

Press photo
2022

Fund drive, upgrades launched at Patriot Park

BY DAVID HURST
DHURST@TRIBDEM.COM

SHANKSVILLE - An excavator was at work Friday inside Patriot Park, digging a narrow trench to enable crews to run electricity to their 17-acre property.

It's the first step in a new phase of work planned for 2022 at the park - and one they need plenty of help with, Patri-

ot Park President Randy Musser said.

The nonprofit kicked off a \$95,000 fundraiser this week to enable them to illuminate the 40-foot flag, add new informational placards and a station that documents the name of every life U.S. lost in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

"When people exit the (nearby) Flight

93 National Memorial and turn onto Route 30, we want them to see our giant flag in the distance in front of them," Musser said.

Organizers debuted the U.S. Route 30 site last summer as a tribute to the more than 7,000 lives lost during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Their centerpiece flag stands in the

middle of the property and will once again be joined by the Field of Heroes - rows of small flags honoring each member of the military who died during that span.

The electrical hook-up will enable the group to host different events on-site,

Please see **PARK, A2**



DAVID HURST/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Patriot Park's Pat Walker, Pat Terlingo and President Randy Musser (from left) stand near an area being excavated for electricity service on Friday at the site near Shanksville.

PARK

Continued from A1

including ceremonies during Memorial Day and Independence Day, he added.

"We wanted to get something on the ground last year - introduce ourselves to people and show them they can have confidence in us and what we're trying to do," Musser said. "And now, we're hopeful people will get behind it."

Patriot Park officials have already seen examples of that in the form of contributions, land donations and even in-kind labor to develop the park.

A member of Boswell-based Berkey Excavating was trench digging free of charge Friday to support the effort - a move Musser said will enable the foundation to cut thousands of dollars off the \$25,000 estimate for Penelec to run electricity to the site and for electrical boxes to be added at several locations.

Other plans include adding gravel to improve and expand their parking lot and a dozen new storyboards that would educate visitors about different aspects of the war.

That includes the role of battlefield medics, bomb detecting military K-9's - topics that Shade-Central City, Shanksville-Stonycreek and North Star students are researching for them.

At one end of the park, an exhibit space will be added to enable visitors to find the names of each service member who died during the 20-year-long "war on terror."

A heavy duty, weather-resistant book is being prepared for the exhibit, Musser said.

He said the fundraiser will support all of that work, as well as operational costs, such as annual insurance fees.

The group is sending out direct mailings, emails and reaching out to veterans groups, including the American Legion for support.

Supporters can also visit www.patriotparkfoundation.org to learn more about the

2022 Fund Drive and donate.

"We've come a long way - and we're going to keep moving along," Patriot Park member Pat Terlingo said. "It's just a matter of getting our mission out there for people to see."

Upcoming season

Several events are being planned for the 2022 season, including the park's inaugural Memorial Day ceremony.

Details are still being finalized, he said.

On the Fourth of July, Veterans and Athletes United will bring a traveling exhibit to the park that will feature an American flag made entirely of red, gold and blue dog tags.

One is inscribed for each life lost.

"It's going to be a busy year," Musser said.

David Hurst is a reporter for The Tribune-Democrat. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @TDDavidHurst.