

## Scarborough Leader

July 11, 2014 Edition

### **Cost of Freedom Tribute rolls in**

By Michael Kelley  
Staff Writer



People of all ages stopped by Gateway Shoppes in Scarborough last week to visit a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, as well as tributes to men and women killed in wars ranging from World War I to the Global War on Terror, as well as Sept. 11. The tribute was brought to Scarborough by the Wounded Heroes Program of Maine. At left, members of the Scarborough Fire Department salute as the convoy of motorcycle riders that escorted the Cost of Freedom Tribute from York to Scarborough enter the Gateway Shoppes Wednesday, July 2. The traveling tribute was in Scarborough for the Fourth of July weekend. (Michael Kelley photos). The Independence Day weekend was one of remembrance for visitors of Cabela's in the Gateway Shoppes on Payne Road.

From July 3 to July 6, the national outdoor retailer hosted the Cost of Freedom Tribute.

The event, which was free and open to the public and hosted by American Veterans Traveling Tribute, included a 360-foot long, eight-foot high replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, as well as a 190-foot display honoring all veterans and active military.



“What I like about this wall is it is not just about Vietnam,” said Greg Sirpis, Cabela's retail marketing manager. “There is a separate wall that deals with the other conflicts and Sept. 11, so

there will be an educational element to the whole display. I am sure it is also going to be emotional for a lot of people.”

The wall is 80 percent the size of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington D.C. That wall, opened to the public in November 1982, was constructed with approximately \$9 million in private funding from the Vietnam Veterans Fund and contains the names of the 58,286 service members who were killed in Vietnam or remain missing.

The wall that came to Scarborough contains all the names on the wall in Washington, D.C.



Organizers of the Cost of Freedom Tribute hoped it would not only help healing, but also educate and inform people about the history of the United States. (Michael Kelley photo) **Work to bring the wall** to Scarborough began a year ago after a conversation Sirpis had with Pam Payeur, executive director of the Wounded Heroes Program of Maine, which sponsored the wall. Sirpis said Payeur asked him if Cabela’s was interested in hosting the wall.

“I said, ‘It’s a no-brainer. Let’s do it,’” Sirpis said.

Payeur said the idea was brought up to her by Biddeford resident Roland Pelletier, a Vietnam veteran who was active with Wounded Heroes of Maine prior, as Payeur said, to “losing his battle with (post traumatic stress disorder)” in May 2013.

“We both thought this one, with the multiple exhibits, was much more of an interesting and comprehensive display,” Payeur said. Over the last few months, 30 volunteers had been meeting weekly to make Pelletier’s vision a reality.

Payeur, a resident of Saco, said there were several options. The scheduling worked out that the Fourth of July weekend, one of the most patriotic times of the year, was available. When Payeur found out, she quickly jumped on the opportunity.

“That seemed about the most appropriate date for me, so we took it,” Payeur said. “It celebrates exactly what these guys fought for. It is as simple as that.”

**The wall and the** associated tributes arrived in a tractor trailer July 2 and was escorted to Scarborough from York by police, as well as representatives of several motorcycle groups, including Patriot Riders of America, Blue Knights, Rolling Thunder and Combat Motorcycle Vets. The wall was constructed the morning of July 3, just in time for the Fourth of July weekend traffic.

The wall was busy all weekend, with many individuals looking for names of their friends and family on the Vietnam Wall, the wall of dog tags of soldiers lost during the Global War on Terror, or other parts of the tribute.

“There’s a flood of emotion on many levels for everyone here right now,” Payeur said as she watched people view the tribute July 3.

Sirpis said raising awareness about veterans is a long-standing mission of Cabela’s. in Wreaths Across America festivities, providing a place for the convoy to rest on its way to Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Sirpis said three or four years ago the Scarborough location was the only Cabela’s store to participate. Last year, there were 28 that helped the Wreaths Across America effort.

“It’s all part of our community involvement. Veterans and kids are always someone I am very interested in working with,” Sirpis said.

*Want to comment on this story? Login to our website at [leader.mainelymediallc.com](http://leader.mainelymediallc.com) and let us know your thoughts.*