



Courtesy file photo

The guest speakers at last year's Veterans Salute day stand solemnly as the national anthem is played.

Veterans Salute years in the making

Hinesville has long history of supporting military

By RANDY C. MURRAY
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As the second annual Veterans Salute approaches, some of those who played key roles in the first event recently took time to talk about how and why Hinesville set aside a day to celebrate all veterans and family members of all branches, past and present.

According to Hinesville Military Affairs Committee member George Holtzman, a desire to recognize veterans' service and sacrifice goes back to before 2010, when the Bryant Foundation and the Independent Telecommunications Pioneers Association signed a 50-year lease that allowed the Hinesville Downtown Development Authority to take control of Bryant Commons. Proposals for a veterans memorial were made even before the Bryant Foundation was formed in 2002, he said.

Holtzman said that when the Liberty County Chamber of Commerce building was under construction, there was talk of a memorial for veterans. He said 1st District Councilman Charles Frasier was looking for ideas about how the city might raise funds to pay for it.

There also was talk of building a veterans memo-

“Hinesville has a great reputation of supporting our military families. We respect the soldiers and their families. They deserve everything we can do for them.”

Melinda Schneider, the “yellow-bow lady”

rial on Fort Stewart, Holtzman said, but a large number of local veterans wanted the memorial to be in the city so they would have greater access to it.

“I was asked to serve on the Bryant Foundation because I’d had a working relationship with (Georgia) Sen. Glenn Bryant,” Holtzman said. “He and his wife, Trudie, had three kids — Alan, Danny and Michael. ... I think former Mayor Tom Ratcliffe deserves recognition for the visionary person that he is. A lot of what we have (at Bryant Commons) is a result of his vision.”

Holtzman said the foundation was struggling to maintain the Independent Telecommunications Pioneer Association’s museum located in the old Bryant home, and the city was looking for a way to deal with a water-retention problem in the downtown area.

The city’s lease of Bryant Commons subsequently led to construction of the 15-acre lake that took care of

the water issue, and Bryant Commons’ 150 acres provided a site for a veterans’ memorial, he said.

Third District Councilman and HMAC Chairman David Anderson agreed. He said that once the city gained control of Bryant Commons, city leaders asked local veterans to come together and brainstorm what they wanted a memorial to look like.

“I put the thought before HMAC,” Anderson said, noting that members taking part in the planning included Holtzman, P.J. and Melinda Schneider and a few others. “After some discussion and a few meetings, George, who is on the Bryant Foundation, decided we needed to form a nonprofit organization called Veterans Memorial Walk at Bryant Commons.”

“After more meetings and more discussion, HMAC decided we should recognize all branches of the Armed Forces — Army, Navy, Air

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Above: This rendering depicts an aerial view of what the Veterans Memorial Walk at Bryant Commons will look like when complete. Below: This rendering shows what part of the Veterans Memorial Walk at Bryant Commons will look like.

One memorial planned to honor all Liberty County veterans

By RANDY C. MURRAY
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A visit to Fort Morris, the Midway Museum or the Fort Stewart Museum reveals numerous military heroes who have served and protected this community, state and nation from its beginning.

Liberty County was formed and appropriately named in 1777, just after the start of America's fight for independence. This community's Revolutionary War heroes include Gens. Daniel Stewart and James Screven as well as Col. John McIntosh and partisan soldier Robert Sallette, plus two signers of the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Lyman Hall and Button Gwinnett.

From the Revolution to Operation Enduring Freedom, there has been no shortage in Liberty County of those willing to fight for liberty. Hinesville Mayor Jim Thomas said it's time the community recognized the service and sacrifice of all Liberty County veterans of all branches of the military.

"This year, as we honor our veterans, we are sponsoring an event that will raise funds to support the construction of Veterans Memorial Walk at Bryant Commons," Thomas said. "Our city has a rich military history, and the construction of Veterans Memorial Walk will honor those that have served and those who continue to serve. The walk will honor all the services and the Liberty Independent Troop, a local military unit that has a rich and storied history in this county."

City Councilman and Chairman of the Hinesville Military Affairs Committee David Anderson said that after the city signed a 50-year lease on the 150-acre private estate of the late state Sen. Glenn Bryant and his wife, Trudie, plans were underway to build



one memorial that pays tribute to the service of all local veterans, past and present. He said HMAAC hopes to have a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the memorial on Veterans Day next year.

