

HOSTING THE MOVING WALL FROM A-Z

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HOSTING THE MOVING WALL™

From October 25 – 29, 2007, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2423, its' Ladies Auxiliary and the American Legion Post 458 hosted The Moving Wall™ in Indian Trail, North Carolina. The following are the lessons learned by the members of The Moving Wall™ Committee.

This is intended to be a useful guide to assist you in your preparation of The Moving Wall™ coming to your community. This guide is solely based off of the lessons learned from our planning and execution in hosting The Moving Wall™. Every organization is different, and the presentation that we conducted may or may not work in your area, based off of what your organization is trying to accomplish.

Please note; Rule # 1. I am a Veteran, not an English teacher. So I hope that all my sentences make sense and there are no spelling errors. If there is, please see Rule # 1.

FORMING THE COMMITTEE

After submitting the request to obtain The Moving Wall™ (hereinafter referenced to as "TMW"), and learning of the dates that TMW will be at your location, you first need to establish a committee. (The Moving Wall™ Committee)

Form a committee as soon as possible. We formed ours 10 months out from when TMW was scheduled to arrive. We met every other Wed night, up to 2 months prior to TMW arriving. Then we met every Wed night until TMW arrived. With all of the coordination, planning and other tasks that have to be accomplished, you will need all the time you can get. Do not wait until a couple months out to start forming committees and planning for this event.

Select a committee chairperson. The committee chairperson needs to be a **STRONG** leader. Everyone reports to the chairperson. The chairperson makes all the final decisions. We did not vote on anything, like you would find in a board meeting. We discussed all the issues in an open forum, and then the chairperson made the final decision.

Select the remainder of your board members, based off of the amount of different categories that you have established. Select only what you need.

We had the following board assignments, (each of which will be discussed)

Finance

Media

Law enforcement

Medical

Veterans services

Mental health

Schools coordinator

Programs / Pamphlets

Landscaping / Grounds

Volunteers coordinator

These are only the top issues that had to be dealt with. Many on your committee will be tasked with other jobs as the process continues.

If you are a VFW Post or other Veterans Post, or a different type of organization, don't just form your committee from members within. Recruit from within as well from the outside. Our committee comprised of several that we not members of our VFW or American Legion Posts. They were from other Veterans Posts and organizations. But the expertise, knowledge and more importantly, the connections, were immeasurable. You are going to have to deal with government bodies, businesses, media, law enforcement and a multitude of other organizations on a daily bases in order to pull off a successful presentation of TMW. Seek and find the best and most qualified people for the jobs that you need filled. Even if that means that you have to recruit from outside your organization.

When you have your first meeting, the first thing that you will need to decide on is the way you want to present TMW and what you want to get out of the presentation. There are basically two ways to present TMV. The first is just bring in TMW and setting it up, and who ever comes, comes. The second way to present TMW and to tell everyone that you can about TMW coming to your location.

We chose the later, and tried to let everyone know that TMW was coming to our Post. We even went so far as to contact the surrounding States' media and let them know to get the word out.

The last thing that anyone on the committee wanted to hear after TMW had left our Post was someone stating “I wish I would have known TMW was here, I have a relative on the Wall.” Don’t let this happen to you, try to get the word out to everyone.

DIFFERENT COMMITTEE POSITIONS

FINANCE

You will need to set up a budget. But before you establish one, make sure that you have read the TMW handbook and your contract. The contract specifically states that all monies raised are to be used solely for the presentation of the TMW. Any monies raised in excess that are not spent, are to be turned over to TMW.

We had no idea how much money that we needed to raise. Our first meeting, we set a goal of \$10,000. This dollar amount was based solely on the fact that we had no idea how much we needed to raise. So in essence, we just picked a number. Within a month, we had to raise that goal to \$20,000. And after that, we raised our goal to \$50,000. The reason for us raising our goals was because the more we became involved in our plans, we realized that we did not have enough money to execute our plans. As you read through this, you will see where our money went, and why we decided to raise \$50,000.

