

# Honoring Our LEGACY

## 20 Years of Service and Growth

In September of 2018 the Vietnam Era Museum turned 20 years old. We are incredibly proud to still be the only Museum in the country dedicated to the Vietnam Era, its complexities and importantly, its lasting impact.

It's always important to look back at the people who contributed to our continued success, those who laid down the roots of our work and made a strong commitment to our mission which we carry forward. Thank you to all who have contributed to our work through time and support.

In 1982, the power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. spoke to a group of Vietnam Veterans from New Jersey. Over the next decade, these Veterans worked with state legislators, Veteran and

community groups to generate support for a tribute to all New Jerseyans who served during the Vietnam War.

In 1987, Governor Kean signed legislation appropriating \$25,000 toward a design competition for the Memorial. Over the next year, more than 420 entries were considered. In July 1988, the winning design by Hien Nguyen, a naturalized American citizen who had escaped from Vietnam thirteen years earlier, was unveiled and work towards the Memorial's construction began.



Hien Nguyen with Memorial model at the unveiling ceremony, 1988

## Remembrance Day

As support increased, the Foundation became a formal non-profit organization with a growing staff and Board. Working together, Governors Florio, Kean and Whitman found support from the state's corporations and contractors.



New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Remembrance Day Ceremony

In April of 1991, May 7th was officially designated as New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Remembrance Day, eternally recognizing the sacrifices made by New Jerseyans and their families. It has remained our central ceremony. By 1995, funds and support had been raised and the Memorial was completed.

## The Last Patrol



In 1989, The Last Patrol, a group of fifteen New Jersey Veterans and three Nurses who served in Vietnam traveled over 200 miles from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. to the future site of the NJVVMF. Rubbings of the then 1,486 known New Jerseyans on the D.C. Memorial were placed

in a box and attached to Henry Rossi's wheelchair for the trip home. The group made the walk back to New Jersey over the next fifteen days raising awareness about and support for the Memorial.



Last Patrol member Henry Rossi entering the Memorial site with rubbings

## Memorial Dedication



Dedication of the Memorial, May 7, 1995

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial was dedicated on May 7, 1995. Supporters including the Whitmans, General Norman Schwarzkopf and state legislators processed into the Memorial behind the Last Patrol, completing a project that had been a labor of love for so many over the past decade.



John Whitman, Lawrence Cody, Honorable Christine Todd Whitman, and U.S. Senator John McCain

## Vietnam Era Museum

By the spring of 1993, preliminary plans for the Memorial's companion project, the Vietnam Era Museum, had begun. The Museum was dedicated in September 1998, three years after the completion of the Memorial.

The Vietnam Era Museum became the nation's first and only museum dedicated to the context of the Vietnam Era. The Museum was designed to welcome students, Veterans and the general public through expanded programming and class trip programs. These resources have grown exponentially over the past two decades as the Foundation has evolved into a recognized and professional organization.

Other Monuments followed as the NJVVMF expanded its collaborations with Veterans' and military organizations across the region including the U.S. War Dogs Memorial, the Women's Meditation Garden, New Jersey Gold Star Families Monument and the Vietnamese-American Monument.

The NJVVMF strives to become a national center recognized for its unique programs, exhibitions, collections and ceremonies. Our dedication to our mission and our community guides every aspect of our work. Each year we work with nearly 10,000 students and educators from across the region, thousands of Veterans and their families and other visitors to the site.



New Jersey Gold Star Family Monument

“

NJVVMF is about keeping alive the memories of our 1,563 Heroes on the Memorial Wall, which include 1,562 Men and 1 Very Special Woman, Captain Eleanor Grace Alexander.

”

Jim McGinnis, Vietnam Veteran, NJVVMF Volunteer

We are grateful to the countless people whose commitment created this unique and important site. It is based on this commitment that we look forward to the next chapter of our work.