

Memorial Weekend Celebration To Honor World War II Veterans

Event to Commemorate Completion of the World War II Memorial at Veterans Memorial Park, Wichita

The public may go to the website at <http://wichitaworldwariimemorial.com> under the Memory Book tab to leave a memory or story about a loved one who served during World War II.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WICHITA-A Memorial Weekend celebration will commemorate the completion of a World War II memorial at Veterans Memorial Park in Wichita and honor the veterans who served.

The event will be held 3 p.m. Sunday, May 28, 2017 at 339 Veterans Parkway, along the Arkansas River near downtown. (Please bring lawn chairs for seating.)

The hour-long celebration will include music, Color Guard, a presentation, wreath placement and a flyover by World War II Stearman aircraft.

Volunteers have installed 1,500 commemorative bricks honoring World War II veterans, which pave three walkways leading to the memorial – two 6-foot-tall, 8-inch-thick granite panels.

Each brick is engraved with a World War II veteran's name, branch of service, theater of operation and date of service. A directory with each name and brick location was installed in April to help visitors locate the bricks honoring their loved ones. The bricks were installed for a donation of \$100 each to finance the project and set up a fund for the Memorial's upkeep.

Originally, organizers thought they would install about 500 bricks, but as word spread, a second and third walkway were added to keep up with demand.

“Every brick celebrates an important individual history and has a deeply personal connection to each family,” said Ted Ayres, president of the Board of Directors of World War II Memorial, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization formed to support the project. “I am honored and pleased to have been a part of this effort to honor and respect those who served so admirably in World War II. I want to thank all those

who contributed funds, labor, ideas and support over the years it has taken us to get the Memorial completely finished.”

This ceremony culminates one journey, Ayres said.

“I hope it will be the start of something new and wonderful for those whose loved one who is respectfully honored, forever, with this Memorial in Wichita’s beautiful Veterans Memorial Park.”

The project was named “Operation Kilroy,” after the famous drawing of a bald man poking his long nose over a wall next to an inscription, “Kilroy was here.” It is engraved in one of the panels of the memorial.

The project was the mission of Phil Blake, a World War II veteran who had been an unofficial caretaker for maintaining Wichita’s war memorials. He began the project after people began asking him about getting a World War II monument in Veterans Park. A dedication of the Memorial was held in November 2011. Blake died in 2014.

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