Plans signed to build replica of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

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The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services and Vietnam Veterans of America Northern

New Mexico Chapter 996 signed a Memorandum of Understanding July 17 to build a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.

Under the agreement, VVA will commence fundraising, independent of DVS, to cover the estimated $300,000 cost of building the replica of the national Wall featuring the names of the 58,318 American service members killed in action or listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War. Of that total, 398 are from New Mexico.

VVA Chapter 996 will commission an artist for the project. Once the replica wall is finished, it will be donated to DVS and displayed at its Vietnam Veterans Memorial and State Veterans Cemetery in Angel Fire.

“This collaboration recognizes and honors New Mexico’s Vietnam War veterans, especially those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and did not come home,” said DVS Secretary Judy Griego. “This Wall strengthens our state’s resolve that we will never forget our men and women who bravely and honorably served our country during the Vietnam War.”

Once the replica wall memorial is built, members from the David Westphall Memorial Foundation will also volunteer to help with maintenance and upkeep.

“This is a long time coming…a dream come true for New Mexico’s Vietnam War veterans and their families,” said VVA Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 President Jake Lopez. “I am grateful for this partnership with DVS, which is showing a strong commitment to honoring those of us who served in Vietnam.”

To Make a Donation to VVA Chapter 996

VVA Northern New Mexico Chapter 996 is a Congressionally-chartered 501- (c)19 nonprofit corporation. Donations to its fundraising to build the replica wall can be made by going to the chapter’s website dedicated to the wall effort at www.vietnammemorial.net. Donations are tax-deductible.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire was built by Albuquerque residents Victor and Jeanne Westphall in 1971 as a memorial to Marine 1st Lt. David Westphall. Their 28-year-old son was one of 16 Marines from Bravo Company/Third Division on patrol who were killed in an ambush by North Vietnamese forces near the North/South Vietnam border on May 22, 1968.

The Memorial was dedicated on the third anniversary of his death in 1971. The Westphall Foundation was created to raise funding to recoup construction costs and for maintenance.

In 2005, the Foundation donated the Memorial to the State Parks Division. Management of the Memorial was transferred to DVS in 2017.

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