Your finance officer needs to keep accurate books. We ran our ledger in three different columns. The first column being monies donated. We listed, by name, every person or business that donated and the amount that was donated. The second column was actual monies spent, by listing who the check was issued to, and for what. The third column was for projected expenses. What we knew in the future that we would have to spend. If you don’t know the actual project expense figure, estimate, but do so on the high end. We never moved a projected expense amount into the actual expense column until the check was issued for that expense.

It is important to know what cash you have “on hand”. Take the donated amount, subtract your actual expenses, then take that figure and subtract your projected expenses, and that is your “cash on hand”. This figure is very important, because it allows you to cover any unexpected expenses, plus allows your committee the freedom to add things down the road. That special touch that someone thought about that may have been overlooked.

You will need to have cash “on hand” when TMW arrives. Do not have a zero balance on your financial spreadsheet the day TMW arrives to your location. Plan for the unexpected. Such as your local restaurant that planned on serving your volunteers, but at the last moment, forgot to prepare the food. Then you are left having to purchase the food from another location.

Have your finance officer be the first one to speak during your committee meetings. Also have your finance officer print off a finance report and hand to everyone in the meeting. So everyone knows the bottom dollar and what you are dealing with financially.

MEDIA

This is by far, one of the most important positions on your committee. Make sure that your selection to fill this position is with someone that is driven to get the job done. It is a very frustrating position. The majority of the media will turn you down, and you will feel like you are banging your head against the wall. But, if you do not get the word out to the public, then no one will come. And all your hard work in preparation of TMW coming, will be for nothing.

But keep working at it. Start working on media coverage at least 4 months out. Have a press release completed. Something that you can email and fax to all the media outlets. At first, you are going to feel like none of the media cares about the sacrifices that over 58,000 made during the Vietnam War. But all it takes is one media outlet to broadcast something about TMW coming to your community, and the others will follow. That is where your hard work will pay off.

Contact your local and state officials. State Senator’s offices are a great place to start. Ask for their Public Affairs Officer (PAO). Tell them what you are doing, and ask them for their media contact lists. Trust me, PAO(s) have contact information for every media outlet in your state. Use that list to contact the media to get your word out.

Have your local Vietnam Veterans do most of the interviews. Our local newspaper started running stories about the Vietnam War and our Vietnam Veterans about 4 months out, every week.

We did a news conference at our Post about two weeks prior to TMW arriving. We sent the information out to about 10 newspapers and 5 TV stations and several radio stations. We had 3 newspapers show up, 2 TV reporters and no radio stations. This is the

frustrating part of being the Media board member. But use this to your advantage. All the news outlets are in competition, and all news outlets “spy” on each other. And when one newspaper runs a story, or a TV station shows on its’ evening news a story that the other news outlets have failed to broadcast, then you will start getting calls.

Most TV and radio stations have public service announcements (PSA), that they run free of charge. If you do this, make sure that you have contacted the news outlet at least 3 months in advance. A lot of other organizations know about these PSA and if Suzy the Homemaker is give a cooking class the week you are hosting TMW, and she takes the last PSA for that week, the news outlets will not bump her to give you her slot. It is first come first serve on PSA.

A lot of news people are veterans, and a few are Vietnam Veterans. Seek them out, and use them to help you get the word out.

One month out from the arrival of TMW, do a media blitz. Call everyone. Your media person is going to find that they are on the phone all day, everyday, weeks prior to TMW arriving.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

You will need to coordinate with the local law enforcement (LE). Have someone that is preferable in law enforcement to handle this position. You might need traffic control in your area. And if you decide to escort TMV to your community when it arrives, you will have to do a lot of coordination.

Contact your local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Coordinate with them for the use of the large flashing road signs. These are the large road signs that you typically see on the interstate warning of road construction ahead, or a bad accident. Good way to get the word out that TMW is at your location. We were able to get 4 road signs for an entire week and placed them on the Interstates telling the motoring public that TMW was coming, and the directions to get to our Post.

