

Memorial Garden Is Dedicated

THE DEDICATION. The Memorial Garden at the Center for Families of the Fallen is complete and was dedicated on May 31, 2011. The dedication was a lovely affair and it was a wonderful day to be a member of the Delaware Federation of Garden Clubs. Our only regret is that it was impossible for all our 800+ members to attend. We did have excellent representation with all club presidents and federation board members invited.

Dedication speakers were U.S. Senator Coons; U.S. Congressman Carney; Colonel Joyce, head of Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Public Affairs; State Representative Bradford Bennett; Alice Witterholt, DFGC Immediate Past President; and Renee Blaschke, NGC Immediate Past President. At lunch, we also had a lovely extemporaneous thank-you speech from Mrs. Virginia Carson, the widow of Charles C. Carson, for whom the base mortuary affairs building is named. Mrs. Carla Markell, first lady of Delaware also attended the dedication.

Starting with Senator Coons, each person made thoughtful, respectful, dignified and eloquent remarks. Ms. Witterholt presented the Donor Book. Ms. Blaschke presented a citation from the National Garden Club. And Representative Bennett presented a proclamation from the State of Delaware. The Blue Star Memorial Marker is in place, making the garden the fourth Blue Star sight in Delaware.

We had press coverage from the *Wilmington News Journal*, *The Dover Post*, WDOV, WDEL, Delaware-on-Line, WHYY, *The Middletown Transcript*, *The Delaware County Daily Times*, *Rolling Thunder*, and DAFB. We were the lead item on Senator Coon's website for a couple of days.

We received a note from Renee Blaschke which said "I cannot thank members of the Delaware Federation enough for your support of the Memorial Garden. The dedication ceremony will always remain one of the special highlights of my administration. I stand in awe and in honor of this accomplishment."

Another attendee said, "I have had the opportunity to attend many ceremonies of this type over the years, but this was the most meaningful and memorable one I have ever been to."

RECOGNITION AT THE NATIONAL GARDEN CLUB CONVENTION.

The Memorial Garden project received enormous praise throughout the National Garden Club (NGC) convention in May, and Delaware brought home the award for the best state project, in the 1,000 member and below category, one of the most coveted awards given by NGC.

MEMORIAL GARDEN ITEMS AVAILABLE.

Since the garden is a private space and we will not be allowed to visit it, a video is being made. The video will be posted on the Memorial Garden web-site and copies will also be available to purchase. Photographs will soon be available on-line, as well. We'll send out an email to club presidents with instructions to access the video and photos as soon as they are

ready. Donor Books may be purchased at <http://bit.ly/memorialgardenbook> .They are about \$90 plus shipping and handling.

MEMORIAL GARDEN CONTRIBUTIONS AS OF JUNE 15, 2011.

Total donations received are

\$303,442.68 and expenses so far are \$90,007.75 for a balance of \$ 213,434.93. Not all bills for Phase 1 have been received.

MEMORIAL GARDEN PROJECT NEXT STEPS.

The next step for the memorial garden project is to pay all the bills for this phase of the project and determine what is left for a “phase 2.” Since Phase 1 is virtually complete, Joy Ericson and Donna Curtis will be stepping down as co-chairmen of the Memorial Garden Project.

Regina Brown, our new President of Delaware Federation of Garden Clubs (DFGC), will be working with the DFGC Board to develop a plan for Phase 2 of this very exciting and successful endeavor.

Submitted by

Joy Ericson and Donna Curtis, Memorial Garden
Project Co-Chairmen