

Town honors vets by hosting wall

BY MELANIE BOLTHOUSE
Summer Guide editor

For those affected by the Vietnam War, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. has served as a place of healing and remembrance.

To give everyone a chance to commemorate the historic U.S. event, three men from California constructed a moving replica of the wall

that has traveled the country for almost 20 years.

In August, northwest Michigan will get its chance to remember those who gave their lives in battle or are considered "Missing In Action" when the moving wall finds a temporary residence in Kalkaska.

"We want to remind people that Vietnam did happen," said Ron Kea, a chair-

man for the Michigan Heritage and Research Foundation.

The foundation, which is responsible for bringing the wall to the region, was formed in June 1991 to honor the 73 Michigan men who went missing in Vietnam and the state's more than 500 law enforcement officers killed while on duty.

The foundation's interest in the wall began three years ago, Kea said.

"Because of our purpose, we just thought bringing the wall should be part of our program," he said.

The 252-foot-long monument will be on display at the county fairgrounds in Kalkaska Aug. 22-28. While it is a miniature model of its more famous counterpart, it

holds all 58,235 names engraved on the wall in Washington D.C.

Vietnam veteran John Devitt created the moving wall with the help of colleagues Gerry Haver and Norris Shears in 1984, after attending the 1982 dedication of the real monument.

His purpose was to share his experience with others who might not have the opportunity to travel to the capital themselves.

Devitt now travels around the country 10 months of the year, displaying the wall in close to 30 cities.

The expense of bringing the wall to northwest Michigan is \$3,500, but Kea said the foundation expects to spend closer to \$10,000 on the event after brochures, landscaping and the proposed construction of a permanent flagpole. All of the money is being raised through donations to the Heritage and Research Foundation.

Opening ceremonies will take place at 4 p.m. Aug. 22. Then the moving wall will be on public display 24 hours a day until Aug. 28.

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