

VFW Posts Restore WWI Memorials

The efforts are part of the 100 Cities/100 Memorials program created by the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission and the Pritzker Military Museum.

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VFW Post 968 in Raymond, Wash., is one of 22 Posts nationwide that could receive up to \$2,000 in matching grant funds to help restore World War I memorials.

Post 968 Adjutant Gordon Aleshire said the Post decided to restore the monument, in part, because of the 100 Cities/100 Memorials program.



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“This community embraces the honoring of their servicemen and women so it’s important to get [the monument] back in a respectable condition,” said Aleshire, who served in Vietnam in 1970 with the 132nd Assault Support Helicopter Company as a flight engineer on Chinooks.

The program, created by the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission and Pritzker Military Museum, aims to issue 100 grants, each up to \$2,000, to restore, preserve or conserve WWI memorials.

VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson, a member of the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission, said the 100 Cities/100 Memorials project was “a great way” to get VFW’s local communities involved in the WWI Centennial.

“I was happy to see the great response from our members and Posts to this opportunity to raise awareness of the sacrifices made by veterans of the Great War,” Anderson said.

The Raymond, Wash., monument resides at Fifth and Duryea streets, near a library, church and city park. It originally had three rifles on top, according to Aleshire, but the “wood stocks just rotted away.” They were eventually removed, he said. The monument’s concrete base has been resurfaced, and the rifles will be recreated in bronze, Aleshire said. Restoration began in June, he added.

In addition to applying for the grant, the Post has used crowdfunding and community campaigning to raise the \$10,300 needed for the restoration.

The refurbished monument also will include a bronze image of a fountain and bronze dedication plates.

Post 3104 in South Hadley, Mass., chose to take a different approach in commemorating the WWI Centennial. Post Commander Brian Willette, who served in Afghanistan in 2010 with the 86th Infantry Brigade as a motor transport operator, said the Post is hosting re-enactments of the 104th Infantry Regiment receiving the Croix de Guerre, a French military honor, in 1918.

“My goal was to specifically honor this regiment and to tell people, tell the younger generations about World War I through this event,” Willette said.

The Post has received requests from schools to talk about the regiment, which was deactivated in 2005. Afterward, the 104th’s lineage “fell into another unit,” according to Willette.

Other Posts can get involved by restoring monuments, rededicating local memorials, distributing and planting poppy seeds or hosting educational and remembrance events.

Posts that have been selected to receive a 100 Cities/100 Memorials grant will be informed by Nov. 11, according to the World War One Centennial Commission’s website.

For more information on the 100 Cities/100 Memorials projects, visit www.ww1cc.org/100memorials.

Photo caption: VFW National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Brian Willette speaks in April to attendees during a unit recognition ceremony and WWI Centennial flag raising at Apremont Triangle in Springfield, Mass. The event honored the WWI exploits of the state’s 104th Infantry Regiment, an American unit awarded the Croix de Guerre for gallantry during the Great War. The medal is a French award for outstanding conduct in battle.

This article is featured in the November/December 2017 issue of [VFW magazine](#) and was written by [Kari Williams](#), senior writer, VFW magazine. Photo courtesy of Brian Willette.