vernon Mayor Mary Jane Chesley, and Hall of Honor Committee member Don Davis accept the Hall of Honor's 2014 Governor's Hometown Award in Springfield. The award was presented at a ceremony last week, and announced by Governor Pat Quinn.