

September 6, 2016 Press Conference – Wall of Faces

Address by Thaddeus Placzynski, Director of Erie County Veterans Affairs Department

I wish to thank each of you in attendance who understand and appreciate the significance of this outing. Approximately a month ago I took on the role of the Director of Veterans Affairs for Erie County. Working in this capacity is a great honor for me. Each day I am grateful to be entrusted with the responsibility of assisting Erie County's veterans with everything from processing service related claims to guiding them to resources available to them throughout our county and the commonwealth.

Today I would like to share with each of you a Nationwide initiative supported by Erie County that will warm your hearts and possibly bring a tear to your eyes. This initiative (Wall of Faces) focuses on taking a first step towards honoring and always preserving the legacy of the Fallen Vietnam Veterans of Erie County. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is committed to finding a photo to go with each of the 58,315 names on The Wall located in Washington, DC. This is an effort being undertaken by each and every county in the US. I am proud to announce that on July 28th of this year Nebraska was the 16th state to have submitted a picture of each and every one of their fallen Vietnam Veterans.

With that said; I wish to call out today to those friends and family members of the 59 Erie County Fallen Vietnam Veterans with the request that you assist in forever preserving their memory. Specifically, my office is collecting pictures and/or stories of these veterans for purposes of placing them in a place of honor. This place of honor is currently a tractor trailer that travels throughout the US with a scaled down version of the Wall. On one side of the scaled down wall are the inscribed names of the Fallen and on the other are 3---75 inch color screens that are linked to digital pics of each of the Fallen Vietnam Veterans that are currently on file. This tractor trailer is known as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Funds mobile Education Center. This is only one prong of this effort. The other is to construct a Memorial on the 3 acres that currently is home to The Wall. At this point funding is approximately 100 million dollars short. According to the Director leading the charge funding is the only hurdle not yet cleared for construction of this memorial.

The pics and stories that we collect commemorating Erie Veterans will be placed both in the Mobile education center and in the Memorial to be constructed adjacent to The Wall. My office is assisting with this effort so the 59 fallen Erie County veterans will always be remembered and honored for the sacrifice they and their families made. In the years to come when the next generation of veterans and civilians alike visit either the wall or the mobile education center the Fallen Erie County Vietnam Veterans will forever have their place in history. That brings me to where each of you come in.

This is a challenging undertaking. If you know anyone who is a friend or relative of any of these veterans please let them know that pics and stories of the veterans are being collected. My office will be the drop off point for these items. It is my hope that we can collect something from each of the 59 veterans so they can be forever remembered for their service.

Thank you to each of you gathered here today. Before handing the microphone I would like to acknowledge those in the audience who have served. Special thanks to each of you for your service.

If you should have any questions about this initiative please contact me at your convenience so we can make this dream a reality.