

# THE WALL THAT HEALS

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The value of open space and parks is often forgotten by many, but it can be integral to an experience. Such is the case with the memorial to Vietnam veterans, located in Washington DC. The shiny black granite walls reflect the surrounding trees, landscape and sky. The setting is quiet and contemplative, allowing visitors to acknowledge the loss of the men and women listed on the wall. At the highest point in the center, on the top of the right panel lists the first date of loss in 1959 and the names of the individuals who gave their lives. More than 58,000 individuals are listed on The Wall.

On Veterans Day in 1996, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund unveiled a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial designed to travel to communities throughout the United States. In 2008, *The Wall That Heals* was on display in Newport, NH and Needham, MA. In 2006, it travelled to Quincy, MA, and in 2009, we look forward to visiting The Wall in Lynn, MA. *The Wall*

**“It is hard to put into words the emotional impact these four days can have to a community!”**

*That Heals* lists all the names that are on the original, and is accompanied by a travelling museum.

The Wall arrives in your community on a Tuesday. On Wednesday morning, 6-8 volunteers from your community arrive to help set up the panels which are not heavy, but must be carried carefully from the truck. It is preferred to have The Wall set up on a grassy area that is level, allowing for a minimum of 250' x 60'. There is a special set-up option if an asphalt area is chosen. The site needs to have adequate public access and be able to be open to the public for 24 hours. The 53' trailer must be located near The Wall and have space for a 20' x 20' tent.

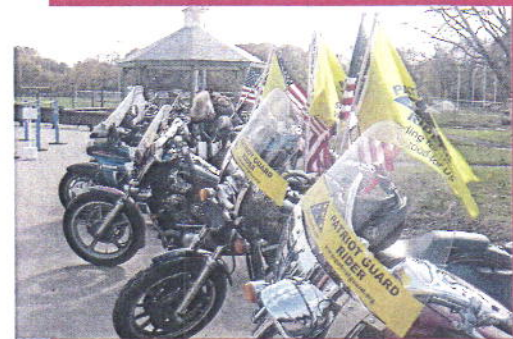
The Wall is officially open to the public from



Thursday morning through Monday morning. It requires electrical hook-ups for the lights that illuminate The Wall at night. Volunteers are needed throughout the four days, to assist visitors and help detract any vandalism. As the site must be solemn, all other regular events at the park need to be cancelled.

The pre-planning for this event is integral to its success! One person should be the site coordinator, serving as the primary contact with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, insuring that all details are covered prior to The Wall's arrival. There is a \$5,000 fee paid to the Memorial Fund that goes towards the costs of maintenance, promotion, staff travel and transportation. Communities are also asked to provide a \$100 per diem to the two staff members to defray the costs for their hotel stay. In Needham, the Assistant to the Town Manager was the site coordinator. She worked with two co-chairs, with one leading the weekly meetings during the two months of preparation, and the second recruiting the volunteers needed for different aspects. The DPW Parks and Forestry Superintendent, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Park and Recreation Director, and Assistant High School Principal provided Town department coordination. The Commander of the local VFW Post was integral team member, particularly in recruiting volunteer assistance from local and regional veterans.

It is hard to put into words the emotional impact these four days can have to a community! There are nine men listed on The Wall that grew up in Needham. Each of their families was invited to participate in ceremonies over the four days, including the laying of a wreath for each young





man. It was particularly significant, as the event was held at Memorial Park that sits below Needham High School and is home to many high school sports where they enjoyed carefree days. Some veterans were proud to share their stories with us, and some stood to the side, keeping their thoughts private, but were able to see the community ready to provide support. One of my favorite stories came during the reading of the Massachusetts names. Some high school students started playing touch football on the adjacent field. A volunteer went over and asked if they could stop during the reading of names, out of respect for those who had given their lives. The boys came over to The Wall, walked along reading the names, and then visited the museum, talking to local veterans. It was a teachable moment!

If your community is interested in participating in this experience, contact the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund at (202) 393-0090 or at [vvmf@vvmf.org](mailto:vvmf@vvmf.org). The website has a tremendous amount of information at <http://www.vvmf.org/index.cfm?SectionID=3>

Do not hesitate to contact one of your New England communities who have hosted *The Wall That Heals* to learn more about it! ■