



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Waynesboro

A Tribute to Educators

By Clint Nicely

“The Ultimate Sacrifice.” “The Last Full Measure.” “Heroic Dedication to a Cause.”

These are phrases most often heard in tributes to fallen military personnel, but also in honor of law enforcement officers and firefighters. In cities and towns across the nation, there are hundreds of parks, monuments and memorials dedicated to lost members of the military, as well as scores of similar tributes to First Responders. In recent years, these phrases have also been used in tributes memorializing far too many courageous health-care workers, who were victims of the COVID pandemic.

Like most everyone, I am familiar with many of these tributes and memorials. What I did not know, until Donna’s and my recent road trip out West to see the grandkids, is that there exists a National Memorial to Fallen



Educators. As a teacher for over twenty years in my past, I was excited to visit this memorial. And because our UU congregation

includes many current, former and retired educators, I think it may be of interest to share some of what I learned.

This moving memorial, the brainchild of Carol Strickland, Director of the National Teachers Hall of Fame, is located on a hill on the north end of Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas. (Yes, there actually are a few hills in Kansas.) Strickland was inspired to create the National Memorial to Fallen Educators after the Sandy Hook Elementary School mass shooting in 2012, which killed 20 children and 6 educators. On the hillside just below the One Room School House and Museum, the memorial is a stone-wall-lined plaza containing three black granite pillars (reminiscent of the Vietnam Memorial in DC),



with just under 200 names engraved, followed by their year of death and their state of

residence. The plaza is designed to hold six pillars, with funds for a fourth pillar currently being raised.

Strickland, coordinating with a host of both national and state education departments and teacher organizations, worked tirelessly to get the names of educators who died in the line of duty throughout our nation’s history, while at the same time working to raise funds to build the memorial. Dedicated in June, 2014, with just two pillars containing 114 names, the

memorial has names added each June, in conjunction with the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. The earliest inscriptions on the pillars date to 1763 and 1764, the results of conflicts and retaliations involving Native Americans. Most of the more recent additions are the results of school shootings, though one notable exception is that of Christa McAuliffe, the teacher scheduled to conduct classes from space before she died in the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion in 1986.

Kansas national and state legislators pushed for and succeeded in getting official national recognition and registration for the memorial in 2018. In June of this year, when the most recent names were added, a ten-year rededication ceremony once again paid tribute to those “educators [who] perished in the line of duty from accidents, violence, or from the global coronavirus pandemic. Some lost their lives while protecting students. All of them left this earth heroes.” Sadly and tragically, school shootings have become, it seems, if not commonplace, at least unsurprising. And each year since the establishment of the memorial, the names of school shooting victims have been added, along with the seemingly futile annual entreaty that “no more names be added.”

If you are ever travelling through central Kansas, you will find that Emporia is a great place to visit. To learn more about the memorial, to donate, to read a brief summary for each of the names on the memorial or to see more pictures, check out the sources I used: the [National Memorial to Fallen Educators](#), and the [National Teachers Hall of Fame](#).

Help Wanted

Wayne Nolde is seeking assistance with yardwork such as cutting brush, vines, limbs, etc. and loading the material on a trailer. The work is at Wayne's home in Mount Sidney. His preferred timeframe is November or early December. Wayne will make a donation to UUFW of \$20 per hour for up to six hours of your help. Contact Wayne directly to work out the details.

For more information about how our help wanted service works, [click here](#). Direct any questions to stewardship@uufw.org.



The UUFW Membership and Social Justice teams joined forces to be a presence at Staunton Pride 2024 on October 26, We talked to people about UUFW, handed out brochures and had fun on a beautiful fall day.

