



Middlesex County Veterans' Advisory Council  
The Wall That Heals  
Middlesex County Administration Building  
John F. Kennedy Square, 5th Floor  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

# NEWS

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact: Stacy Bersani 609-409-5039  
Bridget Kennedy 732-745-4228**

## ***The Wall That Heals Coming to Middlesex County***

**Families of 98 county residents killed in Southeast Asia are sought for Oct. 14 ceremony**

New Brunswick, NJ, August 24, 2004 -- August 20, 2004, may go by as just another day for most people in Middlesex County, but for the family of Michael James Coyle of Camp Kilmer, it will be a day of remembrance and loss. On that day in 1964, the 25-year-old Army captain became Middlesex County's first casualty in Vietnam. The first of 98 young men from all over the county who proudly served and made the ultimate sacrifice for their country -- fourteen from the Brunswicks, nine from Edison. The roll of cities includes Kendall Park, Metuchen, Old Bridge, Sewaren, Jamesburg, Dayton. The last was Air Force Major Andrew Ivan, Jr., of South River on Aug. 23, 1978.

To remember these heroes, recognize their sacrifice and their families' loss, and educate children about the Vietnam War, the Middlesex County Veterans' Advisory Council and Board of Chosen Freeholders will host *The Wall That Heals*, a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, from Oct. 14 – 17 at Roosevelt Park, Edison. *The Wall That Heals* will be open 24-hours a day, and there is no charge for admission. This traveling exhibit features a 250-foot replica of the memorial, as well as an Information Center and museum displaying memorabilia left at The Wall in Washington, DC.

- MORE -

“Visiting the memorial is a profound experience,” said Jane Brady, freeholder and advisory council member. “We will be honoring the Vietnam veterans and their families during opening ceremonies on Thursday, October 14 at 11 a.m. We ask that any family members of those 98 men killed in Vietnam to please contact Carl Asszony, county veterans service officer, at 732-745-4051, as soon as possible. That list of names is on the Middlesex County web-site. This is a ceremony for those families.” A Massing of Colors of veterans groups, scouts, police and fire companies will take place on Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon. A Candlelight Ceremony on Sunday, October 17 at 5:30 p.m. will close the display. **The list of county Southeast Asian casualties may be found at [www.co.middlesex.nj.us](http://www.co.middlesex.nj.us).** **Go to Human Services Department and click on the yellow, green and red “Middlesex County Remembers Vietnam” logo.**

The Moving Wall was the inspiration of John Devitt, a former helicopter door gunner and Army veteran, when he attended the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, in 1982. “The memorial is a visual experience that words cannot describe. As you approach the Wall and the words inscribed come into focus, you’re riveted and the emotions just pour forth,” he said. That is what inspired Devitt to dedicate his life to giving people all across the nation a chance to experience a similar catharsis.

With the help of a few friends and the support of many businesses, The Moving Wall became a reality. The first was built of Plexiglas, with each name silk-screened onto the panels, and appeared for the first time in 1984 at the Tyler Rose Festival in Texas. In its present form, the third generation, the wall is made of aluminum panels.

For many Vietnam Era veterans, seeing the Memorial in DC – a memorial that for luck and the grace of God could have included their names – was a somber, difficult walk across the Mall. “It’s been 20 years and I still remember that day, that walk, those feelings,” said South Brunswick resident Gary Cooper, an Army veteran who is also a member of the council.

- MORE -

“The emotion of standing there with other veterans; with the families of those who lost their lives; seeing the roses on the Wall and other personal items left in remembrance, drew us all together, made us all a family on that sunny, August day. A few years ago, I saw this display bring out the same emotion, healing and awareness,” he added.

The Wall That Heals exhibition is organized by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the organization charged with preserving The Wall in Washington, DC, and its vast legacy. National sponsors of the tour include Target, Disabled American Veterans and the Harley-Davidson Foundation. The Veterans’ Council is seeking local sponsorship to offset the costs of bringing the display to the area. Corporations, groups and individuals wishing to donate should contact Carl Asszony, veterans service officer, at 732-745-4051, or at [carl.asszony@co.middlesex.nj.us](mailto:carl.asszony@co.middlesex.nj.us). Volunteers are also needed as soon as possible. To volunteer, contact Ken Holman, volunteer coordinator, at 732-247-3727.

# # # #

Reporters and photographers are invited.

To arrange interviews with members of the Council, contact Bridget Kennedy.

