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CITY OF PALMDALE

NEWS RELEASE

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The Mobile Vietnam Memorial Wall Returns to Palmdale Amphitheater in November

PALMDALE – The “AV Wall,” a half-scale size tribute monument of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., will be displayed this year from Nov. 10 through 15 at Palmdale Amphitheater, located at 2723 Rancho Vista Boulevard.

The display will coincide with the Veterans Day holiday period and is a partnership between Point Man Antelope Valley and the City of Palmdale.

The City of Palmdale’s Veterans Day Ceremony will take place at the display on November 11 at 11 am. The guest speaker will be Ellie Kay, a military spouse and founder of Heroes at Home, a non-profit organization which helps military members and their families. She serves on Congressman Steve Knight’s Academy Admissions Panel and is a frequent congressional speaker. Bobby Breech will sing the National Anthem, The Salvation Army Brass Band will perform and The Sunday Night Singers will sing their rousing rendition of “The Armed Forces Medley” to celebrate all veterans in attendance. Vietnam veterans will receive a Vietnam Veteran lapel pin in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

Like the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., the AV’s own Mobile Vietnam Memorial Wall has the name of the 58,315 Americans killed in action during the Vietnam War. Visitors may make rubbings of names and leave tokens of tribute, and meet with Vietnam War veterans.

“This is the wall that heals,” said Mike Bertell, president of Point Man of the Antelope Valley, the veterans organization that is the guardian of the AV Wall. “This is a wall that brings us together as a nation,” said Bertell, who was a drafted Vietnam combat infantryman with the 101st Airborne Division.

At a cost of more than \$100,000, the AV Wall was built with the aid of \$20,000-plus in small change donations made by schoolchildren of the Antelope Valley. Since its debut in 2009, it has been displayed across the Antelope Valley and Southern California, and is a unique grass-roots tribute.

This year's theme for display of the AV Wall is "Honoring the Gold Star families of the Vietnam War," a tribute to those immediate family members who lost a loved one during one of America's longest wars.

"We are reaching out, and want the community's assistance in helping us find Gold Star families of the Vietnam War period, so that we can recognize and honor them," said Stacia Nemeth, a key volunteer in organizing the AV Wall display.

A Candlelight Memorial Walk honoring Gold Star Family members in attendance and local soldiers whose names are on the wall (The AV 76) is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 12 at 9 pm. As each soldier's name is read, a candle will be placed by a family or community member at the appropriate wall panel.

Taps will be played by MSgt Gerald Lockwood each night at 10pm. An essay contest was conducted this year for 4th – through 12th graders to show their understanding and appreciation for veterans and Gold Star Families. One winning essay will be read at each ceremony.

The Gold Star Family Recognition Ceremony will take place on Sunday, Nov. 13 at 2 pm. Hailey Callison will sing the National Anthem and the Highland High School JROTC will present the Table of Honor. Representatives from the U.S. Vietnam War Commemoration Committee will present certificates and pins from the Certificate of Honor "In Memory Of" program to the Vietnam Gold Star Families who register for the ceremony.

Guest speakers at this ceremony are two members of the Sons and Daughters in Touch group, Ron Reyes and Susan Mitchell-Mattera, who both lost their fathers in the Vietnam War. They will share their stories of living with their loss and finding hope through their travels to Vietnam to see where their fathers died and to meet Vietnamese sons and daughters who lost fathers in the war. Following the ceremony, there will be a private reception for Gold Star Families at the Hilton Garden Inn.

“The City is proud to honor the Gold Star families of the Antelope Valley and surrounding areas at the events this year,” said Palmdale’s Recreation Supervisor Annie Pagliaro. “Losing a loved one in war is something very few people can understand, but each of us can show appreciation to the Gold Star families by attending the ceremonies and expressing compassion for their loss.”

The AV Wall Committee and The City of Palmdale are thankful to the sponsors of this event: Lockheed Martin, DHS Solutions and Signs and Designs, Inc.

For more AV Wall information, call 661/524-6408 or visit www.avwall.org.

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