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DeGlopper team remains hard at work



ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY
MICHAEL J. BILLONI

Contributor

After getting over the disappointment that an elaborate unveiling and dedication of a life-sized statue of Grand Island's World War II hero, Pvt. Charles N. DeGlopper, has been postponed until June 5, 2021, the memorial volunteer committee was hard at work this week planning the completion of its fundraising goals.

Its first benefit will be the fifth annual Memorial Day "Flags on the Boulevard" "Never Forget our Fallen" program, sponsored by the DeGlopper Memorial VFW Post 9249. Flags will be flown for one week on the outer ring of the memorial park at the intersection of Grand Island Boulevard and Baseline Road. They will be placed in memory and honor those who gave their life for this country. Flags will be placed for a \$50 donation or \$100 with an accompanying 27-by-18-inch sponsor sign. Proceeds will be shared with the VFW Post for its veterans programs and the DeGlopper Memorial project expansion.

Deadline to purchase flags is May 1. For more information, call 773-6343 or email GIVFW9249@yahoo.com. Information will also be available at the Post at 4 p.m. Wednesday, April 29, when it hosts the first of three spring Chivetta's chicken barbecues.

"Our goal is to fill that park with flags and, with all we are going through, that will be a much-needed site for all of our Grand Island residents," said Alan Lee, VFW Post 9249 commander and current judge advocate.

Ray DeGlopper, nephew of the medal of honor war hero, is hopeful another fundraiser for the DeGlopper Memorial project expansion will also be held in the park over Memorial Day weekend. DeGlopper, commander of the Grand Island American Legion Post 1346, said the post's annual floral basket sale over Mother's Day weekend may be forced to move to Memorial Day weekend, where it would be set up inside the park. A raffle for a large floral planter will be held for the memorial project expansion.

Project Manager Dan Drexelius, owner of Double "D" Construction on Grand Island, encouraged all Island residents, veterans and others to help through financial donations of any size or through the purchase of three different sized brick or granite pavers, which are currently being placed around the monument site. For more information, or to donate, visit www.degloppermemorial.org.

Drexelius said thousands of potentially engraved bricks will be placed on the walkway from the cannon near the intersection of Baseline Road and Grand Island

COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial team met last Thursday night and announced the following:

Due to the unforeseen circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we regret to announce the postponement of the dedication of the DeGlopper Memorial Expansion from June 6, 2020, to June 5, 2021. We feel that this decision is in the best interest of public safety.

The DeGlopper Memorial expansion committee would like to extend its sincere thanks to the Grand Island community and all who have provided support. The memorial honoring the brave men and women who have served our country and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice will be one that is of major historical significance for our community. We look forward to your continued support as we work toward the completion of this project.

We assure you that our work to complete the project will continue as we are permitted to do so within the New York state guidelines for construction.

We invite you to visit the website at www.degloppermemorial.org for updates on the memorial, as well as opportunities to continue to help support our mission.

Sincerely,
 The DeGlopper Memorial Expansion Committee



Dan Drexelius, project manager, stands over the KIA pedestal of Pvt. Charles N. DeGlopper.

CHICKEN BBQ

The COVID-19 pandemic is not stopping the Pvt. Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial VFW Post 9249 from hosting its annual Chivetta's Chicken BBQ sale. The only difference is this spring's events will be drive-thru only, as the post is closed to the public.

The barbecues will be held at 4 p.m. Wednesdays, April 29, May 13 and 27. Dinner is priced at \$10 each and includes a 1/2 barbecue chicken, coleslaw, potato salad, dinner roll and butter.

The post is located at 2121 Grand Island Blvd. For more information, call the club at 773-6343.

Certainly the 6-foot, 7-inch real-life monument of DeGlopper, the U.S. Army World War II hero, will be the centerpiece of the park, but as Drexelius pointed out there will be so much more for visitors to explore.

Former Town Supervisor Mary Cooke, a member of Grand Island's historical society, chairs a committee that is researching all Island veterans. Members are writing descriptions of the 18 residents who were killed in action during their service for this country. The individual KIA pedestals are being placed around the KIA monument.

Drexelius said the committee has found details of a startling statistic: 68 Island residents fought in the Civil War when Grand Island only had less than 1,000 residents. They, too, will be honored at the site.

"This has been an amazing history lesson for all of us, and I encourage all Islanders to frequent the park often and say 'Thank you' to our brave veterans," he added.

Boulevard to around the Killed In Action statue, and around the elaborate Gold Star Mothers brick symbol where the statue will be placed next year, to the ground in front of the memorial walls.

"Once bricks are in place, our engraver will carve names on site probably twice a year; so, if someone wants a brick near a family member or friend we can hopefully accommodate them," he explained.

Drexelius, who volunteered to help build and raise funds to make the Miracle League Field in Veterans Park a reality, became involved with this project after receiving a call from Ray DeGlopper four years ago.

"How can you say no to Ray DeGlopper about a project like this?" explained Drexelius, who is not a veteran, but whose father and family members have served in the United States Armed Forces. "We are doing this as a labor of love for our veterans. This has become an amazing history lesson for all of us and, if it were not for these veterans who served, we would not be here today talking about it."