MEDICAL

You will need to coordinate with the local rescue squad. We had paid Emergency Medical Services (EMS) with an ambulance at the Post during the peak hours. Those were in the evening hours and when we had ceremonies. Contact your local hospitals,

they may donate their time and services for this. Also, contact your local government body, they may pay for this service. Our county government paid for both the LE and EMS.

VETERAN SERVICES

This one is a tricky issue. There are a lot of veteran's services out there. All of which are good services and are greatly needed. However, we did not want anything taking away from TMW. You will be contacted by several veteran service organizations about wanting to place a tent near TMW, in order to hand out brochures and ask for donations. We turned them all down. To us, TMW was about honoring the sacrifices of those that did not return home. We did not want people coming or going from TMW and being asked to donate to a cause. Even though the cause was to support Veterans, we felt this was not the time or place for that.

We did set up a tent, away from TMW and had all the organizations place their information on a table. We did label the tent as veteran services. However, there was no active recruiting, or badgering of people. If an individual saw the tent and walked up to it, that was fine.

MENTAL HEALTH

Very important issue. We contacted the local Red Cross and were able to get on site mental health counselors, 24 hours a day for the entire time TMW was at our Post. But, we stressed that we wanted only those counselors that had a military background. That is going to cut the number of counselors that you thought you had, down significantly. A lot of Vietnam Veterans have never seen TMW, let alone the actual Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. This is a very emotional time for all.

Make sure that you have actual grief counselors. The last thing that you want is a marriage counselor trying to comfort a Vietnam Veteran that has lost friends.

Have some kind of identification system so that your volunteers know who is a counselor. Our counselors wore a yellow ribbon. You want them to be discreet in the area, and only identifiable by your volunteers.

Special note about your Vietnam Veterans. When our VFW Post was notified that we were hosting TMW, all of our Vietnam Veterans were excited. As time went on, and the

realization set in that TMW was coming, some of our Vietnam Veterans became to experience depression.

The best way to describe it is as follows. When a Vietnam Veterans reads in the local newspaper that TMW is coming to your community, he may take a trip down memory lane for a couple of days and remember the past. Then he will go back to some type of normal life until TMW arrives. Then that Vietnam Veteran may have a hard time for a couple of days while TMW is at your location.

But for your Vietnam Veterans that are apart of your committee or are assisting in someway, they are going to think about TMW everyday until it arrives. We noticed this happening to our Vietnam Veterans at the Post. Our Vietnam Veterans were re-living their memories everyday, for months.

We had grief counselors meet with our Vietnam Veterans at least two months prior to TMW arriving at the Post. Understand that they will become consumed with TMW months prior to arrival. Take care of your Vietnam Veterans that are helping you with the preparation of TMW.

SCHOOL COORDINATOR

Part of hosting TMW is to educate the public. Your local schools will want to plan field trips to see TMW. Make sure that it is done during the slow times that you are hosting TMW. Weekday mornings are the best time to have the students show up.

We contacted the central office of the school system, who in turned sent out the information to all the county school. Do this, instead of trying to contact each school individually by yourself. Also, don't stop there; contact the central office of the surrounding county school systems. We had other counties that sent students to see TMW as well.

We had our Vietnam Veterans speak to the kids about some of the experiences that they faced during the war. Such as the fact that there was no internet, or email during the Vietnam War, or other topics. Don't have someone talking to the kids about being in combat. Then we had members of our Ladies Auxiliary take the kids to TMW and let them walk past the Wall. We ran about 100 students past TMW in an hours time frame.

We instructed every teacher that we would not answer any questions during the field trip. We asked the teachers to have the children go back to school and write down any questions that they may have during their visit. Then the teacher would contact the Post and we would send a Vietnam Veteran to the school and meet with the class at a later date. This was good for two reasons. One, if you had to answer questions, it would slow down the process of trying to get the students in and out, and second; it allows your Veterans to be able to go to a school and have a positive influence of our youth.