P.C. Simonton & Associates engineer Marcus Sack, who made the initial drawings and cost estimates for the project along with Mark Taylor of J.W. Buckley & Associates, said construction needs to begin in January in order to meet a November 2015 deadline.

"There are a lot of small pieces to the construction process that are all equally important," Sack said. "It is all of the pieces together that will take the full six months to complete, starting with clearing and grading and continuing with road and sidewalk construction."

"While that work is being performed, the granite will be on order. As the road and sidewalk construction is being completed, the granite should arrive for installation. Once that is installed and the monuments are put in place, the final landscaping will be planted."

According to the memorial design, visitors would arrive at the front plaza that includes the flags of each branch of the military, centering on the American flag that's set back from the plaza. A semicircular paved path will lead visitors from Old Glory to monuments of each branch.

The entire walk is about

the size of a baseball field and includes benches for visitors to rest and reflect on their time in service.

Sack said an addition to the Liberty Plaza is a place for the incorporation of the Liberty Independent Troop seal.

According to the Liberty County Historical Society, the origins of the Liberty Independent Troop can be traced back to the Volunteer Troop of Dragons that first was formed in 1785 and attached to the Liberty County Regiment of Militia. At that time, they were fighting the Creek Indian Wars.

The initial cost estimate for the memorial was \$848,378.40, but Sack said the fundraising goal is closer to \$1 million. George Holtzman, HMAAC member and subcommittee chairman for the memorial, said it's better to go with the higher figure as a goal to allow for inflation and unexpected costs.

"As an Army, Vietnam-Purple Heart veteran, I'm committed to having a place where veterans can go and reflect and think about their time in service," Holtzman said. "The whole idea behind this memorial is to have a place of reverence and the quietness surrounding these bodies of water. The objective of this memorial is not (to) be just a cold, hard piece of granite."

Holtzman said his philosophy always has been that in

MEMORIAL continues on 6



Courtesy file photo

A representative from Troops Into Transportation talks with attendees earlier this year at a Soldier for Life-sponsored job fair. The Soldier for Life: Transition Assistance Program provides training and services that help translate Army skills and experience into careers outside the military.

Resources abound for transitioning soldiers

By PATTY LEON
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Soldiers considering career changes have access to many resources that can help them transition to civilian jobs.

In August 2006, the Governor's Office of Workforce Development launched a program called Operation: Workforce, which aims to help veterans and employers connect within the state.

The program's website, www.OperationWorkforce.com, allows veterans to create job profiles, upload resumes and search for job openings.

The website also enables Georgia employers to create profiles, post job listings, review job applicants

and search for qualified candidates. Through the program, employers can pledge their commitment to giving enhanced hiring opportunities to Georgia veterans.

Hire Heroes USA

At the national level, Hire Heroes USA, headquartered in Alpharetta, helps veterans, transitioning service members and their spouses find the right jobs through personalized employment training. Those looking for assistance can register for training at www.HireHeroesUSA.org.

Hire Heroes USA Chief Executive Officer Brian Stann reported that the organization has built a reputation of excellence for its

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- **Operation: Workforce:** www.OperationWorkforce.com
- **Hire Heroes USA:** www.HireHeroesUSA.org
- **Soldier for Life:** Transition Assistance Program: www.stewart.army.mil/info.asp?e=SFL
- **Veterans Education Training and Transition Program (VET2):** <http://gtpc.gatech.edu>
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success at helping unemployed veterans find jobs, currently at the rate of 24

RESOURCES continues on 6



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Armstrong State University, which consistently has been awarded military-friendly school designations, is building a new campus in Hinesville. Current ASU Liberty Center Director retired Army Col. Peter Hoffman, shown here talking with biology-anatomy instructor Michael Cotrone, will continue to run the new center.

Area schools cater to military-affiliated students' unique needs

Veterans and soldiers seeking college degrees have plethora of options nearby

By JEREMY McABEE
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When transitioning from military service to life in the civilian sector, many veterans place pursuing a higher education at the top of their to-do lists.

More and more, educational institutions are honoring the service and sacrifice of military veterans, current service members and their families by offering programs and benefits that go beyond accepting the G.I. Bill.

