

Veterans Memorial Park



Photo by Fran S. Hunter

311 NW 2nd Street / Smithville, Texas

Veterans Memorial Park pays tribute to everyone who has worn a uniform with pride and dignity: anyone who is currently serving our great country, anyone who has served in the past during war or peace, and anyone who survived conflict or perished in it. In short, anyone from anywhere who has signed up for service in any of the military branches at any time can find a place in this Memorial. Anyone wishing to honor a family member, friend, mentor, or colleague who is serving or has served is welcome to add that person's name to the wall, the pavers, and the catalogue of heroes.

During the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (2001 to 2012), Bastrop County mourned seven military service personnel who had gone to the conflict overseas and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

- Pfc. Tina Marie Priest (March 1, 2006 Taji, Iraq)
- Spc. Joshua Ray Farris (July 9, 2009 Afghanistan)
- Captain Joshua Meadows (11/5/2009 Afghanistan)
- Lance Cpl. Cody R. Stanley, (10/28/2009 Afghanistan)
- Sgt. Mario Rodriguez, Jr. (6/11/2010 Afghanistan)
- Navy Seal Member Matthew Mills from Seal Team 6 (8/6/2011, Afghanistan)
- Staff Sergeant Joe Altmann (12/25/2011, Afghanistan)

They were the initial inspiration for this Park, and Bill McGlaun's (www.billsbronze.com) beautiful 15-foot tall statue of an angel holds the dog tags of the seven fallen ("Homeward"). She represents the sacrifice they and others have made in defending this country and her principles of democracy and freedom. Beyond her are the walls representing service, on which are plaques with a continually growing list of names. These walls will be an ongoing project, and more names will be added over time. Past the walls, the splash pad represents the reason people join the armed forces—the children who play in its waters represent the freedom they protect and the future of this great nation.

Veterans Memorial Park was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 27, 2013 in front of an estimated 1,100 people. It is now open to the public from about 8AM to about dusk. A button activates the splash pad; children can push it as they play. The splash pad is open seasonally during regular Park hours.

During the dedication, the Smithville Color Guard presented colors to open the dedication ceremony and presented a Volley of Three. The names of those veterans who were honored in the park and were killed in action, missing in action, died of wounds from battle, or taken prisoner of war were read aloud in a Roll Call during the ceremony. Senator John Cornyn, Congressman Michael McCaul, Major General Jimmie Jaye Wells, County Judge Paul Pape, County Commissioner Clara Beckett, and Smithville Mayor Mark Bunte spoke at the dedication ceremony.

The Next Phase: Archival Database

This vision includes providing an internet archive of as many individuals as possible so that people may learn more about the history of the veterans memorialized in the Park. Having accurate records to add veterans' names and to describe their personal stories will be an integral part of this process. The resulting database will become a great boon to people doing research on these heroes. Volunteers are needed to help research the biographies of the veterans listed at the Veterans Memorial Park, and information from family and friends is welcome.

The Smithville Public Library will house the database, striving to ensure that every name in the Memorial Park is complete with rank and branch of service and other information such as written and oral histories from the veterans themselves or their family and other electronic data, such as scanned copies of photos or newspaper clippings. This database will be available to the public and will serve as a link to each individual for genealogical or other research.

A heartfelt thank you to our Sponsors

At its dedication, the Veterans Memorial Park was valued at an estimated \$720,000, including the value of the land, in-kind materials and labor, and the cost of the plaques, the splash pad, and other features of the Park. It would not have been possible to build this park without the dedication and commitment of many individuals and businesses, and we are eternally grateful for each and every one of them.

Continuing the Legacy

Although the main fundraising efforts are over and the Park is now open, the continuing need to install plaques as more names are submitted, the development of the database, and ongoing maintenance will require additional funding. (Please note: Donations are not tax deductible). Please contact us to learn about pavers or family plaques, and to provide information about veterans.

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For more information and to donate for the future:
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 www.facebook.com/TXVeterans MemorialPark

Memorial Day, May 27, 2013 Park Dedication

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A Place to Pay Tribute
 A Place to Pray for Peace

Veterans Memorial Park

Letter from Mayor Mark Bunte

I'll never forget it. The church was filled to capacity with family, friends and many citizens of Smithville, all come to honor Sgt. Mario Rodriguez Jr., who fell in Afghanistan in service to his country on June 11, 2010. That was the day I decided I wanted to honor this young man's sacrifice, and support his family. I wanted to pay tribute to him and all of our veterans of Bastrop County, and indeed, of the nation.

The Veterans Memorial Park was born in Smithville Texas that day as tribute to all military families and the innumerable husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons & daughters who have served this great nation.

The families of fallen heroes envisioned a truly unique way to honor the men and women who have provided for and protected the freedoms and liberties that Americans enjoy each and every day.

We thank everyone who has helped make this important vision a reality.

Mark A. Bunte



Mayor Mark Bunte surveys the posts that will secure the Angel to the earth.



Omega Bronze Foundry takes molds from the clay Angel, sculpted by Bill McGlaun.



Sculptor Bill McGlaun with the angel's head.



Early days at the Park.



Volunteer Randy Jubert has installed most of the plaques.