

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

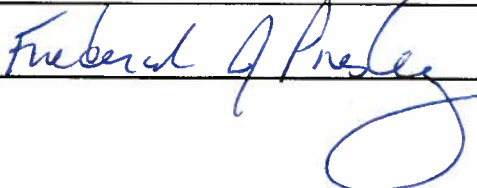
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Stafford County
Program Title: Partnering with the Community to Create a Lasting Memorial
Program Category: Parks and Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Fred J. Presley
Title: Deputy County Administrator
Signature: 

1. Program Overview

Stafford County wanted to create an Armed Services Memorial to honor those who had made the ultimate sacrifice, those who have served, are serving and their families. This memorial would recognize Stafford's participation in the nine major conflicts since the Revolutionary War. They also wanted young people, the future of Stafford County, to have a hand in its creation. And lastly, they wanted it to be somewhere that would be immune to development, an onerous requirement in a fast-growing county like Stafford.

The County appointed a commission of three members – all veterans with one Marine Corps General, a Virginia House of Delegates member and a Board of Supervisors member – to come up with a concept and plan the memorial.

In turn, this group organized a design contest among Stafford's five high schools, picking winners whose designs were used as the inspiration for the professional firm who designed the program. The commission worked with the design firm to finalize the design, timeline and cost.

Next, the Board of Supervisors appointed a group of citizen volunteers to a working group to organize fundraising for the \$835,000 memorial. One year and two months after the fundraising kick-off breakfast, the County held the dedication for the memorial on a beautiful July day. The group collaborated with businesses, individual donors and community organizations to raise the money in just about a year, several years less than initially was planned. The group was successful because they were effective at presenting the project and getting the community's buy-in. Any county could duplicate the steps the commission made by being organized, dedicated to the project and consistent with the message.

2. The Problem or Need for the Program

How do you honor someone who laid down his life serving his country, the Commonwealth and his county? This question was facing the Stafford Board of Supervisors six years ago when Donald and Colleen Lamar, broken-hearted parents, came to the Board asking them to name a street for their beloved son, Marine Corps Sergeant Donald James Lamar, II. Sgt. Lamar, age 23, lost his life in Afghanistan while serving his country, leaving behind a baby and a young wife. The Board decided they would recognize and honor all who had made the ultimate sacrifice as well as the sacrifices made by their families in a lasting memorial that could educate the public, serve as a gathering place and visible reminder of the cost of freedom. Stafford has a long history of service in our nation's armed services with presence in every major armed conflict fought by the United States. Quantico and other military installations are located nearby, and residents serving there have enriched Stafford's community life since the early part of the last century. Creating a memorial was something the County had long been interested in doing, but the request from the Lamar family galvanized the community into action. Partnering with the community was the key to the success of the planning and fundraising for such a significant endeavor.

3. How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

- a.** Innovation – Stafford had never built an armed services memorial before or any historical monument that cost \$835,000. When the Board of Supervisors appointed the Armed Services Memorial Commission, the only instructions they gave them was to build a memorial. The commission had to be innovative in every aspect of the planning. They had to come up with a creative plan to get young people involved – the contest. They had to decide what a memorial should mean for Stafford County,

what kind of tone it needed to set and how to tell the story. They had to determine how to convince folks that eventually, it was going to be a beautiful memorial and that it was actually going to happen. They did it by devising a fundraising folder that contained a pamphlet with design drawings, information on available sponsorships, a form for buying a brick to honor loved ones and other useful information that they printed, and put online. Every communication – via letter, email or in person, pointed people’s attention back to the website where all the available information was located.

- b. Partnering** – This was a tremendous opportunity to partner with governmental departments and the community. County Government collaborated with the schools to hold the design competition. Stafford partnered with the design firm closely to make sure the design was what the Board and the community wanted. The commission and working group worked with the Rotary and other community organizations to fundraise. Along with the Rotary, the commission connected with businesses and individuals who paid to sponsor items, offered in-kind donations or bought bricks. This project could not have been completed without all these partnerships and community networks.
- c. Model for Other Localities** – Groups interested in creating a similar, successful program could use this submission as a starting point. First, determine what it is you are trying to accomplish. Find the people who can help you do it – community leaders and dedicated volunteers. Find a way to tell your story that connects with the community. Be persistent with fundraising and be appreciative. Stafford even had one donor donate multiple times.