Armstrong State University

With a main campus in Savannah and a satellite center in Hinesville, Armstrong State University is well-positioned to offer military-affiliated students — that is, active-duty military, reserve or National Guard members, veterans, spouses and family members — an affordable education that is close to home.

G.I. Jobs magazine has given Armstrong the Military Friendly School designation for the past five years due to an ever-growing list of military-centered programs and initiatives. The school also has seen 20 percent growth per year for the past two years at the Liberty Center, Armstrong's satellite campus that currently operates at 740 E. Gen. Stewart Way.

Armstrong's Liberty County-based campus has grown so much, in fact, that the school recently broke ground on a new,

21,000-square-foot facility that will offer more classrooms, science labs, faculty and staff offices, common areas and student service and support areas.

"We've always been a military-friendly school, but I think we've ratcheted it up in the last couple of years," retired Army Col. and Liberty Center Director Peter Hoffman said. "(Armstrong) President (Linda) Bleicken is truly interested in providing service to veterans and military members — and she's doing it for all the right reasons."

"People who have served our country, they are different," Hoffman continued. "In a society where only 1 percent of the population has served in uniform, these are people who volunteered to serve, and we owe it to them to make sure that the benefits that they've earned are well-used."

Aside from accepting the G.I. Bill for veterans, Armstrong also accepts tuition assistance for active-duty, reserve and National Guard members. And, although active-duty military members receive 100 percent tuition assistance to attend school, the cost of tuition does not include such mandatory fees as institutional, health, facility use and other associated charges. In light of this, Armstrong officials recently decided to waive all such mandatory fees for active-duty service members.

Hoffman also emphasized the need for service members to have credits with transferability — both into Armstrong from other institutions and vice versa. He said that Armstrong con-

tinues to sign articulation agreements with other military-friendly schools, naming Fayetteville Technical Community College as one example.

"Civil-affairs soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg often receive training at Fayetteville Tech," Hoffman explained. "We just signed an articulation agreement with them, which will allow soldiers who come to the civil-affairs battalion on Fort Stewart to step right in at a third-year level here (at Armstrong)."

Hoffman said that Armstrong works with the American Council on Education to "make sure that we award all the credits we can to service members." Armstrong also is listed in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges and Academic Institution for Military Students networks of schools, which work with other network schools to guarantee credit transferability.

"Military-affiliated students are busy people," Hoffman said, emphasizing the need for flexible scheduling. According to Hoffman, half of all the courses offered at Armstrong's Liberty Center take place after 5 p.m. — perfect for active-duty soldiers as well as veterans, military spouses or family members who work full time or have families and other responsibilities. The Liberty Center also offers hybrid courses, which utilize a blend of in-class, face-to-face instruction with online coursework.

"A lot of veterans want that face time, but with the flexibility of an online class," Hoffman said.



Sgt. Maj. Joe Constante listens to Home Depot operations manager Clint McCrae during October's Military Career Fair and Hiring Event at Fort Stewart, sponsored by Savannah Technical College. Savannah Tech is in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges and Academic Institution for Military Students networks of schools, according to Jeff Ashmen, a retired Army command sergeant major and Savannah Tech's military-outreach coordinator.

Savannah Technical College

Another option for military-affiliated students seeking higher education is Savannah Technical College, which operates a main campus in Savannah as well as a full-service campus on Airport Road in Hinesville.

Like Armstrong, Savannah Tech is a member of the SOC network of schools, which "is a benefit provided to active-duty soldiers that (allows them to) write an agreement with a college," according to Jeff Ashmen, a retired Army command sergeant major and Savannah Tech's military outreach coordinator.

Ashmen explained that when service members enter SOC agreements, they agree to complete 25 percent of their coursework at the local college, while the rest of their credits may be transferred in from any number of SOC-affiliated institutions.

"I personally was enrolled in a SOC agreement," Ashmen said. "I probably attended six or seven colleges before I got my associate's degree. But I was able to complete my requirements when I was a young soldier to get that 25 percent with one college, and so they allowed all the remaining classes ... to be transferred back in. They guarantee transferability."

One of Savannah Tech's premier programs for military members is its Troops to Trucks program, which Ashmen said is designed to help veterans gain access to their commercial driver's license and find employment afterward.

