



March 21, 2023

The Honorable Mayor Maria Ristow and The Town of Los Gatos Town Council
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

Subject: **Pandemic Funding Relief Request in Support of *The Flame of Liberty Memorial***

Dear Council Members,

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation requests the Town's financial support to eliminate the remaining Devcon Construction loan balance of \$ 269,577.91 (as of Feb 28, 2023) for erecting the world-class *Flame of Liberty Memorial*, which adorns the Town's Civic Center lawn.

A grant of \$ 269,577.91 from pandemic funding will position the Town of Los Gatos with the highest level of recognition [\$250,000 and above] - the *Circle of Liberty*, upon the Wall of Gratitude. If required, the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation can use the funds to pay off the construction loan prior to the deadline set by those who have granted the pandemic funds to the Town of Los Gatos.

The funding will allow the Veterans Foundation to turn the page on our next chapter and focus all efforts on raising funds solely for the purposes of: 1) maintaining *The Flame of Liberty Memorial*, (2) supporting our Yellow Ribbon Program endeavors to improve the lives of active service members, veterans and their families in our community, and (3) continuing to educate and model to our Los Gatos and greater community on the sacrifices borne by those who serve (in and out of uniform.) Example Yellow Ribbon Programs include the: a) "Silkies Hike," targeted at reducing suicide through networking Veterans which, over the last two years, launched and ended at The Flame of Liberty Memorial, b) Weekly "Breakfasts with Vets" program aimed to deliver emotional healing run by therapist Dr. Clyde Horn, and c) Co-supporting "Stand Down," a gathering of homeless veterans over the course of a weekend that provides to them healthcare physicals, dental checkups, hot showers, haircuts, new clothing, new sleeping bags, provisions, veterinarian services for their pets, VA / college counseling / job search resources, transportation service to and from the event, weekend meals and lodging, and more. Most importantly, the focus on our new chapter will enable us to positively impact the lives of individuals who have defended freedom, supported our country in natural disasters, and given us so much in return.

Your immediate approval of the proposal enclosed will allow us to commence work immediately towards our mission's goal to focus on programmatic support that improves the lives of Veterans.

Please contact Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation President Major General Kent Hillhouse at 408-221-1512 (cell) or Board Member Ellen Manzo at (203) 561-8888 should you require further information.

Thank you in advance, for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation Board

PROPOSAL TO THE TOWN OF LOS GATOS

PANDEMIC FUNDING
RELIEF REQUEST
IN SUPPORT OF THE
FLAME OF LIBERTY MEMORIAL

SUBMITTED BY THE
VETERANS MEMORIAL & SUPPORT FOUNDATION



Pandemic Funding Relief Request in Support of *The Flame of Liberty Memorial*

Submitted to the Town of Los Gatos Town Council by the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation Board

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation requests the Town's financial support to eliminate the remaining Devcon Construction loan balance of \$274,121 (as of Jan 31, 2023) for erecting the world-class *Flame of Liberty Memorial*, which adorns the Town's Civic Center lawn.

Brief History – 69 Days, 6 Years, 6 Days, 6 Months

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation, established in October 2012, has been in place for a decade. The Foundation obtained 501(c)(3) IRS approval in 69 calendar days - weekends and holidays included - following submission of its application to the IRS. Most nonprofits experience 12-18 months for approval.

Over the six years that followed, the Foundation conducted two national arts challenges, made five presentations to the Town Council, presented to the Arts Commission, community organizations and stakeholders, surveyed the public on its interests, engaged media personnel, and worked with artists, architects, engineers, construction experts and landscape designers to establish building plans. The Town of Los Gatos public, the Town Council, the Town stakeholders, and the Foundation Board weighed in and chose the winning design which you now see as *The Flame of Liberty*. The Los Gatos Town Council's final approval for *The Flame of Liberty* building plans arrived December-end 2018.

