



PATRIOT PARK

HONORING THOSE WHO FOUGHT
THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

September 2023 News & Updates

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President's Report

This summer has been flying by here at Patriot Park. It has been jam-packed with events and activities. Of course, we opened the season with a Memorial Ceremony honoring all those killed in the Global War on Terrorism. That was followed up with the arrival of the Veterans and Athletes United Memorial Flag made of red, white, and blue dog tags, each bearing the name of a service man or woman who died in the war. The flag was at the Park through most of July. On July 14 we hosted a concert to benefit Tunnel 2 Towers. We had some issues with rain but stayed dry during the concert. The Flight 93 Memorial Chorus and A Touch of Brass performed for the event. We raised \$371 for Tunnel 2 Towers. Finally, on August 10th we held our first ever fundraising dinner with Pittsburgh Steeler running back Rocky Bleier. It was a huge success and everyone had a fantastic evening. Rocky Bleier was so gracious and spent personal time with everyone who asked for a picture or autograph. Now, as we finish up summer and move into the fall season, we are focused on improvements at the Park and developing support for construction of the Visitor Center and Gold Star Memorial Plaza.



THANK YOU! – **Randy Musser**

Donations to be matched by generous donor

We are thrilled to announce that a very generous donor has stepped forward and pledged a \$25,000 matching fund donation. For every dollar Patriot Park Foundation receives from now until the end of the year the donor will also contribute one dollar. In other words, your contribution to the work of the Park has double the impact.

Why donate to Patriot Park? Our mission is to remember those who gave their lives in the fight against terrorism, honor all those who served during the war, and inspire all Park visitors to live lives that are worthy of the sacrifices made by so many in the U.S. Military since the events of 9/11. The other day a lady with two young children was gazing out over the Field of Heroes Flag Display. A volunteer approached and noticed tears streaming down her cheeks. After taking a few seconds to compose herself she said she was from Ohio and wanted to visit the Park to show her granddaughters that freedom was not free. If

visitors can take away that thought, we have accomplished our mission.

We have accomplished a lot in the 3 years that the Park has been open. We continue to make improvements but they all require financial support. The organization also continues to position itself to kick off the national fund drive necessary to complete all the elements proposed in the development plan. As always, none of the officers or board members receive any compensation. All donations go to operation and maintenance of the Park and design and planning for completion of the Park. Patriot Park Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations may be made by mailing a check to Patriot Park Foundation at 6150 Lincoln Highway, Stoystown PA or by going to the How to Help portal on the Patriotparkfoundation.org website. Please help us continue this worthwhile mission. Remember, Freedom isn't free!

A Night to Remember

Our First Fundraising Dinner

We had it all: A fantastic venue (donated by Curt and Liz Wyandt) with a glorious view of the surrounding hills, the perfect speaker for a Veterans related event (American hero, Rocky Bleir), patriotic and upbeat background music (by singer Danner Conner and DJ Jan Jursa), dozens of veterans and their families among the sold-out crowd of 300, a delicious buffet (by Joey Del), and first-class drinks from Forbes Trail Brewery and Rusty Musket Distillery.

It was a night to remember because of the special buzz in the converted barn of the Friesland Event Center in Hooversville, PA. A sense of patriotism was in the air all night long – from the Pledge of Allegiance led by Meyersdale High School student Laurel Daniels to Danny Conner’s singing of God Bless America, and reached a crescendo in the highly entertaining and moving keynote address by an authentic American hero.

Rocky Bleier, a superstar in high school and college (Notre Dame), was then drafted by the Steelers. Not long after, he was drafted once again by Uncle Sam. After being badly wounded in Vietnam, he refused to believe medical opinions that he would never play football again. Not only did he play again, but standing in that barn in Hooversville, he showed us all the four Super Bowl rings he brought along. His story, his charisma, his patriotism and his presence were greatly appreciated by all of us in attendance and evidenced by multiple standing ovations for this great American.

It was a wonderful night. But there is another reason it was a night to remember, a more important reason. Behind it all we were there to remember those who sacrificed so much in the wars that followed the attacks of 9/11, and in doing so to help raise money to support the mission of Patriot Park.

So “the night to remember” was really the official kick-off event for this year’s fundraising activities. We know that once people find out more about Patriot Park, fundraising will not be difficult. But because we are not so well-known yet, fundraising remains a challenge.

Just like Rocky Bleier would not give up despite the odds against him, we will not give up or let up in taking Patriot Park to the next level. We know that as more Americans learn about the Park, they will generously support it. Because most Americans still love and respect their military and are smart enough to know that it wasn’t the politicians or corporate executives who put their lives on the line time and time again since 9/11. It was the U.S. military.

We cannot ever forget the sacrifices of these American heroes and their families.

As one veteran of the Iraq War wrote in our visitors log at Patriot Park: “We want to live for those who we could not bring home with us.” Another wrote: “As a wounded combat veteran, this warms my heart.”

These are just a couple of examples of the tremendous feedback we get from visitors. These comments validate that we are on the right track “to remember,” and with your generous support we know that even greater things are in the future.

Our first fundraiser was indeed “a night to remember.” With your help, with us working together, each day at Patriot Park will be “a day to remember” for all of our visitors.





2023 Improvements at Patriot Park

We have been very busy making additions to and improvements at Patriot Park this summer. A desert camo Humvee was donated by GovPlanet.com and hauled by Jason Svonavec to the Vo Tech School, where students prepped it for display at the Park. Hauger Automotive then hauled it to the Park for display. Bill and Jan Szych donated 2 Adirondack chairs and a kneeler for an area that can be used to sit quietly and/or pray as one looks out over the Field of Heroes Flag Display. Volunteer work crews worked to create an elevated area that is used for

special events and an overflow parking area to accommodate all the vehicles that need parking when we have a special event. An all-weather bulletin board was also added for posting announcements. The Somerset Garden Club installed a Blue Star Highway Marker at the entrance to the Park in honor of all those who serve and their families who sacrifice so much on our behalf. They also planted a flowering dogwood tree and other perennial flowers through-out the Park.

Who cuts the grass at the Field of Heroes Flag Display?

One of the common questions we receive from visitors here at Patriot Park is this one. How do you cut the grass between the flags? Well with over 7000 flags in the Field it's no easy job. The flags are all placed in rows 24 inches apart. Within each row the flag are also spaced 24 inches apart. However, the flags in every other row are offset from the previous row by 12 inches. When they are placed in the spring the first row flags are set at 0, 2, 4, 6, 8 feet etc. as they are placed in the row. In the second row, the flags are set at 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 feet etc. This layout provides a "sea of flags look" when gazing out over all the flags and also a nice diagonal row look. The 24 inch row spacing allows us to push a rotary mower between the rows and then our maintenance crew runs weed eaters back and forth in the diagonals.

In additional to this care, the Field also requires daily inspection to repair and replace damaged or broken flags and to pull weeds and grass away from the flag stick. We also need to tamp shut the wiggle holes that are created by the flag stick wiggling back and

forth in the topsoil. We have created a tool to repair the holes without needing to bend over.

On average it takes about 20 minutes a day to maintain the flags. However, on occasion if a few deer decide to venture into the Field to munch on the clover, we can

have a hundred or more flags broken. We also can have lots of broken flags if the Field is hit by a big wind storm. Luckily this only happens a couple of times per year. We are researching ways to minimize damage and hope to find a non-breakable flag stick for 2024.

