



ISANTI-CHISAGO

# COUNTY STAR

**A SPIKE IN ACTIVITY:** Volleyball, football regular seasons begin, other sports in playoffs. **PAGE 8**

## From empty land to full hearts in four months

BY BILL STICKELS III  
EDITOR@COUNTYSTAR.COM

Standing beside the freshly unveiled monuments, Clark Swanson could barely contain his emotions. After decades of planning that culminated in a whirlwind of activity over the summer, his dream to complete a permanent memorial to honor veterans like himself had finally come to fruition. And on a summer-like October 9 evening, he was surrounded by a couple hundred community members who wanted to share in this momentous occasion.

Unable to hold it in any longer - even after a hug from his wife Annette, who has been with him this whole journey - Swanson stepped back to the podium, interrupting the final moments of the proceedings to deliver one last impromptu message to the masses in attendance.

"I can't thank the people who

were involved in this and who came out tonight to enjoy this park, which has a special, special meaning to me," he said. "And I hope we can continue to fill these walls and make this (park) the greatest we can make it."

But this night wasn't about Swanson, nor his story, which has been told countless times, including possibly one final time by former Isanti County Veteran's Services Director and park committee member Jim Rostberg at the beginning of the ceremony. Rather, this ceremony was to honor all veterans, whether deceased or alive, having served in action or during peacetime. In addition, the ceremony was to honor a community that came together to make Swanson's dream a reality.

"In less than four months, this site transformed from an empty, grassy lot to what you see today," Rostberg opened the ceremony saying. "A lot of



**A family embraces after finding a name on one of the walls of the Cambridge Veterans Memorial Park following the dedication ceremony on Friday, Oct. 9. The park is located at 207 Birch Street South, directly across from the historic courthouse building.**

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thanks goes to many people for making this vision come true."

"Welcome to our beautiful park," Swanson said during his prepared speech. "I call it 'our park' because that is what it is. It is meant for me, you, and everyone here. We worked hard to make it a special place that has meaning to everyone."

Committee member Curt Haugen reflected on how much area business' donations enabled the park to be completed.

"The committee had the opportunity to work with some very talented and generous

people," Haugen said. "The contractors that provided the time and talent to actually create the physical parts of the memorial. All of them donated either time, labor, or materials and equipment. Through their generosity, they saved this park tens of thousands of dollars. Enough that maybe this park wouldn't have happened this year."

Through a letter read by Rostberg, Isanti County Commissioner and committee member Susan Morris (who was unable to attend due to

illness) relayed the story of the day the sod arrived.

"Much of the crew was 55 or older," the letter read. "Much to our surprise, Officer Jesse Peck saw a posting on Facebook asking for help. Jesse called (Bluejacket head football coach) Shane Weibel and asked if the football team could help. Several football players and cadets from the Polaris Battalion showed up. An eight-hour job got shrunk down to two hours. "We had many meetings

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**A single rose was placed at the base of one of the monuments.**

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## North Branch city council to fill vacancy via applications

BY BILL STICKELS III  
EDITOR@COUNTYSTAR.COM

The North Branch City Council has decided to fill the seat vacancy on the council by the same method as the last time there was an opening - with an application and interview process before making an appointment.

The last time an appointment was needed, it was to fill the seat vacated by Jim Swenson when he won the 2018

election for mayor while still having two years left on his council term. At that time, current Council Member Joel McPherson was chosen out of four applicants.

During the Oct. 13 council meeting, after formally accepting the resignation of Brian Voss and declaring a vacancy, the council unanimously approved posting application forms on the city's website beginning as early as Wednesday, Oct. 14. The council also ap-

proved making 4 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 30 the deadline for returning applications to City Hall.

Once the number of applicants has been discovered, the council will officially decide on an interview date and questions to be asked during their Nov. 10 council meeting. The council did approve a tentative schedule of conducting interviews on Thursday, Nov. 12, immediately following their election canvassing meeting. If there

is a large number of applicants, the council may split the interview process into two days. However, since McPherson will be absent from that meeting, the council will wait until a special meeting on Nov. 17 to make the appointment. McPherson said he was fine with watching a recording of the interviews.