Although certain veter-

ans may be able to have their military driver's licenses converted to CDLs with no additional training or education, Ashmen said taking that fast-track route may lead to CDL restrictions, because most of the Army's vehicles have automatic transmissions.

"What you find is, the rigs that are on the road today that the civilians use are stick shift," he said, noting that participation in Savannah Tech's Troops to Trucks program ensures eligibility for a nonrestricted CDL.

"Also, going through our full program, the initial part talks about a lot of the administrative things, and driving a rig, and maintaining it and state requirements that you don't get when you fast-track and convert your military license to a CDL license. So we highly encourage them to do that," Ashmen continued.

Additionally, Savannah Tech hosts numerous hiring events every year and also partners with Fort Stewart to participate in informa-

tional and recruiting sessions for separating military personnel.

"When soldiers separate from the military, we like to see them live, work, retire and stay in the area," Ashmen said. "So, one of the initiatives we started was to promote the idea of localizing — bringing the jobs in and getting the soldiers that are interested in staying here, and bringing those two together."

Ashmen said that Savannah Tech will partner with the Georgia Department of Labor for a hiring fair at its Savannah campus next month. Last year's fair drew 80 businesses, and Ashmen hopes to have a similar turnout this year.

Whether they're looking for a technical trade skill or a traditional four-year degree, veterans, active service members and their families — otherwise known as the military-affiliated — have plenty of educational options in the Coastal Georgia region.

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Local leaders continue to fight sequestration

Officials, area dignitaries visit Washington, D.C., to meet with legislators, garner Fort Stewart support

By PATTY LEON
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Hinesville Mayor Jim Thomas was just one of several local elected officials who traveled to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., in mid-September, determined to continue the fight against sequestration.

Thomas made the two-day trip with Riceboro Mayor Billy Austin, Savannah Alderman Tony Thomas, Savannah Mayor Edna Jackson, Chatham County Commission Chairman Al Scott, Savannah Chamber of Commerce Director Bill Hubbard and Pembroke Mayor Mary Warnell.

"We went up for two major reasons," Thomas said. "One was the possible reduction of people here in Fort Stewart, and the other was sequestration. We focused on those two primarily because it affects everybody in the coastal region."

Thomas said the group met with several members of the Legislature, including Sen. Johnny Isakson and Reps. Jack Kingston, Sanford Bishop, David Scott, Tom Graves and John Barrow.

"We asked them to rescind sequestration. ... If sequestration went into place, it would be a significant economic impact to the city because one of our economic engines is Fort Stewart," Thomas said. "Not only is it an economic engine for Hinesville, it is for the entire coastal region."

Paul Andreshak, the executive director of the Southeast Georgia Friends of Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield and the former civilian deputy garrison commander on Fort Stewart, said he wasn't able to make the recent trip to Washington, D.C., but he is aware that the local implication of sequestration could be disastrous to national security and the local economy.

"Sequestration is a problem in that the Army will have to, in order to meet the budget targets, will have to cut another minimum 50,000 soldiers," he said. "If you just cut soldiers willy-nilly, you don't have any functioning battle formations or units. They are going to have to take units out of the inventory, and once you start taking units out of the inventory, then you have to move people around ... within the Army structure."

"There are a lot of moving pieces when you start talking about cutting another 50,000, and the impact on Hinesville is the possibility of losing troops. And not only Fort Stewart but also Hunter Army Airfield."

Andreshak and Thomas both said that Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield are significant economic engines in this region.

"People talk about the port, but in fact Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield is a larger economic engine for this region than the port is," Andreshak said. "We are talking \$5 billion a year. I

don't know what the port claims they are putting into the local economy. I know that the numbers on the website talk about state ... and in the state package, of course, it's a significant amount of money, but not right here in the Savannah, Beaufort, coastal regional area.

"And certainly when we start talking about jobs, we are talking about close to 2,500 different types of jobs associated with Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield."

Thomas said the officials they met with acknowledged that sequestration would be something they would try to deal with at the Capitol.

Thomas said the recent trip marked the second time this year he went to Washington, D.C., regarding sequestration. He added that he made the trip at least three times last year. Andreshak said he's made the trip to D.C. at least 10 times in the past five to six years.

