

Joe Davies Heritage Airpark preps for Vietnam Memorial Wall unveiling ceremony

by Diane Betzler
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Palmdale, Calif. -- More than 50 volunteers came out Nov. 7 to help clean up the Joe Davies Heritage Airpark for the unveiling of the Mobile Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall ceremony scheduled for Nov. 13

Working in shifts, enthusiastic volunteers formed groups that took on various tasks. Some began clearing planters, walkways and aircraft display areas of trash, weeds and other debris while other groups broke out generator-powered water hoses and pressure-washed the aircraft.



Each of the display aircraft have been adopted by a local group whose responsibility is to keep the aircraft and its display area clean.

Normally the groups meet once a month for cleanup duty, but this month, several of the groups were involved with the Antelope Valley Veterans' Day Parade that took place in Lancaster on the same day and therefore were unable to report for cleanup detail. Not a problem as far as Rod Holtz, assistant superintendent of maintenance for the City of Palmdale was concerned, he simply put out the word for extra volunteers and Palmdale and Lancaster residents.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the response," Mr. Holtz said. "The community has totally rallied around this park,"

Joe Davies Heritage Airpark is no ordinary park, you won't find swings or slides or baseball fields, but what you will find is lots of American aviation history, and that's what Antelope Valley residents come to support, Mr. Holtz said.

The 11-year-old park is currently home to about 15 restored military aircraft plus a 1/8 scale model of the Northrop-built B-2 Spirit and an AGM-28 Hound Dog Missile. An old Boeing B-52 Stratofortress is displayed in all its former glory. The B-52 was America's first long-range, swept-wing heavy bomber and is currently serving its sixth decade of active duty in the U.S. Air Force.



A Curtiss-Wright-built C-46 is currently being restored and when that restoration is completed, the cargo transport aircraft will also be put on static display. Mr. Holtz and park volunteer Billy

Blackwood traveled to a surplus store in Alaska to purchase parts for the aircraft.

Most of the aircraft on display at the park have ties to the Antelope Valley, Mr. Holtz said. The airpark offers residents and visitors the chance to view the aircraft that have contributed so significantly to the nation's defense.

With all that military aviation history as a backdrop, it seems only fitting for the Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall to be on display at the Heritage Airpark.

The mobile memorial is a half-size replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. It is approximately 250 feet long and 6 feet high. The names of all Vietnam veterans killed or missing in action have been engraved on the replica.

"The memorial wall belongs to the Antelope Valley, we own it," Mr. Holtz proudly stated. The money to have the wall built was raised by the community, school children, civic groups, businesses and private citizens. The fund raising effort raised over \$100,000.

An unveiling ceremony is scheduled for 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Nov. 13.

The wall will be on display at Joe Davies Heritage Airpark Nov. 13 through Nov. 21. Because of the small confines of the airpark, the unveiling ceremony is not open to the public, but the public will have 24-hour viewing privileges following the unveiling ceremony.

Also due to limited space, attendees of the unveiling are asked to park at the Palmdale Airport, adjacent to the airpark. Buses will be transporting visitors to the airpark.

"This airpark is a wonderful memorial and I think it should be important to everyone," said volunteer John Pearce.

Mr. Pearce, who has been volunteering at the airpark for more than a year, said the airpark gives the country's military personnel well-deserved recognition.

"The F-model B-52 that's on display here is the only B-52 that carried the Hound Dog," said Ian Hall, an airpark volunteer. The AGM-28 Hound Dog he referred to was the first air-launched supersonic nuclear missile and is also on display at the airpark.

Highland High School students Danny and David Alrabbah and Nicholas Hicks said they are proud to be part of such a great cause. The eleventh-graders dusted and cleaned the F-101 Voodoo, their adopted aircraft.

The Joe Davies Heritage Airpark at Palmdale Plant 42 is located at 2001 E. Avenue P.