The appointee, who will fill the remaining two years of Voss' term, will be sworn in at the beginning of the Nov. 24 meeting.

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Clark Swanson (left) officially unveils one of the monuments during the dedication ceremony for Cambridge Veteran's Memorial Park on Friday, Oct. 9.



95-year-old WWII veteran Duane "Duke" Peterson of the Braham VFW Post 1731 helped raise the U.S. flag during the ceremony.

# PARK: During dedication, committee gives thanks to numerous volunteers

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like this," Morris added. "And whether it was 4-H kids, friends, neighbors, or just some kind-hearted soul that stopped by to help, they showed up. This park is truly built by this community."

## THE CEREMONY

Befitting the simplistic, but honorable park, the half-hour ceremony itself was light on speeches, but heavy on symbolism.

"We've been told by many people how beautiful the park is," Swanson said. "And one of them said, 'there is dignity in simplicity.' And we believe we achieved that."

"Clark felt a need - more of a calling - to build a park dedicated to those who served," Rostberg said. "A park where visitors could rest in tranquil peace and reflect on the contributions and sacrifices of our country's military service members."

Following Rostberg's introduction and an invocation by Pastor Steve Newton, the United States flag was raised by members of the Braham VFW Post 1731, featuring their oldest living member, 95-year-old Duane "Duke" Peterson.

Shortly later, the remaining six flags, which represent each of the branches of the military, were raised by representatives of the organizations that purchased the flag poles. They included Bradford Township, Rum River VFW Post #2735, Athens Township, Cambridge American Legion Post #290, First Bank & Trust, and Jeff and Kelly Lillemoen.

**'Whether it was 4-H kids, friends, neighbors, or just some kind-hearted soul that stopped by to help, they showed up. This park is truly built by this community.'**

Susan Morris

Isanti County Commissioner & Cambridge Veterans Memorial Park Committee Member

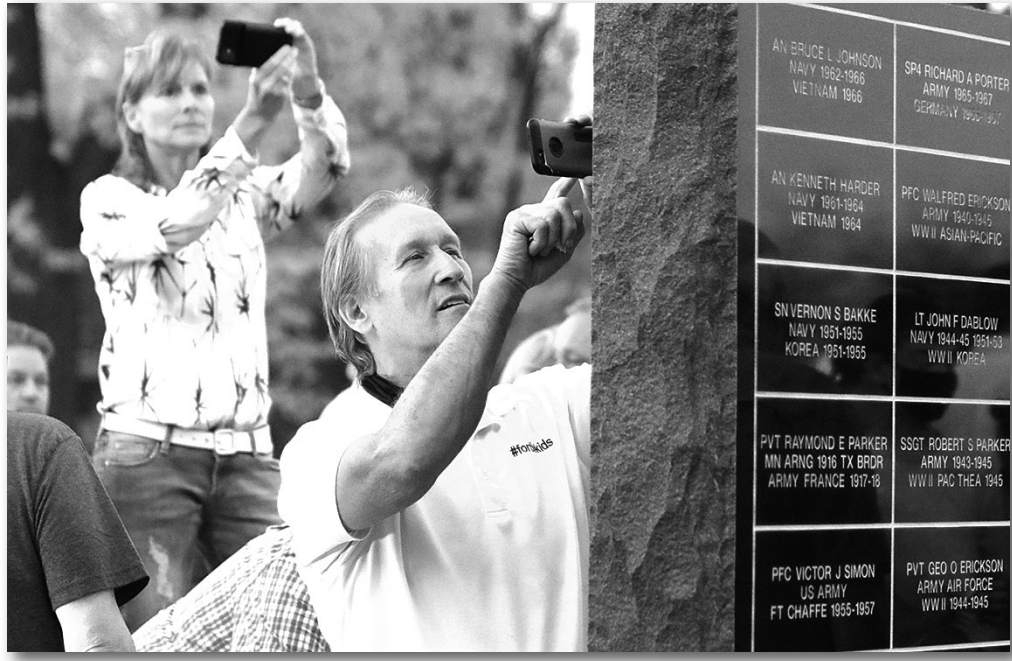
Finally, the three monuments were uncovered and following a benediction by Deacon Gene Kramer, those in attendance were invited to take a close look at the monuments, which was done in spades with plenty of smiles, a few shed tears, lots of pictures being taken, and a general feeling of honor and pride in what was accomplished.

