

Henderson County dedicates Veterans Memorial

By Tracy Martin
 The News Correspondent
ATHENS—If pride could be measured, it would be as tall and solid as the massive brick and granite memorial that stands in an immensurable plaza at the East Texas Arboretum. Dedicated on Nov. 11 to all the men and women from Henderson County who have served and are currently serving in the military.

Each name is etched into 40 granite panels that line two sturdy carved walls. The number is approaching 10,000, and there is room for more names to be added. On Veterans Day, the memorial was officially unveiled to a crowd of more than 1,800 people.

Veterans, their families, and patrons came together for the celebration. Kenneth Bragg was in the Army's 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam in 1967. Bragg stands in front of the panel listing the names of Vietnam Veterans and points to his name "Here I am, I was 1st Squadron, Apache Troop." Bragg can't hold back a tear. "It's so wonderful. It's happy and sad, so many didn't come back. I appreciate what they've done for us."

The ceremony started at 11 a.m. with patriotic music performed by the combined Brownboro and Athens high school bands and songs from the Trinity Valley Com-

munity College Choir. The flags were ceremoniously lowered to half staff by Eagle Scout Will Perryman. Chris Quinn served as master of ceremonies and opened with a prayer.

Teaching letters — offering a glimpse of war through the eyes of local soldiers — were read aloud. Some made it home, others did not. Speakers included District 4 State Rep. Lance Gooden and state Agricultural Commissioner Todd Staples. Staples encouraged families to teach young people about past wars and to honor veterans. District Attorney Scott McKee, who served in Iraq with the National Guard, thanked those who served before and after him for their sacrifices.

Atmos Energy and about 20 volunteers served a hot dog and hamburger luncheon afterwards, courtesy of the company. "It's a part of our (business) culture to support our community and thank our veterans for their service," Atmos employee Davis Winfield said while making the grill. "It's a beautiful day and this shows what an amazing place we live in to do this (memorial dedication) for our servicemen and women."

World War II veteran, double purple-heart recipient and Cain Foundation president Frank In Denton

initiated the memorial project more than a year ago and was joined by a dedicated crew that secured historical documents locating names of all those who have served in the military. Carefully planning with the arboretum, labor by jail inmates overseen by the Sheriff's Office and fundraisers held this past year brought the dream of establishing a veterans memorial into reality.

Bob McDonald, another diving force and arboretum board member, said "It's a great day for the community. This is what our area deserves. This is how veterans — not just here, but everywhere — should have to be honored and remembered and thanked." He explained that some of the funding came through grants and the rest from donations, totaling about \$700,000 to see it through. "However, we'll need to continue to raise funds for upkeep and the cost of adding names into the granite," he added.

The East Texas Arboretum, where the memorial is located at 1601 Patterson Rd, is free to the public to come visit.

If you or a family member who is a veteran from Henderson County are not included on the memorial, you may fill out an application at www.easttexasarboretum.org



Veterans and their families are honored at a dedication ceremony Monday, as they see their names and those of their loved ones engraved into the memorial. Some 9,000 soldiers from Henderson County served in the military dating back to the Civil War.



The Texas Army National Guard military police battalion presented the colors to open the ceremony. Pictured (from right) are Staff Sgt. Anna Rhee, guardsman Jonathan Goodman, Sgt. Gary Duckett, guardsman Philip Thompson and Capt. Ken Rice.



Dignitaries read letters and e-mails from soldiers currently serving during the moving ceremony. Chris Quinn (not pictured) opened with a prayer. Pictured are (from left) memorial planners Jon Richardson, Franklin Denton, Bob McDonald, Rob Stain, and Benny Wherley, also, County Judge Richard Sanders, Texas Agricultural Commissioner Todd Staples, District 4 State Rep. Lance Gooden, District Attorney Scott McKee and Athens Rotary Club president-elect Kelly Driskoll.



THE NEWS PHOTO/ TRACY MARTIN
 AT LEFT: Sons of Confederate Veterans dressed in period Civil War uniforms forms display Civil War artifacts including bayonets and cannon balls. Pictured are (from left) Jim Abney, Jim Day, Phil Albright, Bob Lynch, Joseph Abies and Dan Dyer.



Bands from Brownboro and Athens High schools — including about 150 students — perform patriotic songs, including the "Star-Spangled Banner," during the Nov. 11 ceremony.

You're Invited
 to a Community Wide
THANKSGIVING
DINNER
 Saturday, November 16
 First Baptist Church of Mabank
 110 E. Mt. Vernon • Mabank

Two Serving Times
 Noon and 5 pm

Turkey, Dressing and
All the Trimmings

Friends, Family and Neighbors
All Welcome!



