

Dream park almost a reality

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middletown

The township's veterans memorial park is nearing completion and is scheduled to officially open in November.

The end of a long-held goal is in sight for a Middletown resident and Vietnam veteran who has dedicated the last several years of his life to a township veterans memorial park.

James Remer said the 1-acre park, located next to the township public works complex on Veterans Highway (Route 413), will officially open with a ceremony at 10 a.m. Nov. 6. The rain date is Nov. 7 at the same time.

"It will be the culmination of a lot of work by a lot of people," said Remer, who first approached the supervisors about his idea for Middletown Veterans Memorial Park more than four years ago.

"It will be a memorial to all veterans everywhere who have served in every war down through American history," he continued. "We hope it will be used by residents in Middletown and all around the area. It will be a real show park."

The park is about 75 percent to 80 percent completed, said Remer, who headed the township veterans committee that planned and raised money for the facility.

A small covered walking bridge that will span a small stream and connect the memorial park with a parking lot shared with the public works complex will be installed in the next two weeks, he said. Also, a 5,000-pound black granite stone inscribed with the picture of an American soldier and other military-related items probably will be installed sometime this week, Remer added.

Many elements of the park have been finished already. A circular concrete walkway is lined with several benches dedicated to veterans or some aspect of the military. For example, one is dedicated to dogs that have served in the military.

Sitting on a concrete slab near the middle of the park is a World War II Sherman Tank donated by the Pennel American Legion. It was painted and spruced up by local Boy Scout Christopher McConville of Troop 123 as one of the requirements to attain his Eagle rank.

Nine flag poles have been erected that fly the American, state and township flags, along with the flags of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine.

A pavilion will house ceremonies and classes for students from Neshaminy and other local school districts on field trips. An area near the pavilion is dedicated to Army Sgt. Jae Moon, a Middletown resident killed in Iraq on Christmas Day 2006.

To speed up construction, the supervisors last year approved a \$250,000 loan to the veterans committee that will be repaid over five years. However, because of all the free help from local unions and other volunteers, and discounts on materials from area businesses, Remer estimated the park can be completed for about \$125,000 and the loan paid back far ahead of schedule.

Two fundraisers are coming up that will help with that process. On Sept. 25, a "ball drop" will be held at the township-owned Middletown Country Club. People will buy golf balls that are dropped from a helicopter near a designated hole at the country club. The person who bought the golf ball that ends up closest to the hole will win a "significant" prize or cash or something else, Remer said.

Plus, a beef-and-beer is scheduled at the country club on Nov. 13, he added.

To donate, help with the memorial park, or for more information, call 215-431-4136 or 215-750-3825.

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