Links:

Town Council Approves Veterans Memorial Concept for Los Gatos 11/04/12

https://youtu.be/y8RMTBi9_zk

The Flame of Liberty Veterans Memorial by Artist Frank Kocian Morris

<https://youtu.be/E7O4bmg7OOc>



Photos above – Groundbreaking for The Flame of Liberty Memorial

Six days later, the Foundation conducted a public media groundbreaking on January 4, 2019. Less than six months later, the Foundation had constructed the memorial and conducted a premier dedication ceremony consisting of over 70 speakers and performers - top tier military personnel, public officers, family members of 9/11 heroes, prominent Veterans, emergency service officials, award winning entertainers, bands, military vehicles and community members, - who collectively delivered a message of the importance of supporting America's active service members, veterans, and first responder personnel to the 1500+ audience members and media. If nothing else, that history should be testimony to the fact that once given the green light, the Veterans Foundation team knows how to execute.



The Flame of Liberty Memorial delivers honor, respect, gratitude and healing to America's Service Members, Veterans, First Responders, their Families and two local 9/11 Heroes – Todd Beamer & Mark Bingham.

Today, there stands an unparalleled *Flame of Liberty Memorial* upon the Civic Center Lawn designed by nationally acclaimed artist Frank Kocian Morris who has the recognition of being chosen by the U.S. Treasury as a Master Designer for the U.S. Mint, for which the Town of Los Gatos can be very proud. Work on the endeavor began in 2012. The Town Council approved the memorial building plans in December 2018, and on June 15, 2019, the Veterans Foundation unveiled *The Flame of Liberty Memorial* in a world-class dedication ceremony. *The Flame of Liberty Memorial* honors active service members, veterans, first responders, their families, and two heroes whose actions saved the U.S. Capitol building from destruction on 9/11. *The Flame of Liberty Memorial* creates for the Town of Los Gatos a destination that brings people together to the Town for events at an inspiring venue. Congresswoman Anna Eshoo phrased it well when she declared *The Flame of Liberty Memorial* "a sacred place."

Links:

Deliver a Message of Honor and Gratitude

<https://vimeo.com/390920373>

Flame of Liberty Memorial Dedication Pgm Sneak Peak [Trailer]

<https://vimeo.com/346034483>

June 15, 2019 Flame of Liberty Memorial Dedication – Full Program

<https://vimeo.com/363941922>

Photos Below – Keynote speaker General H. R. McMaster U.S. Army (Ret.) and 25th United States National Security Advisor to the President addresses over 1500 interested community attendees at The Flame of Liberty Memorial Dedication Ceremony, June 15, 2019.





Photo Above – Santa Clara County First Responders join with prominent military leaders and Los Gatos Town Council members to honor local 9/11 heroes, survivors, and victims at the 20th Anniversary event.

In its efforts to accomplish the mission of educating Americans on the sacrifices borne by those who serve, in addition to the premier memorial dedication on June 15, 2019, the Veterans Foundation in 2021 conducted a very moving 20th Anniversary Tribute to one of America’s most tragic days in recent history: 9/11, a 21st Anniversary of 9/11 Remembrance event in 2022, Middle and High School tours of the memorial in which our next generation learned about the history of defending freedom in America’s past and the tragic day of 9/11, and tours to various organizational groups in the area.

Links:

REMEMBER 9/11 – Tribute to Survivors, Victims and Heroes – Full Event

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqBOb1ML6Gg>

Hillbrook School Visits The Flame of Liberty to Learn About 9/11

<https://simplebooklet.com/L9e5AamW793iFARU8BELqO>

When the Veterans Foundation launched this endeavor, we intended to build a memorial that delivered *honor, respect, and gratitude* to America’s active service members, veterans, and their families. Of great significance is that over our journey, we learned that *The Flame of Liberty* is much more than bricks and mortar because a memorial can be **a catalyst for healing**. So today, we add *healing as an additional byproduct of the Flame of Liberty Memorial*. Service members tell us they feel at home at the memorial. It offers a reflective space where they can call to mind their service experience and memorialize the buddies they lost during wartime. Veterans have spoken about how they have felt emotionally less burdened by the events they have harbored in their minds over decades when visiting memorials. And at paver dedication ceremonies in which members of the Foundation have joined families to embed an inscribed paver into our walk of heroes, we have observed veterans and families clutch hands, share stories of wartime that may have been privately held for decades, and weep together, as they collectively honor a loved one.

