

War Dogs to Be Honored With New Jersey Memorial

Bronze statue recognizes dogs' importance to U.S. military.

It is the first official statue of its kind a U.S. Marine crouching to one knee, arm wrapped around a German Shepherd that is standing alert, ears and eyes fixated on a possible danger.

The new memorial to military working dogs otherwise known as war dogs will be unveiled on June 10, 2006, next to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Holmdel, N.J.

The bronze statue is the work of the United States War Dogs Association, an organization of current and former military dog handlers that celebrates war dogs, educating people on dogs accomplishments since World War I.

Military canines make contributions every day while they serve in our military, said Ron Aiello, who spearheaded the project. They are hard-working and do a great job of saving the lives of their handlers and the troops who walk in their footsteps.

The organization raised its own funds for the memorial, and asked sculptor Bruce Lindsey to design it, securing approval from the N.J. Department of Veterans and Military Affairs for the site.

The group is planning more it wants to build a war dog memorial in Washington, D.C., and is working on other projects such as a war-dog postage stamp. Organization members often make presentations and go to shows to explain what dogs do for the military.

Growing up, my family had several dogs that I became attached to, Aiello said. But it was not until I became a Marine scout dog handler that I really understood the bond that can form between a human and a canine. It is a bond of friendship that lasts a lifetime.

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