4. Description of the Program

Perhaps the most vital step in the success of the Armed Services Memorial program was the selection of the commission members. The Board wanted members who had military experience, understood the community and with strong networks perfect for this project. They appointed: Lt. Gen. Ron Christmas, USMC-Ret., founder of the National Museum of the Marine Corps; Supervisor Gary Snellings, member of the Board of Supervisors, Stafford native and Air Force veteran; and Mark Dudenhefer, who at the time was a former supervisor and Delegate to the Virginia House of Delegates as well as a retired Marine Corps colonel. All three men had extensive contacts in the community as well as an appreciation for the enormous responsibility of building an armed services memorial. The commission was assigned a County staff liaison, who supported them in their meetings and tasks.

One of the first actions by the commission was to create a vision statement and a concept. Their vision culminated in the following: “The memorial will be a fitting place for the public to honor the fallen, salute our veterans, and remind our citizens that the preservation of freedom requires service and sacrifice.” They wanted a memorial with a sense of community, pride, sacrifice, honor, courage, history, simple beauty and awe, which became the foundation of the program.

The next step was surprisingly one of the more difficult – finding the proper location. The commission talked about other memorials in other places, even ones situated next to a fast food restaurant. They did not want that to happen to this memorial. A list of County-owned parcels was provided by Planning and Zoning. Another important consideration was the availability of parking. There had to be plenty of parking as the commission and Board envisioned holding community events at the memorial. The site that was chosen is adjacent to the Stafford County

Government Center campus. There is abundant parking, as the site is part of the campus, and there is very little chance of anything being developed around it. The ready-made parking saved money by dispensing with the need to clear and grade a big area and pave it for parking. The only thing that had to be removed and graded was the narrow strip of land upon which the memorial was built.

Next, the commission decided to include schoolchildren in creating the memorial, as the commission felt children were the future of both the armed services and the county. They worked with Stafford County Public Schools to conduct a design competition among Stafford's five high schools. The commission selected five final designs, awarding the top student a \$1,500 scholarship. Gen. Christmas arranged for a prestigious Washington, D.C. architect to critique each finalist's design at a special awards reception held in their honor.

The commission used elements of the children's designs to create a Request for Proposal (RFP) to build the memorial. They added memorial bricks to the design that citizens could buy in memory of their family and friends. They selected Kline Memorials in nearby Manassas, Virginia. The commission worked with Kline on the initial design for a cost of \$650,000.

The commission's next stop was to strategize on securing partnerships with the community. A promotional pamphlet was created detailing the history of the memorial, its purpose and renderings of the design. Members of the commission visited veterans' organizations and other local groups, spoke with the press and started reaching out to their contacts. Staff created a free website for the memorial as well as a Facebook page.

The Board of Supervisors appointed a Working Group to oversee fundraising. This group comprised of ten men and women from the community began meeting in January 2016; the commission met with them jointly. The group brainstormed possible community and business

partners. They devised a system of sponsorship complete with a packet detailing levels of donations and recognition for those donations. Each major element of the memorial was available for sponsorship. The group initially concentrated on securing the top sponsorships, to be announced at a breakfast campaign kick-off in May 2016.

Their efforts resulted in a substantial donation of \$100,000 from a local businessperson in honor of his father and grandfather, both of whom served in the military. Two other businesses quickly followed suit with donations of \$25,000 each. Stafford County offered to donate a third of the total \$650,000 cost. The media coverage of the kick-off breakfast help fuel the interest in the memorial and donations. The members of the commission and the working group contacted potential sponsors in earnest, writing letters, emails, calling and meeting with people.

The commission created a memorandum of understanding between Stafford County and the Stafford Rotary, a community partner and a 501(c) 3, to take donations on behalf of the county and to sell bricks. The County also accepted donations directly, but the Rotary accepted donations on behalf of organizations that only donate to those with 501(c) 3 status.