As per TMW guidelines, children are not allowed to make rubbings from the wall, unless they have a relative whose name is on the Wall.

PROGRAM / PAMPHLETS

This is going to be one of your biggest expenses. That is, if you decide to do a pamphlet. Our pamphlet was all in color, and was eight pages. We put all of our ceremonies, and daily events in the pamphlet. We also put our rubbing papers in the pamphlets, so if an individual wanted to do a rubbing, they would have a nice pamphlet to go along with the rubbing.

The cost for these pamphlets was nearly \$10,000. And that was with the printing company working with us. The actual cost would have been close to \$20,000. We had 50,000 pamphlets made. This is where you are going to have to “guesstimate” on how many people you think are going to come to your location. We had nearly 40,000 show up, so we had a few extra pamphlets. But we would rather have 10,000 extra pamphlets, than be one pamphlet short.

LANDSCAPING / GROUNDS

We were lucky in this category. One of our Vietnam Veterans owned his own landscaping company. Chances are, someone in your community that does landscaping is a veteran also. Ask them for their help. People see two things when they first approach TMW. That is the actual TMV and the landscaping that you have done. A picture (mental picture) is worth a thousand words.

I have seen a lot of pictures from other communities that have hosted TMW. A lot of them show a plywood walkway around the front of TMW. This is great for those that are in wheel chairs. But if you look close, a lot of the walkways leave about a foot of space between the walkway and TMW. In this space, there is usually mulch or grass. The idea

for this is so that people can leave items at the Wall, and they will not be in the way of people walking in front of the Wall.

We thought it was a bad idea. Run your walkway all the way flush with TMW. There are a lot of Vietnam Veterans that are in wheel chairs and a lot of family members that have relatives on the Wall that are in wheel chairs as well. If you have a space between the walkway and TMW, they cannot touch TMW. Ensure that your walkway is wide enough to accommodate any items that are left at the base of TMW and to allow those in wheelchairs to pass by the items.

We hosted the TMW in back of our VFW Post. The field was not level and had hardly any grass. We decided that we wanted to build a park, in honor of all veterans. And build a park we did. It took us about 8 months to complete the park. And it was the best thing that ever happened. The park was solely built by Veterans, and those that supported Veterans. We did not hire any of the work out. It is amazing the amount of different skilled workers that we had in our Post. Building the park brought us together and formed bonds and friendships that will last a lifetime. At the end, we had 22 workdays that we had done over the course of 10 months. The first workday that we had, there were about 7 people that showed up to help. By the end, we had close to 40 people showing up to help. And during the course of all our workdays, the Ladies Auxiliary was cooking meals. So the preparation in hosting the TMW was a great experience in bringing our Post together.

Check with your local lumber stores and ask them to donate your materials. You will also need low voltage lighting to shine on TMW during the nighttime hours. You do not want to use regular voltage lighting, because the light will be too bright against TMW.

Local nurseries can temporarily donate any shrubs or bushes that you may want to use.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

This is another frustrating job. You will need a strong person in this position.

The following is a breakdown of the jobs. The responsibilities of each job will be covered later on.

Tents, escorts, parking, roving, security.

Because TMW is open to the public 24 hours a day, you must keep it manned 24 hours a day. We ran our volunteer shifts in 6 hour increments. From midnight to 6 am, 6am to 12 noon, 12 noon to 6 pm and 6 pm to midnight.

There is a whole host of issues that you are going to run into when trying to do this schedule. It is best that you make out a spreadsheet with all the positions and times on them, and then have people fill in their names as to what they want to work. We would only allow an individual to work one shift in a 24 hour period. You are going to have individuals that want to work 24 hours straight. Take care of your volunteers, and do not let them work too long. If they work too much and fall out on you, then you are down that volunteer for the following day.

Another issue that we found was that people will tell you “mark me down for anything, I will work it”. Then they see what schedule you have given them, and then all of a sudden, it is “I can’t work that”. So, make them tell you what they want to work.

