



AN AMERICAN TRIBUTE

Chris Kyle memorial set for unveiling

Seal's family, dignitaries to attend event

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A public unveiling of the Chris Kyle Memorial Plaza is scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday at 8050 E. Highway 191 near the Veterans Affairs clinic, capping more than a year-long effort to develop a tribute to the slain Navy Seal born in Odessa.

Several of Kyle's surviving family members are scheduled to attend and speak at the unveiling, along with government officials including Congressman Mike Conaway and Odessa doctor Sudip Bose, who served as a frontline physician in the Second Battle of Fallujah, where Kyle also fought. Country singer Larry Gatlin, another native Odessan, will sing the national anthem.

In the meantime, crews are finishing work that began in April on the 2,800 square-foot plaza surrounding the statue.

Vic Payne, the Wyoming-based sculptor who crafted the statue, is driving the piece that is now at a Utah foundry to Odessa next week. The monument-sized statue will stand about 15 feet tall on top of a 48,000-pound limestone base, but it will be kept under a parachute until the unveiling.

Apart from the Kyle statue, organizers say the memorial is laced with symbolism. The plaza is surrounded by four trees from the Crawford ranch of former President George W. Bush. The plaza's limestone is also engraved with names of the 50 states and woven into a Navy Seal trident, for example.

Odessa oilman Kirk Edwards, who chairs the Chris Kyle Memorial Committee, said that in addition to honoring Kyle, organizers of the effort wanted a memorial to pay tribute to all veterans.

"We hope this is a place of solemn peace for them as they see what a community has done to honor one of its own and that will last for generations to come," Edwards said.

Edwards said the memorial plaza cost about \$1 million. About half of those costs represent pro bono work on the project. Of the remaining amount, Edwards said the committee is still seeking to raise about \$150,000 in donations.

Payne consulted family members on the design of the statue, which grew in height from its inception. Kyle's widow Taya Kyle visited the sculptor in April with the Kyles' children and praised the work. She will be among the attendees Thursday.

"The goal is for the setting to be a healing and peaceful place for veterans and their families receiving care at the medical center, and those citizens who want to stop by and take a moment in honor of Chris and all those who serve," Taya Kyle said in a statement.

The unveiling event will be open to the public. But attendees who want to eat lunch served afterward by the Chuck Wagon Gang must buy tickets in advance at a cost of \$17.50 via the organization's website, www.ocwg.org.

http://www.oaoa.com/news/local/article_ad45728c-50e4-11e6-a51d-ab295992ef01.html