

Unique Florida Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial coming to PSL's Veterans Memorial Park

FOR VETERAN VOICE

The Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial Foundation has announced that Port St. Lucie's Veterans Memorial Park will be the home for its new monument honoring fallen Floridians from the Global War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The monument is expected to be dedicated in December of this year. Crafted by PG Memorials from India Black Granite (like the Vietnam War Memorial), when dedicated, it will be the only monument of its kind in Florida.

"There are some monuments in the state in honor of those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, but ours will be unique because it will list Floridians who were killed in each war," said Steve Udovich, the foundation's founder, in a press release.

"There's no other monument like it in Florida and possibly the United States," he said. "We believe Port St. Lucie's beautiful Veteran's Memorial Park is the best location in the entire state of Florida for this monument to honor these service members who made the ultimate sacrifice."

Energetic Veterans advocate

No stranger to advocacy and support for Veterans, Udovich — who served 10 years on active duty and 13 years with the National Guard and Army Reserve, including a year as an advisor team commander in Iraq — has dedicated his time to the nation's war heroes.

In 2006, he founded a program for wounded servicemembers called Warrior Weekend. While running the program for five years, he raised an average of \$50,000 a year in cash and donated services and supervised 36 weekend R&R trips for servicemembers recovering from wounds at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Udovich spoke to the City Council of Port St. Lucie, along with Karen Zook, president of American Gold Star Mothers Inc. Treasure Coast Chapter, and her husband, Mark. In October 2022, the city board unanimously approved the monument. The Zooks' son, Marine Cpl. Ian Zook, was killed Oct. 12, 2004, in Anbar Province, Iraq.

Cpl. Zook's name joins that of U.S. Army Spc. Jordan Schuman, who died July 5, 2011, in Paktya Province, Afghanistan. He was the son of Linda Schumann, president of AGSM Inc. St. Lucie, and her husband, Clay

Monument to join honored group

Port St. Lucie's Veterans Memorial Park includes the Vietnam Veterans wall, World War II Memorial, and Korean War Memorial, Purple Heart Memorial and Gold Star Families Memorial.

"Port St Lucie is a Veterans' community. Our citizens truly appreciate and honor our veterans and those who gave their lives for our freedom," said Veteran and Port St. Lucie Councilman David Pickett in the press release. "We look forward to working with the Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial Foundation to bring this important memorial to our

City."

PG Memorials has crafted 11 memorials in Florida to date, according to Udovich. They pioneered laser etching techniques, and are "the best in the business," he said. More of their work can be seen at picturethisongranite.com.

The front of the monument will include campaign ribbons, outlines of each country, and service emblems. The back will list 355 names of Floridians who were killed in each war.

The Foundation intends this to be the first effort, then plans to work toward duplicating

it in other states, with the same design with state-specific names, according to Udovich.

The Foundation is now raising funds for the Florida monument. According to Udovich, "about a third [of the approximate \$90,000 cost] has been raised."

Those interested in donating, or learning more, are urged to visit www.IAWMF.org.

Donations can be made online, or make checks payable to IAWMF, P.O. Box 491, Dunedin, FL 34697.

The Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial Foundation is an IRS approved 501(c)3. All donations are tax deductible.



Image courtesy of The Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial Foundation/PG Memorials

Florida will host the first-of-its-kind Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial, at Veterans Memorial Park, Port St. Lucie. Crafted by PG Memorials, the front of the monument will include campaign ribbons, outlines of each country, and service emblems. The back will list 355 names of Floridians who were killed in each war. Dedication is planned for December of this year.