Links:

Catalyst for Healing – Honor Flight Commemorating WWII Veterans

<https://youtu.be/9Jo1YrMaC7Y>

The Flame of Liberty Capital Campaign

The Foundation officially launched its *Flame of Liberty Capital Campaign* on the day of our groundbreaking in January 2019. Our goal was to raise \$2,600,000 in support of the design and construction of The Flame of Liberty Memorial, a memorial maintenance fund, delivery of educational programs to the community, and the creation of an endowment fund for yellow ribbon programs to improve the lives of active service members, veterans, and their families. To date, the Foundation, **staffed 100% by volunteers**, many of whom have been on board since inception, has raised \$1,842,810.00 in donations and pledges. As of January 31, 2023, our “stretch” to meet our Flame of Liberty Campaign goal of \$ 2,600,000.00 is \$757,190.

The Flame of Liberty Memorial

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation has, through January 31, 2023, collected and spent \$1,339,053.98 on The Flame of Liberty Memorial. This includes monthly payments towards a construction loan that is in place with Devcon Construction which currently maintains a balance due as of Feb-end 2023 on the construction loan of \$ 269,577.91.

Flame of Liberty Capital Campaign Goal -	\$ 2.60*
Pledges & Donations to Date -	1.84
Flame of Liberty Memorial Expenditures -	1.34
Raised in Fiscal 2020, '21 and '22 Pandemic Years –	1.03
Stretch to Liberty Capital Campaign Goal -	.76
Remaining Construction Loan Balance -	.27
Pandemic Relief Request -	.27

** All figures represented are Millions*

Devcon Obligation

COVID managed to put a huge monkey wrench in fundraising efforts for all nonprofits. Like every other nonprofit, we too felt the “squeeze.” Nevertheless, we continued to fundraise and pay suppliers \$ 1,037,739.38 including every \$16,000 monthly payment as expected on the Devcon construction loan in support of memorial expenses through the trying 2020, '21 and '22 pandemic years. And we did so while maintaining enough of a cash cushion to continue to operate. However, the Foundation has been financially limited to execute on other areas of our mission.

Pandemic Times

In 2022 we continued to dig deep into our sweat equity reserves and work in a lean and mean manner, something we have done all along. Here are some samples related to the 9/11 event of last September as example, that are evidentiary of our “lean and mean” modus operandi:

- 100% of the design work on the new 911 memorial was pro bono and the construction of the new 911 memorial was funded by the Veterans Foundation.
- 700 chair rentals, the delivery truck we borrowed to transport the chairs, and staging for our 911 event was pro bono. A charity organization assisted us in setting up and taking down chairs for the program.
- The temporary staging of fire trucks and emergency vehicles were all pro bono.
- Our marketing collateral was printed with discounted contracts.
- Our keynote speaker at the 9/11 event who flew in from the Ukraine, is registered with speaker bureaus and typically commands thousands of dollars for his speech, (he also has sung the *National Anthem* on ESPN and national networks before over 500 sporting and other events) performed the *National Anthem* at our event and delivered his keynote for a speaker's cost of \$0. other than his economy roundtrip travel.
- The event included over 50 participants including musical entertainers and Gary Scott Thomas, KBAY's radio personality for over three decades who served as our event MC. Every one of our 50 or more performers and speakers took the stage on a pro bono basis.