The commission and working group expected fundraising to take several years but raised the \$650,000 initial fundraising goal in less than a year, resulting in a compressed schedule of quick planning for a groundbreaking in early 2017 and a dedication six months later. Members continued to raise funds to allow for upgrades to the memorial to make it even more special. The final construction cost was \$838,000. On July 15, 2017, a dedication was held with the Commandant of the Marine Corps General Robert B. Neller as the keynote speaker and a vocalist from the President's Own United States Marine Corps Band, among other musical guests.

5. The Cost of the Program

The memorial cost \$838,000 to design and build. An added cost not calculated, but significant to the success of the project, was the time spent by staff assisting the commission and overseeing the project. As well, the citizen volunteers and members of the civic organizations with which Stafford partnered volunteered their valuable time on behalf of the memorial. Most items that were needed were included in the \$838,000 combination of raised funds and donated County funds. Below is a list of the types of items that were purchased with the fundraising money:

- Printed folders for fundraising info
- Postage for formal invitations for dedication and fundraising prospects
- Printed thank you notes (resulting from an in-kind donation valued at \$500)
- Stationary
- \$1,500 scholarship for design contest winner
- Dessert reception for design contest participants
- Fundraising kick-off breakfast catering
- Fundraising kick-off breakfast favors (coffee mugs)
- Dedication flowers
- Dedication tent rentals
- Dedication favors
- Dedication commemorative cookies
- Donor Reception

6. Tangible Results or Measurable Outcomes of the Program

One definite measure of the success of the program was how quickly the money was raised. The group raised the initial fundraising goal in less than a year. Of 1,300 bricks available for purchase, 539 have been purchased so far and the others are available for sale as a continuous fundraiser. An unexpected result of the memorial is it has become a location for weddings. The memorial is near the courthouse on the government campus and many young service members come there to be married. More than 100 couples have been married at the memorial since its opening in July 2017. Visitors to the memorial have left numerous tokens to honor fellow service members. Those items are collected and displayed in Stafford's Government Center lobby. The memorial has also become a stop on student tours of the Government Center as well as a draw for visitors to the county. Stafford has already held a Veterans Day ceremony at the site and plans to hold annual ceremonies. Stafford's Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities team maintains the care of and upkeep of our memorial, representing another way the entire county has come together to support the project and ensure continued enjoyment for those that come to pay their respects. Perhaps the best indicators of the success of the program are the many heartfelt sentiments of gratitude expressed from multiple veterans, active duty members and their families.

All involved learned the importance of being appreciative of community partners and sponsors. Partners and sponsors were honored in many ways including personal notes, recognition on the website, Facebook page and County publications, VIP seating at events and inclusion on a special plaque in the memorial. A formal reception was held for the partners after the memorial was opened and each was presented with a token of appreciation from Stafford County. The

years of working together on this project strengthened the ties between business, community organizations and County government.

Additionally, the memorial has become a civic/educational asset, visited by schoolchildren, members of the military, employees and those who may want to sit and remember.

7. Brief Summary

Stafford's partnership to create an Armed Services Memorial is worthy of an achievement award because it indeed was a simple idea that became an incredible asset for the county and brought the community closer together. Stafford can feel like a bedroom community to Washington, D.C. There is no downtown area for the County, and the Armed Services Memorial Commission wanted to create a space that would have a sense of community to it.

The memorial came out of a request, and it was something the county had never done before but was of great honor to the many men and women who have served in the military and lived at some point in the county. The County had to develop the program from scratch, and it was an innovative, original process. While other localities had memorials, Stafford figured out what would work best for its community and found a success that can be duplicated by other localities and groups. For County government, it was an exercise in working together as a team. Many times, departments can be caught up in their own responsibilities and not interact. This program and endeavor required a level of intergovernmental cooperation that is not part of everyday work. It was good practice for any time the County needs to gather to achieve the same objective.

Supporting Information

[Creation of Armed Services Memorial Video](#)







