

Missoula County Media Release

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Missoula County Awarded Grant to Restore World War I Statue

Missoula County's Doughboy Memorial, "Over the Top to Victory," was selected as one of 50 memorials from around the country to receive a \$2,000 matching grant from the [100 Cities/100 Memorials program](#) to restore the statue and granite base.

"Writing the application to restore the Doughboy memorial represents the joy of being a grants administrator for the county" Grants Administrator, Nancy Rittel said. "A particular highlight is working closely with diverse persons and organizations towards a common goal. This application would not have been successful if it weren't for help from veterans' groups, the courthouse renovation architectural firm, the Historical Museum, and a Missoulian reporter."

Funding is well timed with the conclusion of the fifth and final phase of the courthouse renovation project.

"This grant is a great opportunity to restore and rethink a monument previously hidden by overgrown trees that surrounded the Courthouse," Paul Filicetti, Preservation Architect on the project, said. "Times have changed and there's an expectation today that monuments, especially one as significant as this, be wheelchair accessible."



The statue was originally erected by the American Legion Auxiliary in 1927 to honor the 39 local men who died in World War I. The sculpture is cast bronze with a granite base that was sculpted by artist John Paulding.

The 90 years since it was placed on the County Courthouse lawn have taken their toll on the granite base, which list the fallen heroes. The bronze is in need of appropriate cleaning so the names and language can be more easily read.

“With this grant, Pauling’s statuary bronze doughboy and the memorial plaques on the granite base will be cleaned and treated with a protective wax coating, then the granite base will be cleaned and repointed,” Filicetti said. “The result of this restoration effort will be a return of the original uniform color and sheen to the statuary bronze and granite had before being subjected to years of neglect.”

The grant award was the result of community involvement and investment. The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula provides a WWI exhibit that proved to be critical in sharing just how great of an impact the war had on Missoula during the time.

“With the outbreak of World War I, in April 1917, Montanans served and sacrificed at a rate greater than any other U.S. state,” Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Director, Matt Lautzenheiser said. “Over 40,500 Montana soldiers were sent to battle, or over 10 percent of the state’s total population. Of these brave men, nearly 1,000 never returned. They gave their lives for their country and the American ideals they held dear. The County’s 1921 J. Pauling ‘Doughboy’ statue and the WWI Homefront Exhibit at the Historical Museum are dedicated to those who sacrificed at home and in the trenches of Europe.”

Additionally, two local veterans groups wrote letters of support, which were included in the application packet.

“This award absolutely would not have happened if it weren’t for the assistance of Colonel Gary Sorensen (Ret.) with the Western Montana Military Officer’s Association (MOA),” Rittel said. “Colonel Sorensen was the liaison between the American Legion Post #27 and the MOA in acquiring letters of support in an extremely short timeframe and especially over the July 4 holiday. He went above and beyond in meeting with me and ensuring that the letters were done and in my hands in time to scan and upload. He’s not a signatory on either letter but he made them happen.”

“Doughboy” was an informal term for a member of the United States Army used during World War I. Many believe the term came about because of the brass buttons on their uniforms, which collected dust, giving them the appearance of flour dumplings or dough cakes. Others believe it was because American soldiers used flour or pipe clay to polish and keep their belts white.

Restoration is slated to begin in late spring of 2018. Estimates for the schedule suggest that the washing and repointing of the granite base and the washing and waxing of the bronze plaques and statue will take two weeks, depending upon weather and the schedule of the other courthouse renovations. Ideally, the goal is to have the statue restored as soon as weather permits. With the overgrown trees gone and the statue all spit and polished, residents and visitors alike will be drawn to stop and read about the Missoula doughboys who sacrificed their lives for our country.

Missoula County extends appreciation to the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, the University of Montana, American Legion Hellgate Post #27, Western Montana Military Officer’s Association of America, and A&E Architects for their efforts to secure this grant award.

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