

Enduring Heroes Artist Opens Studio on Veterans Day

By Rhonda Kozacik
Special to the Outlook

Photos courtesy
Bob Amott

For the past two years, a group of dedicated volunteers, including Pasadena-area Gold Star families (those who have tragically lost a son or daughter in action), have worked tirelessly to bring the Enduring Heroes Memorial to Pasadena. This bronze monument of a soldier triumphantly holding the American flag will be erected at the gateway to Pasadena and will pay permanent tribute to 11 hometown heroes who lost their lives fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Wars on Terror since 9/11/2001, and honor those veterans who have thankfully returned home.

Noted local sculptor Christopher Slatoff brings artistry and skill to the creation of this monument, which will enhance Pasadena and create a greater awareness of, and appreciation for, all those who serve. Slatoff takes turns using pictures of the 11 fallen soldiers as reference, ensuring that the spirit of each hero is memorialized. Photographs of all 11 heroes are mounted on his studio wall, where he keeps them for inspiration.

Recently, on Veterans Day, Enduring Heroes supporters, friends and family had the opportunity to visit the artist's studio, and view the monument in process, being sculpted in clay. All those who visit his studio, especially the Gold Star families and veterans, find the soldier and Slatoff's vision and spirit healing.

Guests on Veterans Day included several members of local Gold Star families, who drew comfort from the inspirational monument and the support of Pasadena Mayor Terry Tornek, former Mayor Bill Bogaard, Pasadena Police Chief Phillip Sanchez, and City Council members Andy Wilson and John Kennedy.

The monument will soon leave for the foundry to be cast in bronze, and will return to Pasadena in May. The complete

piece, destined to be a prominent landmark, will be installed in Defenders Parkway at the corner of Orange Gove and Colorado Boulevards. The committee is planning a dedication ceremony, a meaningful tribute in honor of the warriors, veterans and their families, for Memorial Day, May 29.

For additional information about Enduring Heroes, follow the group's Instagram (@Enduringheroes) or Facebook page (Enduring Heroes) for updates on the monument's progress, bios of the heroes and the upcoming dedication ceremony.



Jordi Stringfellow, artist Christopher Slatoff, Claire and Bill Bogaard, Jaynie Studenmund, Shelley Lowe and Rhonda Kozacik



Councilman Andy Wilson, Chris Slatoff and Mayor Terry Tornek



The monument, a combat soldier triumphantly holding the American flag, will be cast into an 8-foot bronze sculpture.



The bronze maquette is a preliminary model, or small scale "sketch" of the monument.



City Councilman John Kennedy



Cassandra Lane Rich, Christopher Slatoff, City Councilman Steve Madison and Shelly Lowe



Jaynie Studenmund with Police Chief Phillip Sanchez and his wife, Deborah



Fred, Gina and John Stifter



Scott Jenkins, Jaynie Studenmund and Kris Leslie

Greater Pasadena's Fallen Heroes

Todd Bryant — Army, First Lieutenant
Age 23 — 10/31/2003 — Khalidiya, Iraq

J.P. Blecksmith — Marines, Second Lieutenant
Age: 24 — 11/11/04 — Fallujah, Iraq

Dion Whitley — Marines, Lance Corporal
Age: 21 — 6/15/05 — Ramadi, Iraq

Sergio H. Escobar — Marines, Lance Corporal
Age: 18 — 10/9/05 — Ramadi, Iraq

Carla Stewart — Army, Specialist
Age: 36 — 1/28/07 — Tallil, Iraq

Adam J. Rosema — Army, Specialist
Age, 27 — 03/14/07 — Baquba, Iraq

Cory Hiltz — Army, Private First Class
Age, 20 — 6/28/07 — Iraq

Rogelio A. Ramirez — Marines, Lance Corporal
Age: 21 — 8/26/07 — Al Anbar Province, Iraq

Willie Gilbert — Army, Specialist
Age: 23 — 5/14/2013 — Senjaray, Afghanistan

Scott R. Studenmund — Army, Green Beret Staff Sergeant
Age: 24 — 6/9/2014 — Gaza Valley, Afghanistan

Joseph Francis Stifter — Army, Sergeant
Age 30 — 1/28/16 — Iraq



Photos of the 11 heroes displayed in artist Christopher Slatoff's studio inspire him daily as he works.