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SERVING UP SMILES

RIGHT: Shelby Township Senior Center Recreation Supervisor Bernadette Caullay serves meals to Karen Gates, of Detroit, and Joanne Leitz, of Shelby Township, at the senior center's Thanksgiving party Nov. 20.

Photos by Donna Agusti



LEFT: Bob Labadie, of Shelby Township,

Township takes steps to amend veterans memorial

BY SARAH WOJCIK

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — At a Board of Trustees meeting Nov. 18, Shelby Township Supervisor Rick Stathakis addressed the township's veterans memorial and listed steps the township would take to honor fallen soldiers in the most proper manner.

At the suggestion of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4659 Commander Joseph Wrobel, Stathakis said the township would move the Global War on Terror monument beside the veterans wall, directly to its right, to be in line with the chronological order of America's wars represented on the memorial: World War I, World War II, the

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Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Stathakis added that the Global War on Terror monument would have its own special lighting and, at the behest of Wrobel, the VFW would conduct a special dedication ceremony in the spring.

Mark Barbret died in Iraq on Oct. 14, 2004, at age 22, and his name was engraved on the veterans memorial wall under a header titled "Iraq" at the municipal grounds a year later.

His name, along with two subsequent Macomb County soldiers who died in Iraq, Tarryl Hill and Christopher Kube, was engraved between World War II and the Korean War.

In 2013, the Township Board followed Shelby Township Veteran Events Coordinator Phil Randazzo's recommendation to erect a separate Global War on Terror monument displaying the names of the five local soldiers fallen in or as a result of service in Iraq and Afghanistan, and cover the names on the wall of Mark Barbret, Hill and Kube.

"Mark Barbret's sacrifice was the first of its kind. There was no precedent to follow to immortalize his service to our nation," Stathakis said. "We put (the names of Barbret and the subsequent fallen heroes in Iraq) on any space available, which happened to be out of sequence, and in the theater they were killed, rather than the war in which they died."

He said the decision was made with much unknown at the time,



Mark Barbret

would have been additional space allotted to the right of the Vietnam War.

Kim Barbret, Mark Barbret's father, said the family was notified of the unveiling of the new Global War on Terror monument, but not that his son's name would be covered on the wall. He said his family members kept their displeasure private until recently because they hoped time would lessen their chagrin.

"It didn't change," he said. "Every time we showed up (to the veterans memorial), our anger (came back). It really hurt. We avoid it now and stopped coming to the park."

He said he spoke to township officials about adding his son's name back to the memorial and seemed to be getting somewhere, but then work sessions about the topic did not result in progress.

"Call it a threat or whatever; I mentioned that if you're postponing it and I'm not getting action, I'm going to have to go to the press to get public opinion," Barbret said.

The day before Veterans Day, several TV news stations aired pieces shot at the Barbrets' home and the township memorial site.

"I was surprised that the news media would ruin Veterans Day

such as the name of the war or that more soldiers would fall in Afghanistan, and that if the designers of the original memorial had today's information, there

for the veterans," Shelby Township Veterans Coordinator Phil Randazzo said. "That's a Memorial Day story. Memorial Day is a day for the soldiers who are killed in action. Veterans Day is for the soldiers of America who were honorably discharged."

Randazzo said it should have been a joyous day, but reporters "invaded the (hallowed) memorial site like locusts in a cornfield."

"I've done more ceremonies for (the Barbrets) than you've got Christmas gifts," Randazzo said. "Some people never get closure, but you can't turn around and criticize your leaders or a person like me."

Barbret said that he and his family have great respect for Randazzo, what he has done for them and other veterans, as well as his service to the country.

"I see things are evolving toward a better resolution than we had originally," Barbret said to the board during the public comment portion of the Nov. 18 meeting, after Stathakis explained the plan to move the Global War on Terror memorial in line with the wall. "I will continue to fight for what is right, so I ask you again to fix it. The best resolution in my eyes is to return their names to the wall and we can be done with it."

He said his family wants equal treatment for Mark Barbret and the other soldiers who lost their lives in the Global War on Terror, and the monument separates them from the other fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives for their country.

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