

Veterans & First Responders

Memorial

★★★ at Fairfield Glade ★★★

Veterans and First Responders Memorial at Fairfield Glade

Overview

As 2024 closed out and 2025 begins, I thank the supporters and many friends within Cumberland County, the State of Tennessee and throughout the United States who have encouraged the Board of Directors. We continue to pursue the dream of developing and building a Memorial that recognizes the incredible support to our nation by veterans and first responders. Their service has been and will continue to be invaluable.

It has been a long journey to this point. After almost six years of planning, raising funds and managing its development, we are near completion of the Flag Plaza and the groundbreaking for the Memorial Garden. This report will highlight some of the 2024 accomplishments and identify the expectations for 2025.



2024/2025

Construction

We started 2024 with high hopes of having the Flag Plaza completed by Veterans Day, but due to an extended period of rainy weather, contractor schedules and some complications associated with the design we were not able to reach that goal. However, we were able to make significant progress towards its completion, including the final site preparation and adjustments, the installation of all electrical and irrigation conduits and drainage tiles, finishing the block work for the pedestals and walls and the installation of the sidewalks and cement foundations.



Next on the schedule is the installation of the pavers including the personal engraved ones for veterans and first responders and specially designed pavers. This work will start in January and be completed by the end of February if not before. All the pavers are ordered, shipped and received, including those designated as “filler pavers”. So far about 900 with the names of veterans, active-duty personnel and first responders will be included in this initial installation period. (The filler pavers will be installed in such a way that they can be replaced at a later date as more are ordered by interested individuals and organizations).

Once they are installed work will begin to attach the Crab Orchard stone to the block walls and pedestals that are already in place. This work should start in late February or early March. These will include spaces for the later installation of plaques, signs and other special features to help tell the story.

When the stonework is completed, things should move along quickly. First will be the placement of the 13 flag poles that are in storage. The electrical work will then be finished including the placement of the lights. Some of the landscape work will also be done during this period along with the installation of plaques.

Special Features

The Flag Plaza will have some features that will add to the unique nature of our Memorial. The two end circles in the design will include pavers with the engraved symbols of the 50 state flags and state seals. They will also have a larger engraving of the United States Seal and the three stars which are incorporated into the Tennessee flag. The objective of these engravings will be to highlight the national scope of our community and the individuals who call Cumberland County home. We are one nation.

Another dimension of the Flag Plaza includes recognition of the 33 Tennessee Medal of Honor recipients. This will be included in one of the smaller connecting circles between the American Flag and the Military Flag circles. The first Medal of Honor medals were awarded in Chattanooga during the Civil War. Within the Flag Plaza will be plaques that will be a part of the various flag displays. Some of these details are still being developed and will be added at a later date.

Financial

The Memorial had a very successful financial year in 2024. Here are a few of the major highlights:

- The year began with a balance of \$334,357 and ended the year with a balance of \$540,157, a net increase of \$205,800
- A total of \$182,186 was spent on Memorial related costs. Most of this was for construction (\$154,637) and bricks (\$18,843).
- The major source of revenue for the year was the awarding of a \$250,000 grant to the Memorial from the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services. This grant was made possible through the support of Governor Lee, House Speaker Cameron Sexton and State Senator Paul Bailey. All other revenue came via private donations and the members of the Crab Orchard Utility District.
- It is anticipated that the final costs for the Flag Plaza will be between \$550,000 and \$600,000. The Board of Directors has been very diligent in managing these funds while doing our best to engage highly skilled contractors, using quality products while meeting our design expectations and community standards.
- The Memorial Board has a “pay as you go” policy and has no paid staff or consultants. It is an all-volunteer operation.

Engraved Pavers

To date there are about 900 engraved pavers for veterans and first responders that will be part of the initial installation as well as the other special pavers mentioned earlier.

We will continue to take orders as the Flag Plaza has more capacity. However, as we have previously announced, we will only install a few times a year. The filler bricks will be replaced with the engraved pavers on a regular basis.

Phase II Planning

With the Flag Plaza nearing completion, we are starting to move forward with plans for the second phase which is the Memorial Garden. It will include an Honor Pavillion and various pedestals and block walls highlighting significant events throughout our history. The design will closely resemble the concept drawings that were released at our July 17th Town Hall Meeting at the Community Center in Fairfield Glade. An architect has been engaged to help us as we prepare for the initial construction of the Memorial Garden. We hope to involve the Crossville campus of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology in the construction of this pavilion.

We anticipate construction will begin on this part of the Memorial later this year and hopefully be completed sometime in 2026 or soon thereafter. We are optimistic about this schedule as we now have identified the skilled contractors that will be able to do the work in a timely fashion. The design of the Memorial Garden, while attractive and appropriate for our purposes, is not as complicated nor as demanding as the Flag Plaza. We will know more about specific requirements once we receive and review the architectural drawings now being developed and are better able to estimate the costs.



Continued Community Support

Once we have finalized our plans for the Memorial Garden, we will host another Town Hall meeting to share with the community our plans, needs and opportunities. We will continue to need financial support from our supporters in order to complete this part of the Memorial. There will be significant opportunities for individuals and organizations to make meaningful contributions to the success of the Memorial. We will share these at the appropriate time as we move along in our planning.

Board Membership

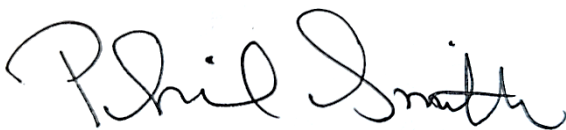
The success to date has been largely dependent on the willingness of our volunteer Board of Directors to dedicate their time, talent and resources towards building the Memorial. Two long-standing Board members left the Board, Mike Williams and Judy Moore. Many of you will remember Mike served as our Fairfield Glade Chief of Police before accepting a senior law enforcement position with the Tennessee Board of Regents. A veteran of the United States Marine Corps, he was one of the initial founders of the Memorial and served as a past president of the Board. Judy was also a long-time member of the Board drawing upon her marketing background to help with special events and community outreach efforts along with managing the engraved paver program. She also assisted in the design and subsequent manufacturing of our VFRM Challenge Coin. Fortunately, she will continue to volunteer her services. The service of both Mike and Judy on the Board is appreciated.

Joining the Board are two veterans of the United States Marine Corps, Rick Leonard and Bryan Vaughn. Both have been volunteers with the design and construction of the Memorial. They have been active in the Sgt. Morgan W. Strader Marine Corps League based in Cumberland County. We welcome both of to the Board.

Summary

Once again, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express our appreciation to our supporters for their encouragement and patience. This has been a challenge, taking much longer than we planned but we remain committed and focused on getting it done in a way that will be a source of pride for the community and the men and women we will be honoring. The weeks and months ahead will be exciting as we see this come to completion.

For more information and updates, including how to order engraved bricks or to make donations to help with our construction, please visit our website at: vfrmemorial.com

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil Smith, President