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News

Sherrill Field of Honor salutes heroes

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SHERRILL -- The Reilly-Mumford Memorial Park will soon be decorated with the red, white and blue of 100s of American flags, commemorating local heroes and remembering the sacrifices of the people who lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001.

The three foot by five foot flags, standing on eight-foot poles and adorned with the names of persons who have left a lasting impression on people in the community, will make up the first-ever Sherrill Field of Honor in the park. Those honorariums will be installed after the final concert of the summer season on Sept. 6 and remain in place at the park until a memorial service on Sept. 11.

Spokesperson Vicki Andrews said flags can be bought for \$29 to honor military members, veterans, police and firefighters, EMTs, and any friend and family heroes. Donations will also be accepted to help offset the more than \$500 in shipping charges in having the flags delivered to Sherrill, she said.

Sponsored by the Sherrill Merchants Association, the Field of Honor is also a fundraiser for the development of the green space at the Community Activity Center into a park.

"Because this is a Sherrill event we wanted to have the funds go towards something in Sherrill," Andrews said. "I love Sherrill -- it's a great community."

Flag sponsor forms are available now at Arnie and Son's Produce/Kraig's Kegs/Corey's Beverages, Alliance Bank, Colosseo's Restaurant, Ebenezer's Café and Creamery, Emilio's Deli, Enchanted Touch Massage Therapy, John Froass and Sons, Libbey's Good News Gift Shop and Sew Blessed, New Images, New York Pizzeria, the Olde Gingerbread House Gift Shoppe, the Oneida Community Mansion House, the Oneida Company Store, Rose Garden Salon, Sherrill Auto Repair and Machine, Sherrill Automotive, Sign and Art Etc., Taste of China, Victoria Buda's Academy of the Theatrical Arts, Vogt's Auto Sales, Yankee Ltd. and Skinner Station, and Zabroso Restaurant.

They are also available at the Tuesday night concert series in Reilly-Mumford Memorial Park from 7 to 9 p.m. or by calling Andrews at 363-5638. Deadline to sign up for a flag is Aug. 28, and the flags will be assembled by volunteer Boy Scout helpers on Aug. 31 at the Community Activity Center.

The nation-wide Healing Fields project started displaying flags as a way to remember the victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, as well as the heroes who brought down another terrorist-piloted craft in Pennsylvania that tragic day in 2001. When Andrews saw that Auburn had one of the flag displays for Flag Day, she

was so impressed by the image she knew she had to bring the event to the Silver City.

"I just thought it was breathtaking the way all those flags stood together," Andrews said. "I knew that Sherrill would be the place to do something like that, and everyone I talked to was very in favor of it. Then I took the idea to (Sherrill City Manager) Bob Comis and he said, 'We can do that.' Anytime I've approached him or (city Recreation Supervisor) Sara Getman about anything they've been very gracious."

She also approached Sherrill Merchant Association President Elizabeth Haley, owner of Libbey's Good New Gift Shop, who then took it to the merchant members and received an enthusiastic response.

"They were all for it, so we just took it and ran with it," Haley said.

Haley explained the Flag Sponsor Form requests a donor's name and contact information, along with whether he or she plans to keep the flag or donate it to a future event and if the person to be memorialized by the flag is a fallen soldier, veteran, current military, firefighter, law enforcement, EMT and family member.

Tags containing the information and whatever message the sponsor wants to say about the person honored will be attached right to the flag before it is positioned in the park, Haley said.

Reilly-Mumford Memorial Park is actually the second site considered for the Field of Honor -- originally the flags were going to go across the street in Triangle Park, the location of the city's veterans' memorial and Sherrill's Memorial Day services, but the volume of flags expected to be flown made a larger site necessary.

Andrews said they are lining up "some wonderful people" to officiate the memorial service on Sept. 11, including Brett Roden singing "God Bless America" and Katie Musacchio singing the National Anthem. All four Sherrill churches will be involved, along with the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Little Leaguers.

"We definitely want the kids to be a part of this," she said, noting they will lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The event will also feature Dan Skinner playing bagpipes, an innovation and benediction, a 21-gun salute, the reading of all the names on the flags, and a speaker who Andrews expects will be either a veteran of Iraq or Afghanistan.

After the Sept. 11 service, people who sponsored a flag can either take it home with them, or donate it back for a future event, Andrews said. Either way, the sight of having all of those flags spaced out across Reilly-Mumford Memorial Park will be a memorial one all by itself, she said.

"I think seeing all of those flags in the park is going to take your breath away," Andrews.

"I'm excited for this," added Haley. "I think it's really going to be something to be able to see all of those flags flying there, showing just how thankful people are for all of those who serve our community and our country."

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