We ran up to 45 volunteers per shift, during peak hours. And had around 20 volunteers working the midnight shift.

PROPERLY RUNNING THE MEETINGS

We would gather once every two weeks, up until about 2 months prior to TMW arriving. Then we met every week.

When you first find out that you have been selected to host TMW, spend a couple of weeks brainstorming. Talk about the way that you want to host and present TMW to the public.

Then move into the planning stages. This is where you will spend the majority of your time in the meetings. About a month prior to TMW arriving, you transition into the execution phase.

We conducted our meetings in the following way.

The chairman would open the meeting by talking about general issues.

Then have each of your committee members report on their status. We would always start with the finance report. It is up to you as to who you want to go first. There is no proper order, whatever works for you.

People have a tendency to want to “get out of their lane”. Meaning, that your finance officer should only be talking about finance, and not landscaping. As chairperson, you need to make sure that people “stay in their lane”. This is not an easy job, and people can have their feelings hurt. But if you allow this to happen, you are going to have mass confusion.

Take charge of your meetings from the beginning. This is not a “good ole boy” gathering. This is about honoring those that made the ultimate sacrifice. And people should be made to understand such. If you find that one of your committee members is not pulling their weight, replace them. We had to.

You will find that as you progress with your meetings, people will start to really take pride in what they are doing, and what the committee is doing as a whole. And if you have a bad apple in the bunch, it can really bring everything down. So take care of it as soon as you realize what is happening.

Our meetings usually ran about 2 hours long. And one rule that we had, was that no one other than the committee members were allowed in the meetings. If you start inviting guest, then you will start having other opinions as to how you should present TMW. Then you will find yourself having to re-invent the wheel all over again. Once you have decided on a course of action, stick with it.

We did not allow any drinking, (alcohol), at all during our meetings.

Use a backwards calendar. This is good tool. Take a calendar and start with the arrival of TMW. Then plan backwards. This will give you deadlines as to when tasks need to be completed.

CEREMONIES

Ceremonies are great to have. We had three during the course of TMW coming to the Post. The three were – Opening Ceremony, Dedication Ceremony, and Closing Ceremony.

Opening Ceremony. This was on the first day that TMW was open to the public. We had researched and found that we had 18 fallen heroes from our county. During the months prior to TMW arriving, we contacted each of the families of the 18 and invited them to come to the opening ceremony. We had over 150 family members in attendance. And all of the hard work of the committee over the last 10 months, paid off seeing the family members in attendance. This is what it is all about.

We allowed the Mayor of the town to speak during the opening ceremony. This is the only time that we ever allowed a politician to speak. None of the other ceremonies consisted of a politician giving a speech. We did not want any politicians. This is about honoring those that made the ultimate sacrifice, not a time to say, “vote for me”.

The only individuals that gave speeches, other than the Mayor during the Opening Ceremony, were Veterans. All of our guest speakers for each of the three ceremonies, were Vietnam Veterans.

You will have some politicians that will show up and try to solicit votes, because you have a large gathering of people. We ran them off and made it clear that this was not the time or place to try to solicit votes.

Ceremonies should not last more than one hour.

Make sure that you have a good PA system, with plenty of speakers. We could have used a few more speakers, because the crowd that was not close to the stage had a hard time hearing the individuals giving speeches.

Have a stage that is at least 3 feet off the ground. Someone that is 5 foot tall, standing 50 rows back is going to have a hard time seeing anything that is going on. And that 5 foot person might be the family member of someone that is on the Wall.

Ask you local governing body to issue a Proclamation. Our Mayor declared the week that TMW was at our Post as Vietnam Veterans Week. Something that you can include in your ceremonies is the reading of the Proclamation.

We ran our ceremonies basically all the same.

BREAKDOWN OF CEREMONIES

Posting of Colors

We had the local VFW and American Legion Posts present the colors. There were all in VFW or American Legion Uniforms. Most of the members were Vietnam Veterans. You can have a local military unit present the colors, but we wanted the Vietnam Veterans to participate as much as possible in everything that we did.