Links:

American Challenge – Lessons From 9/11

<https://vimeo.com/807131616>

And despite the challenge COVID placed before us, we continued to deliver in support of our mission. In 2022, the Foundation:

- Co-hosted the “Silkies Hike” (named for the “silkies” running shorts most participants wear for the affair,) a hike that is geared to take a stab out of veteran suicide using humor and creating a forum for veterans to network.
- Continued execution of the “Gratitude Campaign” in honor of first responders, healthcare workers, military members and essential workers who supported America during the pandemic.
- Conducted weekly veteran meetings with Dr. Clyde Horn where an open forum discussion offers participants the opportunity to discuss issues of greatest concern to vets with Clyde, an expert therapist on veterans' issues.

Photo Left – Veterans meet Veterans at the Silkies Hike in Los Gatos



- Hosted a visit from Medal of Honor recipient Sammy L. Davis at *The Flame of Liberty Memorial* site.
- Supported families who requested ceremonial dedications as their pavers of gratitude in honor of a loved one who served, were lowered into our Walk of Honor.
- Unveiled the new California State Guard plaque boulder and the newly designed 9/11 memorial wall (both funded by the Veterans Foundation) at *The Flame of Liberty Memorial*, which were on our radar screen since inception.
- Participated as Guardians aboard Bay Area Honor Flights which flew local WWII, Korean War and Vietnam Veterans to Washington D.C. to visit memorials in their honor. Through this effort and that of our own *Flame of Liberty Memorial*, we have learned that visiting memorials can be the catalyst towards healing.
- Supported multiple remembrances throughout the Bay Area - e.g., Memorial Day celebrations, July 4th celebrations, the San Jose Veterans Day Parade, and Wreaths Across America and local events – Saratoga Classic Cool Car Show, Fiesta De Artes, Los Gatos Wine Walk, and more.
- Managed the ongoing landscaping, maintenance, and holiday dress-up of our *Flame of Liberty Memorial* for holiday events over the course of the year (which also requires funding from the Veterans Foundation.)
- And conducted student educational tours in which we taught America's next generation of leaders about the sacrifices borne by those who serve and the history of selfless acts of courage delivered by America's service members in their defense and delivery of freedom to our country.

In short, it wasn't easy.



Photos Below – Major General Kent Hillhouse US Army (Ret.) and Navy Reserve Captain Doug Beck share firsthand experiences surrounding the tragic events of 9/11 with students of the Hillbrook School.

Links:

Project Gratitude to Those Fighting Covid with Courage

<https://vimeo.com/434842466>

Bay Area Guard Unit Flyover Los Gatos to Honor Frontline COVID-19 Workers

<https://vimeo.com/422661895>

Holiday Season at the Memorial Site

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rNvEG1YtP5jQjrcrtNjdllC7d6DtEllH/view?usp=sharing>

Next Acts

In 2023, we intend to conduct fundraisers (July and in the fall,) that will embellish our cash reserves to support our mission.



The Committee and Volunteers –

The Foundation Board in place consists of approximately 15 regular volunteers many of whom have been at the Foundation table since inception. The Foundation's President is Major General Kent Hillhouse, US Army (Ret.). We invite you to visit our Flipbook to learn more about some of our Board members.

Photo – Foundation President and Major General Kent Hillhouse U.S. Army (Ret.) awards a deserving service member the Purple Heart.

Link:

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation – Meet Some of Our Members

<https://simplebooklet.com/veteransfoundationmembers>

The Wall of Gratitude

A grant of \$ 269,577.91 from pandemic funding will position the Town of Los Gatos with the highest level of recognition - the *Circle of Liberty*, upon the Wall of Gratitude. If required, the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation can use the funds to pay off the construction loan prior to the deadline set by those who have granted the pandemic funds to the Town of Los Gatos.

In conclusion, the funding will allow the Veterans Foundation to turn the page on our next chapter and focus all efforts on raising funds solely for the purposes of supporting our Yellow Ribbon program endeavors, maintaining *The Flame of Liberty Memorial*, and continuing to educate our community on the sacrifices borne by those who serve. More importantly, it will enable us to improve the lives of individuals who have defended freedom, supported our country in natural disasters, and given us so much in return.

Thank you in advance, for your consideration of this request.

Photo Below – The Wall of Gratitude at The Flame of Liberty Memorial