"What we try and do is go at a time when this is an issue for Congress, then we can express our desire to keep Fort Stewart as it is and to keep Hunter Army Airfield as it is," Thomas said. "We added that for every person fighting against sequestration, there is an equal number possibly fighting for it."

"Elected officials concerned about their region and the economic impact sequestration could bring — it would be a neglect of their service to the public and community if they didn't go to fight for the cause," Thomas said.

"It is not an option," he continued. "You have to go and represent yourself. We've been told by the legislative delegation that it is extraordinarily important for us to go and to work with both the legislative delegation and the Pentagon. On our last trip, we went to the Pentagon and we met with officials in the Pentagon to discuss these same issues. We were told that no decisions have been made on this, but we wanted to weigh in and let them know that we did not want a significant decrease in our soldiers here."

Andreshak said frequent trips are necessary because leadership personnel often change.

"You want to make sure that the staffers on the Hill, both in the Senate and in Congress, understand the issues that are going on down here," Andreshak said. "They are very familiar with it because we talk to them on a frequent basis, and they pass the information along. ... In fact, they are the ones that organize the trips we take to see the folks at the Pentagon. ..."

"And what people don't understand about the Pentagon is that not only do we need to go up there to make sure that the current generals — and I say current because they change — are familiar with Fort Stewart and Hunter, but the people that are put-



Photo provided

Hinesville Mayor Jim Thomas, Southeast Georgia Friends of Fort Stewart and Hunter Executive Director Paul Andreshak, Savannah Mayor Edna Jackson, Pembroke Mayor Mary Warnell, Rep. Jack Kingston, Liberty County Commission Chairman Donald Lovette and Armstrong State University Liberty Center Director Col. Pete Hoffman met in Washington, D.C., in June 2013 to discuss ongoing efforts to strengthen the economic value of Fort Stewart.

ting together the packages are familiar with Fort Stewart and Hunter."

Andreshak recalled being involved in discussions during the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process.

"It was amazing to me how many staffers were working on packages for BRAC, for example, that had never seen Fort Stewart because Fort Stewart is only one of 10 divisional posts," he said. "You can go your entire career in the Army and never have been in Fort Stewart. So you got to make sure that the people up there not only in the general officers' sense — the ones that rotate every one to two years — but also the ones who are putting the packages together understand what our capabilities are and what the advantages of having soldiers in an area that I consider is one of the best power projections in the Army."

Andreshak said officials need to be made aware of Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield's easy access to four local ports. He added that Hunter Army Airfield has the longest runway on the East Coast, both installations have access to train tracks and both have the ability to get the units to the ports within 24 hours.

"All of this stuff needs to be brought up," Andreshak said. "When I went up there in 2005, they had no idea what kind of capabilities we had here at Fort Stewart, especially on the ranges. Not everyone in Hinesville, Pembroke, Richmond Hill and in Glennville appreciate the big booms that go on in the middle of the night when they are using the ranges, but the Army can actually use Fort Stewart for every weapon system that they have, and that is not possible in every place."

"There are all these benefits, and you have to be able to go up there, press flesh

and explain to them why Fort Stewart is more important than another base," he continued.

Thomas said Fort Stewart could face three possible scenarios.

"The Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment — the SPEA as they call it — envisions three scenarios, three alternatives," he said. "The first alternative is the loss of 16,000 soldiers. The second is retaining the status quo (with) the same strength and levels we are at now. The third is gaining 16,000 soldiers."

"Those are the three alternatives, and either one except for the status quo would be

extraordinarily difficult for us," Thomas said. "We could not accept 16,000 people all at once. Over time we could, but not all at once. And the loss of 16,000 people, obviously, would be catastrophic."

Thomas said the representative from the Army and Pentagon will arrive in Hinesville for a public forum Nov. 17 to discuss sequestration issues.

Andreshak said it is imperative that everyone in the community come out to show their support in keeping Fort Stewart as it currently is.

"We are trying to encourage the locals and to include the chamber of commerce, the media and make sure that

folks understand that they need to be there to support their local economic engine," Andreshak said, adding that they intend to include citizens and dignitaries from Bryan County and Effingham County as well as other communities that could be affected by sequestration.

