

# 5th Marine Support Group Proposes Park Monument

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By Breeana Greenberg

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The Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group is soliciting input from the community on a potential monument at Heritage Park that aims to honor Marines and their families.

The concept for the monument honoring “the force behind the force,” Support Group President Terry Rifkin said, was prompted by a comment from a Marine years ago that has stuck with her in the years since the city adopted the 5th Marine Regiment in 2004 and the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group incorporated in 2008.

“A Marine said to me, ‘You know, we just love all the monuments you’ve done at Camp Pendleton, but how come we never thank and celebrate the families?’” Rifkin said.

“So, that conversation with that Marine stuck in my mind, and about three to four years ago, I started working on something that would honor the families,” Rifkin continued. “I found a sculptor out of Colorado – his name is Sutton Betti – and I found this image of ‘Returning Home’ ... and I’ve been to so many farewells and welcome-homes that this to me depicted the family.”

The monument will feature a bronze sculpture of a Marine reuniting with their family in front of a granite backdrop. The granite slab will include text about the importance of families, Rifkin said. The statue would be located on the walkway on Golden Lantern leading up to Heritage Park.

The Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group is seeking input from residents on the monument before March 3.

“What we are proposing is not going to be a concern for height, obstruction of any views, and it’s not going to be a gathering place that’s going to be noisy,” Rifkin said. “It’s really a place for peaceful contemplation.”

“I think it would be something beautiful in the community that would be a colorful symbol of appreciation and respect for those who serve and those who love them,” Rifkin continued. “So, if anything is on their mind, they’re welcome to call me, but we’ve tried to take into consideration anything we thought that they might object to.”

After receiving community input, the support group aims to bring a proposal for collaboration on this monument to the City Council in March.

“We’re excited that the community is being notified and also that the City Council will vote on our proposal to together create the infrastructure, meaning the hardscape, softscape, etc., and the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group is going to do the monument and the granite,” Rifkin said.

If the monument is approved, Rifkin noted that the support group will begin to offer sponsorship opportunities for the statue.

“We will be eventually inviting people to be part of something truly special with this heartfelt tribute to the brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting our freedom,” Rifkin said.

The statue aims to honor the “dedication, sacrifice and profound impact of the families who support those they love and, therefore, allow them to fight,” Rifkin said.

“This monument will be in the heart of Dana Point, and it really is more than a piece of art,” Rifkin continued. “It’s a symbol of gratitude, respect and in support of the Marines and their families.”

As Rifkin will conclude her term as president at the end of 2025, she said after promoting the monument for the past three years, seeing the project come to fruition is gratifying,

“It would feel like our city has something that honors the adoption (of the 5th Marine Regiment in 2004) and a tangible enduring tribute to the adoption of Marines and to our support organization,” Rifkin said.

“We feel it will be a kind of beacon of hope, unity and pride for both the residents and visitors. It reflects the patriotic spirit of Dana Point and serves as a constant reminder of our community’s unwavering support of our 5th Marine Regiment at Camp Pendleton.”

Those interested in submitting their input on the monument are encouraged to contact Rifkin at [President@DanaPoint5thMarines.com](mailto:President@DanaPoint5thMarines.com) or call 949.412.3475.