

5th Marine Regiment Support Group Fundraises for New Monument

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By Breeana Greenberg

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Dana Point's Fifth Marine Regiment Support Group is planning to install a new monument at Heritage Park early next year, seeking to honor servicemembers and their families.

In the meantime, the support group is hard at work fundraising roughly \$130,000 to bring the monument, titled "Returning Home," to fruition after years in the making, said Fifth Marine Regiment Support Group President Terry Rifkin.

The monument depicts a servicemember embracing family as they reunite, in front of a granite backdrop.

Rifkin said it took years to flesh out the concept for the monument, ensuring all of the details were correct down to the sleeves of the uniform.

"It's emotional for me," Rifkin said. "There were times I didn't know if it was going to happen ... every step has taken so long."

“So, I will be so proud and happy when this finally comes, that we have something in our city that honors the adoption of the most highly decorated regiment in Marine Corps history, as well as all branches of service and then the families,” Rifkin continued.

The monument will offer a space to “reflect with appreciation, honoring the strength, resilience and unity of the military family and the unsung heroes who are the ones who support our servicemembers,” Rifkin said.

Though the support group initially set out to recognize the Marines, as well as the adoption of the Fifth Marine Regiment at Camp Pendleton 21 years ago, Rifkin said the group “realized very quickly that we really needed to pay homage to all the brave men and women in the United States, not just the Marine Corps, but all branches of the armed forces.”

Though the project has evolved, Rifkin said the monument “will stand as a testament to their service and to the unwavering love and sacrifice of the families. It’s going to be a very powerful piece of art, and I’m very excited that it’s coming to our city soon.”

In April, the Dana Point City Council voted unanimously to approve the project in collaboration with the support group. The city committed to covering site improvements and overseeing the installation of the monument. The 6-foot-tall bronze statue will be sculpted by artist Sutton Betti.

“I had no idea when I started five years ago what this would be, but it’s finally coming to fruition,” Rifkin said. “And I really need the help of the community to get involved so that we can pay for our part.”

“Because the city is paying for the infrastructure and we’re paying for the monument itself and the granite tablet and the benches, everything in the park will be sponsored,” Rifkin continued.

The support group is seeking sponsors to support the monument, offering various levels of commitment, ranging from the \$500 “Friends of the Fifth” sponsorship, which buys a small paver, to the “Commander in Chief” sponsorship of \$25,000 or more, which buys a commemorative bench. Rifkin added that the sponsorship is also a branding opportunity for businesses.

“We have a wall of honor and various levels of bronze plaques, and people can honor a veteran, they can honor a friend, a loved one with this visible, enduring tribute at the monument site,” Rifkin said.

Those interested in contributing to the monument are encouraged to visit danapoint5thmarines.com/returning-home/ or contact Rifkin at info@DanaPoint5thMarines.com or 949.412.3475.

Rifkin recognized that the quick turnaround for their target of installing the monument early in 2026 is daunting, but the group has fundraised about half of their goal.

“Determined people can do incredible things, and I feel that everybody’s pulling together,” Rifkin said. “It’s going to take all of us grabbing hands and shoulder to shoulder to take this over the finish line.”

Heritage Park is located at 34400 Old Golden Lantern in Dana Point.