The exact time for the Nov. 17 public forum still was being finalized as of press time. Andreshak said the mayor has offered the use of the Hinesville City Hall, and organizers are trying their best to schedule the forum for the afternoon or early evening to give working professionals the opportunity to attend.

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Tree replacement on track for annual wreath-laying

Crape myrtles replacing eastern redbuds on Fort Stewart's Warriors Walk ahead of ceremony

By JEREMY MCABEE
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For 468 families, Warriors Walk is hallowed ground.

That's why when the eastern redbuds — the trees that have served as living memorials to those 468 3rd Infantry Division soldiers who gave their lives in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom — began systematically dying off, Fort Stewart officials knew something had to be done.

"I go to sleep every night fearful that a family member from California, Oregon or even Georgia is going to visit Warriors Walk one day and find their soldier's tree dead," said Maj. Gen. Mike Murray, commander of the 3rd ID and Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield, explaining why over \$200,000 has been spent to replace those eastern redbuds since the memorial first was created in 2003.

Originally chosen because of their April blossoming — the same time as the first reported 3rd ID casualties — the eastern redbuds proved problematic as the memorial grew to a number unimaginable by its designers. The first ceremony was held April 29, 2003. In the decade since, 467 trees have been planted, each one memorializing the life of a Marine Division soldier lost in combat.

According to Murray, the eastern redbuds just had too many factors stacked against them to survive — namely, the South Georgia climate, clay soil and a specific type of beetle that burrows into the redbuds' trunks. After the head of the University of Georgia's horticulture department told Murray that Fort Stewart was

"I go to sleep every night fearful that a family member from California, Oregon or even Georgia is going to visit Warriors Walk one day and find their soldier's tree dead."

Maj. Gen. Mike Murray, commander of the 3rd ID and Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield

"about 100 miles too far south and 100 miles too far east" to support the eastern redbuds, Murray knew drastic measures were unavoidable.

Rather than continue to replace the redbuds with more of the same, Murray — along with his staff and the experts from UGA — decided that a complete overhaul of Warriors Walk was in order. The decision to exhume all 468 eastern redbuds and replace them with crape myrtles, however, did not come easy.

"We moved slower than probably 100 people wanted us to move, but I wanted to get a personal letter out to all 468 families before making a final decision," Murray said. "I've also written a personal letter to each of the (commanding generals) from 2003 to now to get their support."

Murray said that his goal was to have all 468 trees replaced in time for this year's annual Wreaths for Warriors Walk ceremony — a task that



Photo provided

The eastern redbuds that previously lined Warriors Walk on Fort Stewart (above) are being replaced with crape myrtles (shown at right), which experts say are more likely to thrive in Southeast Georgia's climate.

Warriors Walk — by the numbers

- **468:** Number of trees on Warriors Walk, all of which are being replaced
- **\$200,000:** Estimated amount spent on tree replacement
- **2003:** Year the memorial first was created.
- **2007:** Year the Wreaths for Warriors Walk tradition began



Photo courtesy of www.artboard.org

ing will take place at noon Dec. 13. The ashes from those redbuds then will be spread throughout the memorial.

Murray said that each primary next-of-kin will receive a small portion of an eastern redbud, along with a plaque depicting a redbud in full

bloom.

Although the crape myrtles blossom in summer, Murray is optimistic that the trees — which are native to the area and generally live 50 years or longer — will honor the purity of the sacrifices

made by the soldiers of Warriors Walk.

"When families visit Warriors Walk 50 years from now and can still see their soldier's tree and know the sacrifice these soldiers made ... it will be worth it," he said.



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MEMORIAL

Continued from page 2

giving, he receives, explaining that he can't "out-give" himself in volunteering for this project.

"Now that I've semi-retired from my real estate profession — I'm still working, but I'm not managing 20 sales agents — it gives me a little more time to focus and go talk to people and ask them to make contributions. It's a dream I want to see fulfilled for this community. My challenge is finding those people with the deep pockets who can afford to make those big contributions."

He said that when the larger, more expensive components for the memorial — like the front plaza, promenade, lake, flag area,

Top: When complete, the Veterans Memorial Walk at Bryant Commons will include a plaza (shown here), promenade, lake, flag area, service monuments and benches. Above: This space at Bryant Commons in Hinesville is the site of the planned Veterans Memorial Walk.

service monuments and benches — have been paid for, people with "shallow pockets and more modest means" will be able to buy bricks and pavers and other, less costly components.