National Anthem

The first ceremony that we conducted, we had a local school choir sing the National Anthem. Good to have kids involved, and they sang great.

We also contacted a local Army unit that had an Army Band. That was a great addition to one of our ceremonies to have an Army Band playing.

Pledge of Allegiance

We had the Boy Scouts start us off with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

We had preachers that had a military background give both the invocation and benediction. We wanted someone with some military experience that would know the right words to say during a prayer.

Reading of Proclamation

This is where the Proclamation was read to the public.

Speakers

During all of our ceremonies, we had a Master of Ceremonies. Someone that kept the ceremony running smoothly and would introduce the speakers. When you figure out who

you want as a speaker, ask them for their bio. Then during the ceremony, have the Master of Ceremonies introduce the speaker(s) and read their bio.

We only allowed the Mayor of the Town to speak during the first ceremony. We did not want politicians giving a “vote for me” speech. All the other speakers were Vietnam Veterans and other combat veterans.

Our guest speakers consisted of two Generals, both Vietnam Veterans, and a former POW from the Vietnam War.

POW/MIA Table

We had a POW/MIA table out for display, and had the VFW Ladies Auxiliary President give a speech on what the POW/MIA table is all about, and what each item on the table represents.

Poem Reading

We had the Master of Ceremonies read a poem about the Vietnam War. There are bunch to choose from, and some are very touching.

Laying of Wreath

The guest speaker would have the honors of laying the wreath. We had two Vietnam Veterans assist in carrying the wreath. On the last ceremony, we had all the Vietnam Veterans form a line and walk behind the wreath layers and then gather around the wreath as it was being laid.

Reading of Fallen Heroes

One of our TMW Committee members was a Vietnam Veteran who had lost his brother in Vietnam. We had him read the names of all our counties fallen heroes. There were 18 names to be read. After the reading of the names was concluded, we told the audience that they were welcome to say the name of their friend or loved one out loud. This is very touching and emotional, to see a mother call her son’s name out loud.

Benediction

See invocation.

3 Volley Salute

This is sometimes referred to as “21-gun salute”. But “guns” are on ships. Most people call it the 21-gun salute, but it is actually called a 3-volley salute. We had the members of the VFW and American Legion Color Guard conduct the 3 Volley Salute. There should be 7 members that each fire 3 rounds. When done right, all someone should hear is 3 rounds being fired, even though it is actually 21 rounds that have been fired. Practice makes perfect.

Taps

We were able to get 2 bugle players that could do the echo taps. If you have never heard this played, it will bring a tear to your eye. One plays several notes, and then the other player, plays back the notes. It gives an echo effect. Very touching, but if you do this, make sure they practice and know how to play it right.

Retiring of Colors

See Posting of Colors.

OTHER ISSUES

Prior to our ceremonies, we would have lines several hundred yards long, waiting to get up to the wall. Just before the ceremony would begin, we closed TMW. We did not want anyone walking around TMW while the ceremony was going on. This will make some people upset, but they can deal with it. We are here to honor those who names appear on the Wall, not to worry that someone lost their place in line.

We also set it up that individuals could only approach TMW from one end. This is important in that it makes a person have to walk the entire length of TMW. People do not realize what over 58,000 names look like on a Wall, until they walk past everyone of the names. But after we concluded with the ceremony, we opened TMW up going both ways. This is because you will have such a large gathering of people and trying to get them back in line to go one-way will be a nightmare. So we had people going to TMW from both ends. After an hour or so, your large gathering will go down, and you will be able to form the line again.

Have your EMS on hand during your ceremonies. We needed ours during one of the ceremonies. Some of the Boy Scouts were trying to look their best being around a bunch of Veterans and standing at attention. But no one told the Boy Scouts not to lock their knees when standing at attention. About ten minutes into the ceremony, we had about 5 kids land face first onto the asphalt after passing out.

