

Iraq War Pedestal dedication Nov. 12th

By Charles Duncan
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Veterans Day is almost upon us and the time has come to unveil the newest addition to Union County War Memorial Park.

The Iraq War Pedestal will be unveiled at a ceremony slated for 10 a.m., Monday, Nov. 12th at Union County War Memorial Park.

Bring the lawn chairs, (only a few seats will be there to accommodate handicapped individuals) and dress appropriately according to weather conditions.

Union County War Memorial is located at the corner of Veterans Memorial Drive (formerly School Street) and School Circle.

The Iraq War Pedestal is the result of a fund-raising drive during the summer when locals were asked to donate to the cause. And donate they did.

Veterans Committee members Roy Hamby, Chuck Honaker and Bob Spaulding spearheaded the fundraiser along with Commissioner Lamar Paris, who along with the *North Georgia News*, were among the first donations.

Honaker, who co-chaired the fund raising drive, and retired Veterans Affairs Director for Union County, Hamby, said the funds were collected from a cross section of residents, businesses, civic organizations, banks and churches.

When the fund drive began, almost \$3,900 separated the Veterans Committee and a fitting memorial to those who served in the War on Terrorism.

Honaker, who helped start the fundraiser, has about 10 pieces of shrapnel still inside him as a reminder of his prolonged service in Iraq.

His hearing was irreparably damaged after an improvised explosive device detonated while he was a gunner on patrol in Baghdad.

That blast severely injured Honaker and killed his friend and Staff Sgt. Bobby C. Franklin, who worked here in Union County.

On Nov. 12, the community will rally at Union County War Memorial for one of the most memorable Veterans Days in Union County history.

The war in Iraq didn't just come with a financial price tag. More than 4,400 military personnel died in the Iraq War which concluded in late 2011.

Union County's War Memorial was established in the mid-1990s and now includes the War on Terrorism, also known as the Iraq War Memorial.

Next year, expect another new addition, a pedestal representing the Afghanistan War Memorial.

"We have put a pedestal up for every major war," Hamby said. "That includes the Indian Wars that relate to this county. It's the right thing to do, it's the dignified thing to do to recognize the Iraq War veterans along with the rest of the wars because Congress has declared it a war.

"Those folks suited up to fight for their country," Hamby said. "And 4,409 paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country and untold numbers have served. Look at all the casualties, those wounded in



Artist/Sculptor Gregory Joranson, of Cumming, has a clay model of the Iraq War Pedestal for the Union County War Memorial.

action.

"Once you enter the military, your life is not your own. Once people start shooting at you, life is never the same," Hamby said. "You

ple Heart Medal.

The United States has officially marked the end of the military mission in Iraq. This nine-year commitment resulted in more than

ate armies from Union County are honored here.

Again, the ceremony begins at 10 a.m. at the War Memorial.



Bob Spaulding, Roy Hamby, Chuck Honaker and Lamar Paris put the ball in motion to complete the Iraq War Pedestal. Photo/Charles Duncan

can't ever change that, you can learn to live with it, you can make friends with what's bothering you, but you can't change it and it will never go away."

Honaker said the Iraq War Memorial is a necessary tribute.

"No one from Blairsville died in that war," Honaker said. "We did lose a county employee who lived in Fannin County. I was wounded, and I'm lucky to be alive. We need that memorial; it's only honorable to honor the fallen in one of the most significant wars in our lifetime."

The guest speaker for the dedication will be retired Army Command Sergeant Major Arthur Joseph McCann III.

CSM McCann served honorably, in Army Airborne, Ranger, and Infantry units for more than 27 years.

His combat tours include Operation Just Cause in Panama, the Gulf War, and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has been awarded the Legion of Merit, two Bronze Star Medals, the Soldiers Medal, and the Pur-

4,400 U.S. Military deaths and more than 32,000 U.S. Military wounded in action.

The time has come to properly recognize this sacrifice, Spaulding said.

Originally dedicated on Nov. 11, 1995, the Union County War Memorial Park depicts the 11 major wars as they impacted Union County, and the United States.

Centered at the memorial is a bronze eagle atop a nine and one half foot piece of black granite.

The eagle overlooks as if protecting the smaller pedestals honoring the 158 men from Union County who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our country during a war-time period.

Adjacent to the memorial are seven flag poles which fly the American, POW, Georgia, and five service flags.

This memorial is unique in that it honors the history of the Cherokee nation as they existed in Union County to the "Trail of Tears" depicting their removal and the ultimate destruction of their nation.

Also, with malice toward none, soldiers who fought and died for the Union and Confeder-



Chuck Honaker during his Tour of Duty in Iraq in 2003. He was wounded Aug. 20, 2003.