Holtzman emphasized, though, that he's not turning down any size donation and encourages local citizens to support veterans by contributing to the memorial.

In addition to direct contributions, he said proceeds from HMA's second annual Veterans Salute on Saturday at Bryant Commons will go directly to the memorial.

Holtzman said there is no cover charge for the event. Instead, money will be raised from tickets sold for the 50/50 raffle and from a silent auction for high-dollar items that have been donated to HMA for the event.

He said this year's Veterans Salute will kick off with the 3rd Infantry Division Band playing the national anthem at 11 a.m. The event, which will include arts and craft vendors, children's games, food and entertainment, will continue until 5 p.m. For more information, call 572-4300.

RESOURCES

Continued from page 2

veterans hired each week.

The team is comprised of military and civilian business veterans. They train unemployed and transitioning soldiers in the skills of self-marketing and networking as they assist them in locating their new career paths.

The website provides tools for writing resumes and preparing for interviews. The organization also offers two-day, on-site workshops at various locations throughout the year and provides a list of transitional resources for registered users.

Members also receive assistance on how to develop post-military strategic plans, identify post-military financial requirements and veteran benefits and learn techniques for job searches, applications and interviews. Submitted resumes also will be analyzed and revised to help better convey previous experiences to potential new employers.

Soldier for Life: Transition Assistance Program

Fort Stewart's Soldier for Life: Transition Assistance Program, formerly called the Army Career and Alumni Program, provides training and services that help translate Army skills and experience into rewarding careers outside the military.

The program encompasses a step-by-step approach for soldiers who have one year until separation or two years until retirement.

Eligible members first attend a pre-separation briefing, which provides training and counseling.

The next step is to develop a personalized transition plan that includes setting goals to pursue education, technical training or career tracks. Once the goals are established, soldiers receive guidance in assessing their current military skills and learn how to translate them to align with their goals.

Soldier for Life also provides financial-planning seminars and briefings, which focus on veteran benefits.

Veterans Education Training and Transition Program (VET2)

Meanwhile, Georgia Tech's Savannah campus launched a new program for veterans in July. Dr. James Wilburn, the military academic program director, spoke about the Veterans Education Training and Transition Program, also referred to as VET2, at a Hinesville Rotary Club meeting.

He said the Georgia Tech program, which is fully funded and free for service members, builds on Fort Stewart's Soldier for Life program.

Wilburn said the four-week program ties professional education with job experience by allowing transitioning soldiers to partner with employers to receive classroom and on-the-job instruction.

After the first week of academic training, veterans demonstrate their skills in a

“CivilianJobs.com is an organization that helps veterans find a job if they decide to separate from the military.”

Jake Hutchings, director of CivilianJobs.com

three-week placement opportunity with an employer. At the end of the course, participants earn professional certificates for their training, making them well-positioned for landing civilian jobs.

CivilianJobs.com

Another national resource service members can use to help them find employment is CivilianJobs.com. According to Director Jake Hutchings, "CivilianJobs.com is an organization that helps veterans find a job if they decide to separate from the military."

Much like Operation: Workforce and Hire Heroes USA, CivilianJobs.com is primarily web-based. In addition to providing resources for resume writing, networking, interview training and job searching, the organization also publishes a bimonthly publication called "Military Transition News."

The publication, available in print and online, offers job-searching tips and transition-planning information and features company profiles of potential employers.

For coverage and photos of area Veterans Day events, go to www.coastalcourier.com

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SALUTE

Continued from page 1A

Force, Marines and Coast Guard. We made plans for a walking trail, amphitheater and other places to play and enjoy. ... Last November was our first fundraiser — Veterans Salute. We raised about \$6,000 for the memorial, (which) ... will cost just shy of \$1 million. We hope to have a ribbon cutting on Veterans Day 2015."

Holtzman said the proposed cost estimate for the memorial was actually about \$849,000 and included clearing and grading, landscaping and irrigation, drainage, concrete walkways, granite plaza and monuments, American flag base, lake and pedestrian bridge.

