



Photo by Erin Sanchez

City officials are attempting to erect a monument in memory of police officers, firefighters and soldiers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The monument will be dedicated in the name of slain Hazel Park Police officer Jessica Nagle-Wilson.

Monument set to honor slain officers, soldiers

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HAZEL PARK – City officials are creating a new addition to a small plaza that connects City Hall with the Hazel Park Memorial Library dubbed a “Salute to Heroes.”

Four brick columns adjoined by a cement block façade are being slowly erected in the plaza in honor of police officers, firefighters and soldiers that have been killed in the line of duty. Most notably, the new monument is being built in honor of Hazel Park Police officer Jessica Nagle-Wilson, who was shot and killed here in 2002.

Nagle-Wilson was the first Hazel Park Police officer to be killed while on duty in the city’s history, according to Police Chief David Niedermeier. Since her death, he has been working to create a place to honor those that put their lives on the line to help others.

“The law enforcement portion will be dedicated in her honor,” said Niedermeier. “I feel it’s necessary because there is nowhere in our community where our fallen heroes have an appropriate recognition for what they have given in the service of their community.”

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Niedermeier has big hopes for the monument, including the placement of statuettes atop the structure to represent each service department, flagpoles and spotlights to light up the plaza at night.

A bronze statuette molded to represent the fallen soldier's display – a burial marker made of a soldier's boots and M-16 rifle – has already been purchased by the father of Pfc. John Dearing, who was killed in 2005 by an improvised explosive while serving Iraq.

"I'm excited about it," said John Dearing Sr. "I've already gone over there and taken pictures of it. I'm pretty excited that it's finally coming together."

Niedermeier hopes to have bronze statuettes fashioned similar to the soldier's display to represent the police and fire departments, including accoutrements like radios, boots and uniforms.

The entire monument is being paid for through a number of fundraising events that have been held since Nagle-Wilson was killed. In 2002, the Hazel Park Police Department held a \$30-percent concert headlined by local musician Jack Scott. The monument's entire cost has not been disclosed.



Photos provided by Hazel Park Police Department

Hazel Park Police officer Jessica Nagle-Wilson was killed in the line of duty in 2002. A memorial for Nagle-Wilson and other police officers, firefighters and soldiers is being constructed at City Hall.

Niedermeier is also looking for residents willing to purchase \$50 and \$100 brick pavers to help defray the cost of the project and for some other donors to adopt flagpoles and park benches he hopes to erect on the site.

"We have certainly enough to get us down the path to getting it done," said City Manager Ed Klobucher. "It's a fitting and tasteful tribute to those that put their lives on the line."

Some organizers have also hinted that two smaller monuments erected in years past in honor of those local residents that died in

Vietnam and World War II may also be incorporated into the new monument once it is completed next year. No details have been outlined, however.

"We've got a couple small military memorials that are not fitting," said Niedermeier. "It's my hope that we can bring these all together in one project. Pooling of resources could make a significant impact that would be fitting for

what I'm trying to accomplish. It became that much more evident to me after the death of our officer, Jessica Wilson."

Organizers hope to complete the monument in time for National Police Week, set for mid-May.

Those wishing to donate to the project can visit the Police Department for details.

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