According to Annette Swanson, the fourth monument is well on its way to being filled with names. Each monument can fit 90 names on it. That wall will most likely be placed in the park next spring and names will start to be added to a fifth wall.

Anyone wishing to purchase a block and add a name to the wall can contact the committee at 612-324-3568, via email at veteransmemorialpark68@gmail.com, or go to their website at veteransmemorialparkinc.org.

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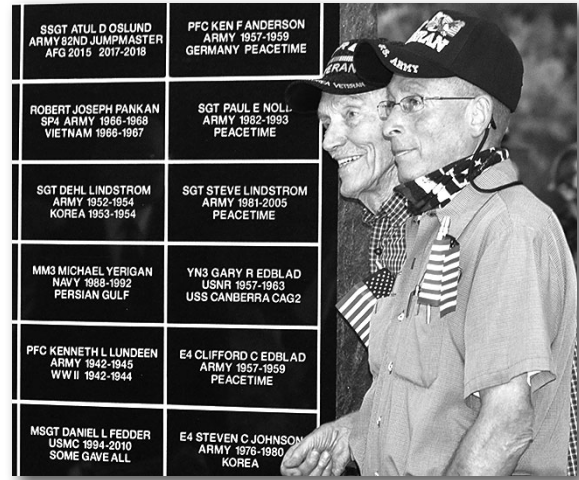
Plenty of photos were taken - both close up and from farther back - following the dedication ceremony.

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Gwen Anderson sings the National Anthem during the raising of the U.S. flag.

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Two veterans pose for pictures next to their names on one of the monuments.

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# Five-car crash results in one fatality

STAFF REPORT  
NEWS@COUNTYSTAR.COM

A five-car, chain reaction collision at the Highway 65 stoplights in Isanti on Friday, Oct. 9, resulted in a Braham woman losing her life, along with one other victim receiving life-threatening injuries.

According to the Minnesota State Patrol incident report, at approximately 5:52 p.m., a 2017 Ford Escape was approaching a red light while traveling west on Heritage Boulevard/County Road 5 in Isanti at the intersection of Highway 65, when it came in contact with a Dodge Durango. The force of the collision caused the Durango to come in contact with a Buick Lesabre. The collision also caused the Escape to roll, coming into contact with a Chevy Equinox, which was subsequently pushed into a Honda Accord. All vehicles came to rest in both lanes of Highway 65 and Heritage Boulevard.

According to the report, 75-year-old Cheryl Rose Thull of Braham, who was a passenger in the Ford Es-

cape, was pronounced dead at the scene. The driver of the Escape, 78-year-old Arnold Joseph Thull of Bethel, was taken to Hennepin County Medical Center via LifeLink with life-threatening injuries.

Also listed in the incident report were 32-year-old Melissa Sue Campbell of Braham, who was driving the Equinox, 37-year-old Rebecca Rae Knoll of Isanti, who was driving the Accord, 48-year-old Trisha Leemarie Fisher of Minneapolis, who was driving the Lesabre, and 49-year-old Cassie Lynn Andersen of Lino Lakes, who was driving the Durango. All four of these drivers received only minor injuries that did not require transportation to a health care facility.

The report also states all six victims were wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash. The road conditions were dry and no alcohol was present. The State Patrol's reconstruction team was on the scene for several hours investigating the cause of the crash, which has yet to be determined as of press time.