He said that in addition to holding the Veterans Salute as an annual fundraiser, he's trying to find some "deep-pocket" donors to donate \$100,000 each for the front plaza, promenade and lake; \$50,000 for the flag area; \$25,000 each for a kiosk and monuments for all five military branches; \$10,000 each for 15 granite benches; and \$5,000 each for 35 ornamental trees.

"We need \$100,000 in the bank by Nov. 18 to pay the architect and to keep this ball rolling," Holtzman said, explaining that HMAAC decided not to pursue a nonprofit organization but instead allow the city to maintain the Veterans Memorial Walk fund. "Right now, we have a balance of just over \$30,000, but I'm expecting several \$10,000 donations and one \$25,000 donation in the coming weeks from some prominent citizens."

Holtzman said the decision to hold the first Veterans Salute was made just

five months before the event, giving them little time to prepare. Nonetheless, he said HMAAC members stepped up to the challenge and took responsibilities for various subcommittees, including logistics, security, publicity, vendors and entertainment.

Among those responsible for the first Veterans Salute were Anderson, Holtzman, the Schneiders, Dennis Fitzgerald, Adna Chaffee, Jeff Ashmen, John Crowley, Walter Helmick, Lou Carreras, Donald Spencer, Karen Bell, Gabrielle Howard, Chuck and Barbara VanDuser, Ron Collins and Pete Hoffman.

Like Anderson, most HMAAC members are former or retired members of the military, and many are members of other veterans service organizations. All HMAAC members support veterans and their families.

"Hinesville has a great reputation of supporting our military families," said Melinda Schneider, who often is called the "yellow-bow lady." "We respect the soldiers and their families. They deserve everything we can do for them."

Prior to the first concept of Veterans Salute or a memorial at Bryant Commons, she said that HMAAC already was doing things to support the soldiers on Fort Stewart, to include operating the food court for what was an annual July Fourth celebration on the installation. She became more directly involved in making and placing yellow bows around the community as a way of showing support for soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"When Walthric Plastic first donated the yellow webbing, the staff at (Family and Morale, Welfare & Recreation) had problems making the bows," Schneider said. "They even tried



Courtesy file photo

Families wait for 3rd Infantry Division Band concert to begin during last year's Veterans Salute at Bryant Commons. This year's event is Nov. 1.

stapling until Walthric Plastic designed the template. I just happened to be there as a volunteer for FMWR when I first came to Liberty County in 2002. I continue to be excited when I have an opportunity to help the family members of our soldiers."

Holtzman, who is a Purple Heart recipient from the Vietnam War, said war really can change one's perspective on life. In his case, the land mine that wounded him killed his battle buddy.

Carreras, who also is a Vietnam veteran, is a retired soldier who serves as the Army Reserve Ambassador for Georgia. He agreed with Holtzman, adding that war's toll is not limited to those wounded, missing or killed

in action. It's especially hard on the family members left behind, he said.

During the recent POW/MIA ceremony hosted by the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 789, and held on Fort Stewart, Carreras read from a book, "Shrapnel in the Heart" by Laura Palmer. He cited three letters written by the wife and children of Army 1st Lt. James Kalsu, who volunteered to serve in an unpopular war despite having been named rookie of the year for the Buffalo Bills in 1969. He was killed in action in July 1970, just before his son was born.

In her letter to her husband, Jan Kalsu said she prayed that the world one day would know peace so

that death never would "sear the hearts of families torn by the tragedies of war."

His daughter Jill's letter spoke of how she wished her father could have been there to wipe tears from her eyes, to laugh and tease her. She said she was proud of him and the values he stood for.

"How I've missed the father-and-son things we could have done, the knowledge and love you could have given me," Bob Kalsu's letter addressed his father. "I can't wait for the time we are united to share our love and talk to each other. You are truly a person I can look up to."

Mayor Jim Thomas, a retired soldier, said there was a need to recognize the sacrifice made by both veterans

and their family members. With Hinesville and Liberty County having a long history supporting the fight for liberty, a day to celebrate the men and women who made history is appropriate.

"The Veterans Salute is an annual event that allows our city and various local veterans groups to honor our veterans," Thomas said. "Because our city has approximately 9,000-plus veterans and their families (as well as active-duty soldiers and their families), the city has chosen a day annually to honor all those that have served and continue to serve. We are proud of our veterans and their contributions to our city, our state and the nation as a whole."



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