

## Volunteers help get the job done

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middletown

One volunteer has put in about 500 hours working on the township's Veterans Memorial Park.

Sometime in the next few months, James Remer will gaze at the finished Middletown Veterans Memorial Park and say a huge thank you again to one of the driving forces behind its construction: donated labor from union members and other volunteers.

Remer, a Vietnam veteran and chairman of the township veterans committee that is planning and raising money for the memorial, said it would never have gotten off the ground without union members and others willing to give up so much time and effort at no charge.

"Everyone has just been amazing; you can't say enough," said Remer. "We've gotten way over 1,000 hours of donated labor from all the unions and a lot more hours from other people who have volunteered."

The veterans park, being built on a piece of land next to the township public works complex on Veterans Highway, is taking shape rapidly and should be mostly complete by the end of the year, Remer said.

Veterans Memorial Park will include a wall with the names of veterans and other information, a gazebo, flags of the various branches of the U.S. military and other features. An old World War II Sherman tank, donated to Middletown by the Penndel American Legion Post, already has been set down on a concrete slab inside the park, where it will remain a permanent fixture.

On Wednesday, veterans committee and union members and other volunteers helped put up some signs at the park that recognize the volunteer work done by unions. The signs were made by Falls resident Kevin Golden, a member of the Carpenters Local 1462, and his girlfriend, Jennifer Estel, who owns a graphic design business.

"It's for the veterans," said Golden of his efforts on the park. "I always like to help out people who have helped the country."

Steve Aldrich, a Bensalem resident and Electricians Local 269 member, agreed.

"It's the right thing to do," he said. "The veterans have fought hard for us, so we can do this for them. Our members do a lot of community type stuff. We live in the community, so we like giving back to it."

Mike Fehrle, a member of Operating Engineers [heavy equipment operators] Local 542, said his father, Rich, a retired member of that union, has done much of the grading work at Memorial Park.

Matt Viola, who lives near the park in the township's Sycamore Ridge section, is not a union member but is one of many other volunteers who have done work at the park. He has put in about 500 hours.

"It's for a great cause," said Viola, who owns a landscaping company. "I have two brothers (John and David) who are veterans and I know a guy who lost a son in Iraq. It really makes me feel good doing work that honors veterans."

The veterans committee also has received donated and discounted material from many local businesses, said Remer. He roughly estimates that all the help will enable the park to be completed for about \$150,000, well below the estimated \$750,000 it would have taken without the help.

If those estimates prove to be accurate, Remer said the veterans committee would be able to pay back almost immediately much of the \$250,000 loan given the committee by the township to finish Memorial Park. The loan

is to be paid back over five years.

Local unions who have contributed to the park are: Carpenters Local 1462, Electricians Local 269, Laborers Local 57, Operating Engineers Local 542, Cement Masons Local 595, Roofers Local 30 and Bricklayers and Allied Crafts Local One Pennsylvania-Delaware.

Chris English can be reached at 215-949-4193 or [cenglish@phillyBurbs.com](mailto:cenglish@phillyBurbs.com).

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