



Healing Field returns to Billings for 9/11

By ZACH BENOIT Of The Gazette Staff | Posted: Tuesday, September 6, 2011 5:18 pm

For the second year in a row, the Exchange Clubs of Billings will host the Healing Field — a display featuring 1,000 American flags — in remembrance of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The flags are set up to honor servicemen and women, veterans, 9/11 victims and emergency service workers. They can be purchased for \$100 each and will be on display at the Montana State University Billings College of Technology, at 3803 Central Ave., from Sept. 8-12.

"It brings awareness because we should never forget what happened 10 years ago," said Kris Koessler, the event's co-coordinator. "It gives people a chance to heal, to honor and remember the people who died and the people who serve this country."

Proceeds raised through flag sales will go to local veterans and children's authorities. A portion of it will also go toward the construction of a 9/11 monument at the COT featuring a beam from the World Trade Center in New York.

Last year's Healing Field, which was at the Exchange City Par 3 Golf Course, sold between 400 and 500 of the flags that were set up. Organizers hope this year to do even better.

"We're hoping to sponsor over 1,000 this year," Koessler said. "The more we sell the more we can provide. And people can keep them or donate them back."

While the flags will be on display through Monday, a special ceremony commemorating the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks will be held on Sunday at 2 p.m. at the COT. It will run in conjunction with the dedication of the beam memorial.

"We heard they were bringing that beam in and thought, 'Let's do one great community event on 9/11, especially since it's the 10th anniversary,'" Koessler said.

The day will include speeches from Montana National Guard Adjutant General John E. Walsh, the former chief of security services at the Pentagon when the attacks happened, a flight operations director who helped coordinate air response and a Montana boy born on the day of the attacks and profiled in a book on 50 babies born that day and in a BBC documentary.

Koessler said last year's healing field showed him just how much it means to people. He most remembers a Vietnam veteran who approached him after the ceremony.

"He just came up and thanked us so much," he said. "It brought a tear to his eye. He was so happy and thankful."