Volunteers prepare flags for Healing Field 9/11 Memorial

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For The Courier-News

Last Modified: Sep 5, 2011 02:13AM

CARPENTERSVILLE — Dozens of volunteers gathered outside of Otto Engineering on Sunday to assemble some 1,300 American flags in preparation for a massive Healing Field 9/11 Memorial set for this coming week.

The planned display, a sea of 2,976 flags in Carpenter Park, will honor the lives lost in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and somberly mark their 10th anniversary.

“We don’t want anybody to ever forget,” said Gilberts resident Dan Helsdon, co-coordinator of the event. “It was 10 years ago, but it changed our lives forever.”

The flags — representing those killed — will include a yellow, red or blue ribbon. Yellow will signify civilian lives lost, with red and blue for fire and police/port authority personnel, respectively.

Each flag will have a tag attached naming the victim, with a short biography about them.

Carpentersville resident Jerry Christopherson, who heads the Patriotic Committee of Dundee Township, brought the Healing Field concept to the village after learning about one erected in 2009 for veterans in Naperville.

Garnering financial support from local businesses, his first endeavor was on Memorial Day last year, when 1,748 flags were placed to honor Prisoners of War/Missing in Action from the Vietnam War.

Christopherson, who sells the 3-by-5-foot flags to benefit local charities, had about 1,600 flags left over to use for this year’s display. He is again selling the flags at for $40 at healingfield.org/Carpentersville.com, which can picked up at Carpenter Park at 4 p.m. Sunday or shipped for $6.

Proceeds from the flag sales will benefit VFW Post No. 5915, American Legion Post 679, and the Boys and Girls Club of Dundee Township.

The Patriotic Committee of Dundee Township is also asking area residents to join the Cell Phones for Soldiers campaign by donating cell phones at the Healing Field or any First American Bank branch, including 261 S. Western Ave., Carpentersville, and 218 W. Main St., West Dundee.

Opening ceremonies for the Healing Field 9/11 Memorial are set for 7 p.m. Wednesday, with viewing 7 a.m. to dusk Thursday through Saturday. At 7 p.m. Saturday, a candlelight vigil will be held.
Sunday’s schedule includes a 10 a.m. dedication of a firefighter memorial at Fire Station No. 1, 213 Spring St., which features two beams from the World Trade Center wreckage. A noon parade will begin on Main Street, travel silently by Fire Station No. 1, and end at the park.

A U.S. Air Force fly-by can be seen at 3 p.m., and closing ceremonies are at 3:30 p.m.

Algonquin resident John Sleeting, a U.S. Coast Guard veteran who helped assemble flags on Sunday, said that Americans need to remember the fallen this weekend.

“We are one country,” he said, “and we were all victims of it.”