

March officially opens Healing Field

September 09, 2011 @ 11:00 PM

LACIE PIERSON
The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON — For more than 40 years, Huntington residents and the Marshall University community have been able to honor and remember the 75 Marshall football players, staff and supporters who died in a 1970 plane crash.

This year, in honoring those victims, more than 50 Huntington citizens and Marshall students also honored the lives lost in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks during the opening of the Healing Field at Spring Hill Cemetery Friday evening.

They participated in what was called the Marshall University March of Remembrance, during which 75 American flags were posted Friday evening to honor the plane crash victims, which were in addition to the already more than 2,000 flags at the Healing Field to commemorate the lives lost on 9/11.

The original grand opening of the Healing Field was delayed by this week's rain, so it was rescheduled to correlate with the march.

"As Marshall students, we're constantly reminded of that crash and the people who died, not in a bad way, but in a way that we get to honor them," said Ray Harrell Jr., student body president at Marshall. "An event like this, I think, shows Huntington that even though we might not have grown up here, we are eager to be involved in the community and the more opportunities we have to do that, the better."

The first ever Healing Field was established in 2002 by Paul Swenson of Sandy, Utah, as a way to visualize and comprehend the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001. More than 100 cities across the country have since held their own Healing Fields, according to the Healing Field Foundation's website.



Mark Webb/The Herald-Dispatch
Garrick Pridemore places one of 75 American flags which represent those lives lost in the 1970 Marshall plane crash in the Healing Fields as the March of Remembrance is conducted on Friday, Sept. 9, 2011, at Spring Hill Cemetery in Huntington.

[Purchase this photo](#)



Related:

- [Gallery: Marshall University March of Remembrance](#)

Huntington's Healing Field was the brainchild of Kevin Brady, director of the Greater Huntington Park and Recreation District. Organizers hope to use the field not only to help the community reflect on the lives lost, but to also raise money to erect a local bell tower at the gravesite of Dr. Paul Ambrose, a local Sept. 11 victim, by selling flags to community sponsors.

Huntington Mayor Kim Wolfe said he felt privileged to participate in an event that ties members of the community together in so many ways.

"I can't think of anything better to participate in honoring 9/11 and those affected by tragedies and the lives lost because of them," Wolfe said. "We've got a combination of generations here that are coming together to commemorate and remember those events. It's a great tribute to the greatest country in the world in what I consider to be one of the greatest states in the nation."

Former Marshall Football Coach Red Dawson was at the event in his Marshall green with an American flag in hand. He said Huntington has never been short on respect for those who deserve it.

"This is a good cause. It helps remind people of those lives lost. There were a lot of good people I know who were lost in 1970, and there were many more on September 11," Dawson said. "It tickles me to see the students are so involved in the history and tradition of the school and they make it a point to know what happened and remember it. Of course, I don't think anyone here has ever forgotten."