

## *Historical Perspective of Veterans Memorial Park - 2009*

The Veterans Memorial Park concept first came into being around 2004 when a letter to the Editor of the Rolla Daily News was submitted asking why Rolla did not have a Veterans Park. Members of the Korean War Veterans Association commented about reading the letter at their next meeting and agreed to begin researching the possibility.

After discussions and meetings with the Rolla City Mayor, Administrator, Council and other Veterans Organizations, the possibility turned into a reality. On Memorial Day, May 28, 2007 the City of Rolla dedicated a portion of land on Lions Club Drive, formally naming it Veterans Memorial Park. In 2007, a "Veterans Memorial Park" committee was formed at a meeting held at the VFW post with the original members: Bill Wright, CDR; Chris Johnson, CDR American Legion; Paul Schuler, JR. CDR DAV; Les Burris CDR KWVA and Harrison Meaux, Jr. 1st Vice CDR KWVA. Harrison was elected chairman.

With the City's agreement a Committee was then formed to take operational control of the property. Using donations and grants, they would transform the property into an actual park complex consisting of walking trails, memorials, an amphitheater, water features and other items to commemorate and honor veterans from the area.

The Committee would consist of representatives of five military service organizations in the area; The Korean War Veterans Association; The American Legion; The Veterans of Foreign Wars; The Disabled American Veterans and The Retired Enlisted Association. It was established as a separate organization and named The Veterans Memorial Park Committee (VMPC). At their first meeting in July 2007 the members elected the first Chairman from among their ranks, Harrison 'Papa' Meaux.

During the next few meetings membership was further defined, By Laws were developed, and goals and objectives were established. During this time the VMPC encountered its first major hurdle. The venue had major problems in that vehicular and pedestrian access would be limited for the next 20 years. This was addressed with the City Council and another site was suggested which was already accessible by vehicle and was ready to be developed. The VMPC accepted the site and, like the previous site, there was no money in the City budget for creation of the park. The VMPC would have to promote and plan methods to raise the money and it was agreed upon.

Shortly after that, the VMPC decided it would be better fitting to change its name to something that better represented the team. As a result of the Committee's Membership and realizing their parent organizations represent Veterans from a large area, the Committee voted to change its name to the South Central Regional Veterans Group (SCRVG). They also formalized the intent to include all veterans, regardless of their agency affiliation, from the following counties; Crawford, Dent, Howell, Laclede, Maries, Oregon, Phelps, Pulaski, Shannon, and Texas.

Since that time, the SCRVG has obtained a 501c designation and can now both provide charitable tax receipts for donations and apply for various grants to complete the park's development. Although not complete, the property has visually transformed into what can be recognized as a Memorial Park and is now used for a number of events including the City's Memorial Day Observance.

The SCRVG is open to any service club, group, organization, school, or government entity with an interest in promoting the Veterans Memorial Park. Anyone wishing to create or contribute memorials or monuments to the park or make tax free donations can contact us by visiting the Donation Tab on this website.