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Monument to military dogs

As the nonprofit group National War Dogs Monument Inc. campaigns to build a memorial to military dogs, its members want to grow the pack.

"We're really looking for some of the fellows who have been in Kosovo or Iraq or Afghanistan who would like to become involved with us," said Alan Driscoll, the group's treasurer, who served as a dog handler in Vietnam.

Within the next few years, the organization hopes to construct a bronze statue at Fort Belvoir, Va., featuring breeds the military has favored since World War I, including a German shepherd, Labrador retriever, Doberman pinscher and Belgian Malinois, Driscoll said. A vault inside, as well as a book for public viewing, will list the names of dogs and their handlers, he said.

The project, estimated to cost between \$3 million and \$5 million, was part of the 2008 Defense Authorization Act. Driscoll said his group has about \$150,000 on hand and is seeking corporate sponsors.

The idea, Driscoll said, "became very important to the Vietnam war handlers because their dogs are all classified as equipment. When we left, all those dogs were destroyed."

Group hopes to honor canines and their handlers



A preliminary design, by artist Renee Headings, of the monument.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL WAR DOGS MONUMENT INC.

About 4,000 dogs served during Vietnam, Driscoll said. Of those, fewer than 200 came back, he said.

Under legislation passed in 2000, retired military dogs are required to be put up for adoption.

The number of dogs that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan isn't publicly available, according to officials with the Defense Department's Military Working Dog Program at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. But officials said about 1,750 dogs serve in the program worldwide. Many assist troops with security patrols and explosives detection.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Eugene Sielagoski, who served as a dog handler in Iraq in 2003-04, welcomed the idea.

"I know some people will say, 'They're just an animal,'" he said. "That doesn't work with dogs because they're our partners and companions. He's doing a job just like any other troop because he's saving lives."

For more information on how to get involved, visit <http://www.nwdm.org> or contact Alan Driscoll at rdx65@comcast.net.

— Brendan McGarry