

Talented Craftsman Hand-Picked To Create Unique Memorial Sculpture

By Cheryl Conway

“The flowers that bloom today are the seeds that were planted yesterday, and all the days prior.”

The All-Veterans Memorial in Budd Lake has been cultivating the idea of a garden this past year, and come end of May, will be unveiled for its visitors to see.

Timothy Sheldon of Lafayette, owner of Wicked Workz metal, has created the sculpture based on a sketch shared by AVM Founder Charlie Uhrmann.

The sculpture –The Military Child, Children of War and War Against Children "Forever Young Monument" –is the latest element planned for the AVM. Uhrmann hand-picked Sheldon for the job based on his passion and cutting-edge skill.

“Tim has a skillset like no other,” says Uhrmann. “Tim proved himself very capable when he engineered the POW/MIA Ascension Bell Tower from a simple drawing I gave him. Tim’s own passion is evident through his work. I understood from the onset, this project will not only require an exceptional engineering skillset, but passion from the heart. Tim delivers both.”

It was an opportunity he could not refuse.

“Charlie came to me last year with an idea and rough drawing to make a sculpture, as I have a knack for creativity and to bring ideas to fruition!” says Sheldon, 33. “I love working with Charlie, doing unique memorials with meaning, and to be a part of not only this project but the two others, which were the POW/MIA Watch Tower and the custom AVM lettering. I am happy to be able to create this memorial in honor of the children who get caught up in these devastating wars, trafficking, and to pay homage to the ones who don’t make it home.”

The Military Child, Children of War and War Against Children element idea grew out of a suggestion by Peg Schultz of Andover, chapter regent of the Morristown Daughters of the American Revolution in October 2022. Schultz shared a personal story with Uhrmann and the significance of the dandelion and military children.

“The dandelion was chosen as the official flower for the military brat because the plant can take root and flourish practically anywhere the wind blows its seeds,” Schultz explains to Uhrmann. “The hardest question for most military brats to answer, including myself, is ‘where are you from?’”

Uhrmann adapted the idea and sketched her vision of The Military Child, Children of War and War Against Children, to represent by the three stages of the dandelion; the poppy; and the daisy.

The dandelion will represent the resilient life stages of the military child; a red poppy will represent “the life of our fallen warriors; the memory of children, all children, our children during war,” she shares. “And the daisy symbolizes the

innocence and purity and new beginnings for children, “all children,” caught up in life’s many battles.

“Though the symbolism of each flower represents the many challenges and life consequences that is inflicted on our children, I chose to design an element that would invoke a sense of peace, faith and beauty,” adds Uhrmann.

“We started the process last year, we had a family emergency around July that lasted to October, we also had some design changes and now it will be done around mid-May 24,” Sheldon shares.

His plan was to finish, install and complete some final touches to the sculpture by the Monday, May 27, Memorial Day ceremony at the AVM.

Like planting and growing a garden, the task is never easy.

“First is creativity and figuring out how to exactly build it into the vision me and Charlie sees!” shares Sheldon. “The rest is cutting on our plasma table, then grinding, heat, bending and welding. As for the painting, we are going for an aged, tattered, worn, look to this memorial and is truly going to be a beautiful addition to the AVM!”

As any gardener knows, patience is key.

“As with any custom job or sculpture, there is an unknown amount of hours involved, expecting about 120 hrs. total plus any running around and any help that Charlie will need when we install the piece in its final place,” says Sheldon.

The sculpture is a steel construction that “will help the worn, tattered, and aged look over time.” It stands roughly 6 feet wide and high.

As the owner and operator of Wicked Workz that he founded in 2017, Sheldon’s works have been mostly “very unique signs and some sculptures. I am still a small one-man business that mainly does custom fabrication and welding, from custom truck beds to high end signs. I can make almost anything you dream a reality!”

He says this project “is more unique.”

With that comes some challenges like, “Trying to make an image into a flower, that looks and resembles each of the flowers,” he shares.

The other hurdle has been funding for the project. The cost of the overall project is approximately \$9,500, says Uhrmann.

“Contributions are always welcome to the AVM and these projects!” says Sheldon.

“Since we rely 100% on private donations, any amount of donation would be greatly appreciated,” adds Uhrmann. “Over the years, it was our policy to provide various organizations the opportunity to sponsor elements throughout the park. This element is different. Since we are all someone’s child or have children of our own, our board felt it would make a greater impact to denote the sponsorship as “Your Beloved.”

Just as the children are cherished in this sculpture, Sheldon deeply values and appreciated this opportunity.

“Working on this memorial with Charlie, who has poured her heart into each memorial piece at the All-Veterans Memorial, is truly amazing,” says Sheldon.

“She has a vision, and we make it happen! We can’t wait to finish this Children of War memorial sculpture and put our mark on another very meaningful project at the AVM!”

The plan is to install the children’s memorial in a meaningful place at the AVM.

“I could think of no better place to set the statue than the Prayer Garden,” says Uhrmann. The element will be surrounded by original, hand-painted stones.

“I hope to see a continuation of the hand painted memorial stones being placed at the statue as a gentle reminder that ALL children matter and that we, as a community support their wellbeing,” she concludes.

Anyone interested in Sheldon’s work can email him at Sheldon at TSheldon@wickedworkz.com.