



Healing Field returns to Auburn's Hoopes Park

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A weekend display of almost 2,200 flags planted into the ground at Hoopes Park will feature music and fireworks during a special ceremony in Auburn on Friday night.

Cheryl Foster, who helped organize this year's event, said the Healing Field: Field of Hopes and Dreams will hold a dedication event at 7 p.m. Friday, a ceremony that will include patriotic music sung by Andy Cooney and conclude with a fireworks display over the park's pond.

The ceremony will also include local officials, but Foster said she wants to keep that list secret in anticipation of the event.

"The fireworks are new this year, and they are biodegradable so they will not hurt the ducks in the pond," Foster said. "Before the fireworks, the Purple Lancers Drum and Bugle Corps will play patriotic music."

The Purple Lancers are another new addition this year, Foster said.

Foster added that visitors should feel free to bring their own lawn chairs or blankets to use during the ceremony.

In case of rain, the ceremony will be moved to the Cayuga Community College gym and the fireworks display will be delayed, most likely until Saturday, Foster said.

An Auburn company, MEDENT Computer Service, also bought 458 flags for a total of \$16,488 – one flag for each Cayuga County resident killed in action since World War I.

Each 3-foot by 5-foot flag will have a tag attached to its pole listing the person its flown in honor of, and those flags will be flown together in the western portion of the park.

George Cuthbert, the company's vice president, said he and his brothers wanted to buy the flags to show their appreciation for those residents who made the ultimate sacrifice for their county.

Family members of those killed in action will be allowed to claim the flags afterward at the information booth, said Cuthbert, whose father served in the South Pacific during World War II and grandfather fought in the trenches of France during World War I.

"It's Memorial Day weekend," said Cuthbert. "Who else gave more than that, the ultimate sacrifice. We want to recognize them and their families.

Other flags will be flown for current military personnel or veterans, victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and other residents.

Many of the flags will also fly in a Healing Field that will be set up at East Middle School in September to honor the 10-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

The Healing Field serves as a fundraiser for St. Joseph School, but it also serves as an emotional Memorial Day tribute for the public, Foster said.

"It's a very special tribute," Foster said. "A lot of people who came to the field last year said it was very touching."

The Healing Field will be set up Thursday morning and residents are welcome to visit before the opening ceremony is held Friday.

The flags will be on display though Monday afternoon.

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