

Contract signed for Vietnam wall in E'town

More than \$300,000 raised for project

By Ryan Alves

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It's official: A permanent Vietnam veterans memorial wall is coming to Elizabethtown.



Elizabethtown Mayor Edna Berger laughs with Vietnam veterans David Jarrett and Dirk Wright at Thursday's contract signing for the Vietnam veterans memorial wall coming to the Elizabethtown Nature Park.

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C.T. Christie, president of the Veterans Tribute Group Inc., signs a contract Thursday to bring the only permanent Vietnam veteran memorial wall in Kentucky to Elizabethtown.

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The Veterans Tribute Group Inc. signed the contract Thursday morning at the Elizabethtown Tourism & Convention Bureau building, which signified the \$300,000 cost of the wall was paid for. The donations have been pouring in for the project since plans were finalized last August.

What's left is the \$295,000 for the wall's construction, which will be completed by Memorial Day 2018, group President C.T. Christie said.

"It's all downhill from here," he said after the signing ceremony. "We couldn't have done this without so many people's help and the community stepping up and getting behind it. We hope they continue to get behind us, too."

Once the remaining money is raised, the construction will take four to six months, group Treasurer David Cowherd said.

It then will become Kentucky's only permanent Vietnam veterans memorial wall. The wall will sit near the Hardin County Veterans Tribute at Elizabethtown Nature Park near Freeman Lake Park. It will be an 80-percent scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"This will be a great educational tool for students and a place of healing for veterans," Christie said.

Around 10 Vietnam veterans came to the signing, which also served as a celebration for project partners.

Carl Swope of the Swope Family of Dealerships was in attendance and received an ovation for his \$25,000 donation. The Elizabethtown Tourism & Convention Bureau also made a large donation: \$150,000 toward the project.

Elizabethtown city government provided the land where the wall will sit and will provide tools and equipment to help construct the wall, Christie said.

"This is going to be a big boon for our tourism," Elizabethtown Mayor Edna Berger said. "We're honored to be a part of this. We absolutely feel blessed. I think we have the perfect place for it."

Jack Johnson of Elizabethtown Community and Technical College's computer-aided drafting department helped design the wall at no cost.

"That kept us from having to pay someone for designs," Christie said. "That saved us a lot of money."

Several veterans in attendance spoke about how other Vietnam groups already are planning trips to Elizabethtown for anniversaries, with the wall being the main attraction.

"And this isn't just going to be a Hardin County or a Kentucky thing," Christie said. "In the contract, it states another group can't build a wall like this within 100 miles of ours. So this is also a project for the entire Midwest."

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