

Welcome* to the Orion Veterans Memorial



Plans for the Orion Veterans Memorial began in 1993 when the Orion Area Chamber of Commerce decided to pay tribute to the military personnel from the Orion area who honorably served our country. Many men and women from this community have served in our nation's military forces from the Civil War up to the present. These veterans, as well as those who will serve in the future, deserved a local permanent memorial to honor and commemorate their service.

In June of 1994, The 50th anniversary of D-Day, a group of interested citizens announced their plan to create the Orion Veterans Memorial. A search for a site was undertaken, and citizens, family members, volunteers, local organizations and businesses then began the task of raising the funds to build the Orion Veterans Memorial.

In 1996 the Charter Township of Orion purchased the corner lot at M-24 and Odanah Street, and the Memorial obtained 501(c) 3 status so that donations would be tax deductible. In 1998 the Township purchased the adjacent lot.

Over the years more than \$900,000 has been raised to pay for the Orion Veterans Memorial, which was essentially completed with the installation and dedication of the central monument on Memorial Day 2012. Bricks can still be purchased of course, and donations are needed to pay for electricity, water, flag replacement and other maintenance costs. This averages about \$700 per month.

Today, the Orion Veterans Memorial serves as a special place where people can go to remember a family member or close friend who served our country. When you see flowers or some personal memorabilia that someone has left on a brick or witness the tears that someone sheds, you realize and understand what an impact that the Orion Veterans Memorial has on people's lives.

A group of dedicated volunteers make sure that the Memorial is kept in pristine condition giving it their almost daily attention. In addition, they prepare the Memorial for the five ceremonies held during the year: The National Day of Prayer and Memorial Day in May, Patriot's Day in September, Veteran's Day in November, and Pearl Harbor Day in December.

Thank you for coming to visit the Orion Veterans Memorial. Please enjoy the day!

Here are the “Points of Interest” when you tour the Orion Veterans Memorial

1. Visitors Welcome Center

As you enter the Memorial check the bulletin board for announcements and review articles which are of interest to veterans. Brick order forms are also available here.



2. The Plouhar Tree

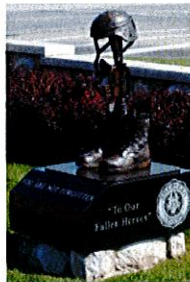
This tree honors Raymond Plouhar who died while serving in Iraq.

3. Commemorative Walk

Non-military families and businesses are urged to buy a brick in this area honoring a non-veteran or supporters of the Orion Veterans Memorial.

4. Fallen Warrior Monument

The purpose of the Fallen Warrior monument is to remind us of all the men and women who sacrificed their life for our country while serving in one of the five armed services. They gave all their tomorrows for our today.



5. The Main Central Monument

The Central Monument consists of a family of four: Mother, father, their son who is in the service and a younger sister all with their arms around each other. It is up to the viewer to determine whether it depicts a departure or a homecoming. This life size statue is cast in bronze and was created by the internationally renowned sculptor Frank Varga, a Vietnam veteran who donated his services to create this one-of-a kind monument.



6. Center Plaques

These plaques name and honor all the men from Lake Orion and Orion Township who were killed in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. They will not be forgotten.

7. Flag Pole/Medal of Honor Recipient

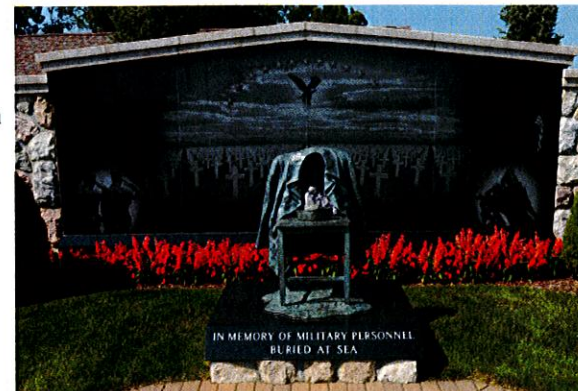
The brick at the base of the flag pole honors James K. Okubo who was awarded the Medal of Honor on June 21, 2000. Okubo joined the United States Army and became a technician 5th Grade serving as a combat medic. He carried wounded soldiers to safety in World War II and treated more than two dozen men despite intense enemy fire. For his heroic actions, Okubo was recommended for the Medal of Honor but was instead awarded the Silver Star because it was mistakenly believed that medics were not eligible for a higher award than the Silver Star. A review of the service records of Asian Americans resulted in his being awarded the Medal of Honor. Okubo was a medical student before the war and died in a traffic accident when he was 47. He is buried in Detroit.

8. Peacoat Memorial

Joe Zikewich, a member of the Orion Veterans Memorial Committee, served on the USS Lexington in World War II. A Japanese kamikaze plane crashed into the carrier in the battle to take Okinawa. Forty seven of Joe Zikewich's shipmates were killed. The memory of these men being buried at sea was the inspiration for this memorial. The 47 gray (blue) bricks in front of the Peacoat Memorial honor the men who died. The Peacoat Memorial honors all men and women of all the five armed services who are buried at sea.

9. The North Wall

Scenes from the past are featured on this wall. The theme of this wall is “A Nation That Forgets Its Past Has No Future.”



10. Meditation Area

Here is a quiet place where people can spend time honoring and reflecting on the heroic actions of four local veterans as well as two sets of local brothers who gave their lives serving in the military.



11. Benefactors Wall

Donors who contributed more than a hundred hours of their time in behalf of the Orion Veterans Memorial or donated \$2,500 or more are identified on this wall. Space is available for adding additional names.



12. The Pathway to Peace

Bricks in this area are for any man or woman who served in one of the five armed services – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard – or the Merchant Marine.

13. Purple Heart Monument

This monument honors all who have been awarded the Purple Heart medal for either being wounded or killed while in combat against an enemy of the United States.



14. Branches of Service Wall

This wall features the emblems of the five armed services and the Merchant Marine.

15. Medal of Honor Monument

This monument honors the men and women who have received the highest decoration awarded by the United States Government. It is bestowed by the President in the name of Congress and conferred only upon members of the United States armed forces who distinguish themselves through “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States.” Due to the nature of the selection criteria this award is usually made posthumously.



As you leave the Memorial take a moment to look up at the United States flag. You have walked among bricks engraved with names of good men and women who have served our country all over the world. Those individuals have not asked anything for themselves, only that you will appreciate what they have done to keep you safe and free.

If you are one of those individuals, we say “Thank You.”