

Pa. Senate approves Dinniman's proposed highway tribute to Medal of Honor heroes

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WEST CHESTER – On June 17 State Sen. Andy Dinniman announced that his legislation to designate a section of Route 23 as the Medal of Honor Grove Highway has been unanimously approved by the Pennsylvania Senate.

Dinniman said the House of Representatives will now consider the bill, and his hope is that it can approve it in time for an official renaming celebration to take place on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2011.

"We're halfway there in terms of adding another great honor for our military heroes, and I am hopeful that we can secure the House's and governor's approval of the bill in time for Veterans Day. Wouldn't that be a great way to honor our veterans and to remind residents that the Medal of Honor Grove, a unique and historic memorial site, is located right here in Chester County?" Dinniman said.

Senate Bill 631 would designate the section of Route 23 that is situated between Chester County's border with Montgomery County and Route 100 as the Medal of Honor Grove Highway. It was set to be considered by the House Transportation Committee the week of June 20.

Dinniman also thanked the hundreds of volunteers who came out to join the Friends of the Medal of Honor Grove and discussed his ongoing plans to promote the historic veterans' memorial site.

The 52-acre Grove, at the rear of the Freedoms Foundations headquarters, just off Route 23 near Phoenixville, is the nation's oldest memorial site dedicated to Medal of Honor recipients. It is divided into one-acre plots for each state, as well as Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Each plot features an obelisk and metal plaques set in the ground, honoring Medal of Honor recipients dating back to the Civil War.

Dinniman said he became involved in this project last year because the Grove had fallen into disrepair, and there were questions about its future. He worked to organize a massive community cleanup of the site that was attended by more than 1,000 local residents, students, families, veterans and volunteer organizations last fall.

As a result of the cleanup, Dinniman recently joined with two Medal of Honor recipients, retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. James E. Livingston and retired Army Col. Walter J. Marm, to announce the creation of the Friends of the Medal of Honor Grove, a nonprofit organization that will maintain and care for the site.

"The creation of the Friends of the Medal of Honor Grove is a major achievement in our efforts to save this historic and unique memorial site. But our mission is not over. In fact, in many ways it has just begun," Dinniman said. "There is plenty of work ahead as we work to raise awareness of the Grove, to restore or add names of Medal of Honor recipients that are missing and get the Medal of Honor curriculum into classrooms."

Dinniman also said that he would continue to work with the Friends group to set goals and timelines for additional improvements and repairs to the site, including restoring or adding the names of multiple Medal of Honor recipients that are missing due to natural wear and tear or a lack of funding.

"It is our hope that by Memorial Day 2012, the names of all 3,456 recipients will be honored at the Grove," he said.

Dinniman also continues to work to get the Medal of Honor Character Development Curriculum, a program developed by the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, into local schools.

"This is a program that incorporates the ideals of courage and selfless service to build character and promote responsible citizenship in students. At heart, it forces individuals to ask themselves, 'What am I capable of in my moment of truth?'" Dinniman said. "I'm pleased to say that it will be incorporated into Phoenixville High School beginning this fall."

The Medal of Honor recipients and their stories provide models of how to respond in moments of great challenge and peril.

For more information about the Friends of the Medal of Honor Grove visit www.friendsmohgrove.org.

For more information contact Dinniman's District Office at 610-692-2112 or e-mail acirucci@pasenate.com.