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Township agrees to relocate Global War on Terror monument

By Sean Delaney
For Macomb Daily

Shelby Township officials are taking steps to better recognize on a Veteran's Memorial the sacrifice of a local resident who was the first soldier from Macomb County killed in Iraq.

At issue is concerns raised by the parents of U.S. Army Pfc. Mark Barbret as to the placement of their fallen son's name on the township's Global War on Terror monument by moving the mon-

ument closer to the original Veterans Memorial site so it can be placed in proper chronological sequence with the other wars inscribed on the memorial's surface.

"Like their brothers before them, who served in places like Germany, France, Italy and Japan, this generation's heroes deserve to be memorialized together and not separated by geography," said Commander Joe Wrobel of VFW Old Settlers Post No. 4659.

According to Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis,

Wrobel sent a letter to the Board of Trustees about possibly relocating the monument in response to concerns raised last month by Angie and Kim Barbret about their 23-year-old son.

"Given that Mark Barbret's sacrifice was the first of its kind from a Macomb County resident during the Global War on Terror, there was no precedent to follow in memorializing his service to our nation," Stathakis said.

"Without having such prece-

MONUMENT » PAGE 2



Shelby Township officials plan to move the Global War on Terror monument closer to the original Veterans Memorial site.

PHOTO COURTESY
SHELBY
TOWNSHIP

Monument

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dent, a decision in 2005 was made in Shelby Township to add Mark Barbret's name, as well as the names of our subsequent fallen heroes serving in Iraq, to any space (on the Veterans Memorial) that was available."

As a result, Barbret's name and the names of other Shelby Township residents who died in the Global War on Terror were placed on the Veterans Memorial out of chronological order, falling somewhere between World War II and the Korean War. They were also placed according to the area where the soldiers were killed - Iraq - instead of the war in which they died.

"If the designers of our original memorial prior to 2005 would've had today's information, there would've been additional space allotted to the right of the Vietnam inscription so that America's Global War on Terror would've been recognized in proper chronological order," Stathakis said. "Obviously no one knew about our future Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, let alone that these conflicts would be called the Global War on Terror. That is why no empty space was allotted to the right of the Vietnam War inscription."

Instead, the township opted to create a separate memorial - the Global War on Terror monument, a new 5-foot granite replica of Macomb County's Heart of America Memorial - to honor those residents who died while fighting terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When the monument was complete, the names of the Shelby Township soldiers who fell in Iraq - Mark Barbret, Tarryl Hill and Christopher Kube - were removed from their previous location on the Veterans Memorial to join the names of U.S. Army soldiers Kyle B. McClain and Todd Lambka, who were

killed in action last year in Afghanistan, on the new monument, which also features Alex Knapp, who died of a cardiac event in 2010 following his return from Iraq.

"We almost got it completely right, except for two very important details," Stathakis said. "First, both of our memorials need to be closer together, and second, they need to be in chronological sequence."

Based on a recommendation from Wrobel, township officials agreed to move the Global War on Terror monument closer to the existing Veterans Memorial, and right next to the Vietnam War inscription.

"This change in location will put the fallen Global War on Terror heroes together, and in an accurate place in the chronological history of America's wars," Stathakis said.

According to Stathakis, the VFW Old Settlers Post No. 4659 has offered to cover any costs associated with the relocation of the Global War on Terror Monument.

"A veterans memorial is a place to honor veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice by showing the utmost respect to the families and loved ones of these brave heroes," Wrobel wrote. "The latest generation of military heroes killed in battle, fighting a Global War on Terror throughout the world in theaters such as Iraq and Afghanistan, is no different. Their sacrifice is just as important as that of their brothers who were killed combatting evil in World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

"This is why the VFW Old Settlers Post No. 4659 is requesting that the Shelby Township Global War on Terror memorial be moved closer to the original memorial and be placed in proper sequence with other wars, so that tribute can be paid to all fallen heroes."

A special dedication of the new memorial is expected to take place in spring 2015.