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## Kickoff today: Fundraising starts for cemetery chapel

By *Bill Hess*

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A fundraising effort kicks off today, July 4, 2012, to build a chapel at the Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Sierra Vista.

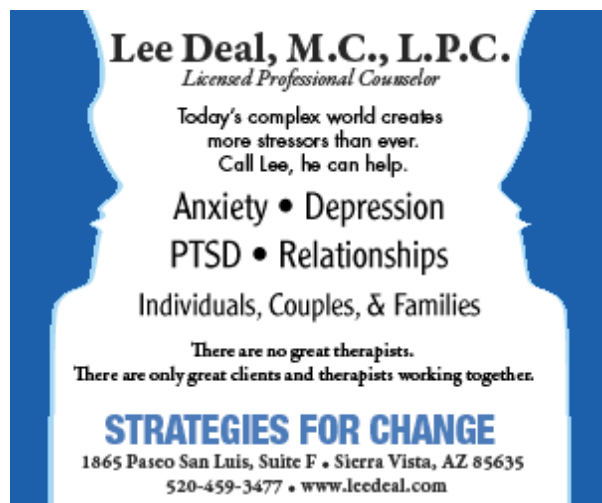
Goal of \$250,000 for a new facility at Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

Bill Hess

Herald/Review

SIERRA VISTA — Today starts a fundraising effort to build a chapel on the Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery.

While there is an outdoor committal shelter at the cemetery, weather conditions sometimes make it difficult to hold funeral services. This is especially true in the winter months when the temperature is at or below freezing, and during the hot months of summer.



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However, a proposed \$250,000 chapel is in the planning stages, members of the cemetery's foundation have said. Foundation Chapel Project subcommittee member, Leo Pimple, said an individual in the community, who wishes to be anonymous, has made a "\$10,000 challenge pledge."

The money will be provided, but the person is asking an individual or organization to match the \$10,000 donation, Pimple said.

Tom Dingwall, the foundation's chairman and member of the subcommittee, said the need for a chapel is to allow services to be held inside during inclement weather or if people want to use a larger facility — the committal shelter can only hold 45 people.

The proposed chapel will hold 95 people.

In the past, bad weather was so extreme people "had to retreat to the back of the committal shelter," Dingwall said. Earl Devine, another subcommittee member, said one time the weather was so brutal, services for a veteran had to be moved into the lobby of the cemetery's administrative building.

Cemetery Administrator Joe Larson said while the funds for the state-operated facility initially came from the federal government, rules only allow for a committal shelter. If a chapel is needed, it has to be built using donations, Larson said. That's the motivation for a fundraising effort, he added.

As for expansion of the cemetery, plans are in the works to construct a new columbarium section to be followed later by additional in-ground burial sites, with the funds being provided to the state by the federal government, the cemetery administrator said.

Since 2005, the foundation has raised nearly \$300,000 for a variety of additions to the cemetery, Larson said. The foundation raised almost \$100,000 for a carillon; \$90,000 to build a cemetery 'within a cemetery' to hold the remains of soldiers from the late 1800s, who were exhumed in Tucson to make way for a construction project; \$35,000 for the Wreaths Across America program and \$30,000 for a kiosk, he said.

Additionally, other funds were raised to landscape or replace landscape items, Larson added.

The long-range plan is to raise the funds for the chapel and to have it built and dedicated on Memorial Day 2015. However, Pimple said if the funds can be raised faster "... we'll dedicate the

chapel on Memorial Day 2014.”

But he and the others agree the proposed three-year project is a logical time frame.

Today, in Sierra Vista’s Veterans’ Memorial Park the foundation will have a small information and donation booth to start collecting funds for the Veterans Chapel Project. Individuals who donate \$1,000 or more will have their names, or organization’s name, placed on a bronze plaque and those who donate been \$500 to \$999 will have their names inscribed on a roll of honor which will be placed in the chapel’s cornerstone.

Larson said Mike Rutherford of Rutherford Diversified, has used company experts to do much of the engineering work, which is saving the project money. Additionally, a rendering of the chapel was done by local artist Harlan White, he said.

Larson said donations can be accepted online at [www.savmcf.org](http://www.savmcf.org) <sup>[1]</sup> or mailed to the Southern Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery, at 1300 Buffalo Soldier Trail, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635, with the memo line of a check stating the money is for the Veterans Chapel Project.

All donations to the tax exempt, nonprofit foundation will be acknowledged with a receipt, he said.

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