

Tribute garden in progress

By Alison Miller

Staff Writer

Final planning is under way for the Thornton Veterans Memorial, and officials for the foundation continue to hope the memorial will have its grand opening on Memorial Day 2007.

Tony Hake, vice chair for the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation, said the memorial is envisioned to be a place where all veterans will be honored, quiet reflection can take place and ceremonies can be held.

"This veterans' memorial is a significant project not only for the city of Thornton, but all of Colorado as well," Hake said.

"With the help of local citizens and area businesses, the construction of this memorial will be a testament to the men and women of the past, present and future that have fought and continue to fight for the freedoms which we all enjoy."

For Terry Cooper, one of the founding members of TVMF, the memorial will stand as a tribute to her fallen son as well as what she described as "a great achievement for the city."

Cooper's son, Lance Cpl. Thomas Slocum, was the first casualty from Colorado in Operation Iraqi Freedom when he died at age 22.

Cooper said it was the support from the community that initially drew her in to the memorial project, and she now has a deeper understanding of why Thornton needs a memorial to honor veterans.

"This city was started by military veterans, and when my son died I discovered how many families out there have somebody serving in the military who are from here," Cooper said. "We should have had a memorial a long time ago."

Cooper said the project is in its infancy and has just moved out of the design phase into a fundraising campaign.

Landscape Architect Greg Banks from Valerian, LLC, designed the memorial based on a five point star. In the center of the memorial, a star will be laid in the ground with three flag poles holding the American, Colorado and POW/MIA flags placed in the middle of the star.

Hake said each point of the main star will be directed at an Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine and Navy satellite memorial that will feature painted scenes depicting the history of each branch.

The circular memorial will measure 150 feet in diameter and be situated on the northeast corner of a new city-designated 18-acre open space located at 139th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard

According to Hake, it was a natural place to build the memorial because it is the highest point in Thornton.

Hake said fund raising will be the key to their success and hopes the community will come together to support the memorial.

"We will be out and visible in the community at every event from now until this project is finished," Hake said.

"We would appreciate any donations from citizens and business of everything from money to paper products, as well as bricks we intend to sell that will be laid in the pathways at the memorial with donors' names engraved in them."

TVMF is working closely with Thornton city officials to promote the memorial, and Hake said they will be closely tied with the city's Fourth of July "Tribute to the Troops" event this summer.

"Remembering the dedication and sacrifice of our armed forces is very important," Hake said. "We are committed to providing a memorial the city can be proud of, and our tent at the Fourth of July celebration will allow residents the opportunity to see what the memorial will look like."

More information about the memorial can be found at www.thorntonveteransmemorial.org.