FUND RAISING

There are a lot of different ways to raise money. Make sure that you are open about the monies that you have raised, and how the monies are being spent. Do not spend the money on other projects, such as replacing the light fixtures in your Post.

Create a letter that explains the history and what TMW is about. Have in there other facts, such as how many heroes from your community are on the Wall. If and when TMW has ever been to your community before, or a surrounding community.

Then we went to every business in our town and asked for donations. Have someone that is on your committee that is a good salesperson and speaker be the one that approaches the business and is able to give a good sales pitch. We also sent out hundreds of letters to businesses and individuals.

Remember, it is not only cash that you need, but also other services. So if you go into a restaurant, ask them to supply the food for one meal for your volunteers. That is better than them giving you a check. We were able to get 15 different restaurants to provide the volunteers all of the meals needed, over the five days TMW was at the Post.

If you are planning on making a pamphlet when TMW is at your location, tell the businesses that information. That if they make a contribution, you will include their name on the sponsor's page of the pamphlet.

We came up with a certificate of appreciation that we created and printed off a color printer. A couple of weeks after we received a check from a business or individual, we would go back to that business and present them with the certificate of appreciation. Don't mail them the certificate, present it in person.

Another way we raised money was through T-shirts. We came up with a design, which merely stated that TMW was coming, and the dates. It was a nice design. We

approached several different printing shops and asked them for their help. We got reduced rates, and sold our T-shirts for \$10.00 a piece. The shirts were costing us around \$6.00 a piece.

However, we made absolutely no money off of this venture. Reason being is that we had no accountability of the T-shirts. You need to have one person that is in charge of T-shirts and fund raising. When our shirts came in, they were being handed out as gifts and such. Keep good control of your shirts, if you don't, they will disappear as they did with our shirts.

OTHER ITEMS

GOLF CARTS

Have golf carts available to transport the handicap if needed. Local golf shops and courses may donate a couple of carts.

WATER

Have plenty of water available. You can have bottle water donated from local grocery stores. We had a line that stretched several hundred yards of people waiting to get up to TMW. Have volunteers walk the lines carrying water for those that need it while they wait in line. Another added touch, we went to a water company, and had them donate the water dispensers, like the ones that you find in office buildings. We had then set up along the lines.

TISSUES

Have plenty of tissue boxes on hand. You are going to need them.

LUMBER CRAYONS

Make sure that you have lumber crayons in order to do the rubbings. Do not use carpenter pencils or anything else. Your local lumber store may donate a bunch of the lumber crayons. Also, have a drop off bucket at the end of TMW so people can return

your lumber crayons. We did not think of this until the second day, after we realized that everyone was walking away with our lumber crayons and we had to scramble to get more.

SIGNS

You will need signs with all different kinds of messages. Check with your local sign shop and see if they will assist you in getting the signs at a reduced rate. You will need parking signs, signs that let the public know who are the volunteers, restroom signs, sign in register, fallen heroes, information tent, demeanor signs that state that this is a memorial and please act as such, (or something along those lines), and other signs that you may think of for your presentation. We put TMW logo on our signs, which made them look good. Make sure that if you use TMW logos, that you include the trademark symbol.

MAYORS AND/OR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

If you are from a small town or city, make sure that you have contacted your Mayor about TMW. Keep them in the loop of everything that is going on. This is going to be a big event in your small town, and Mayors love this type of publicity. But more importantly, you may have to call on your Mayor for assistance. Case in point. We had received approval for the large road signs months in advance. Four days before TMW was schedule to arrive, North Carolina DMV mysteriously lost our application and stated that we would not be getting any of our road signs as previously agreed upon. The person on the committee tried for two days to get the “problem” fixed, but was getting nowhere. One phone call to the Mayor, and in turn a few phone calls to the State Capital, we had road signs that evening. Actually on the side of the road working two days before we had originally requested then to be placed. If we had not have kept the Mayor in the loop on what we had been planning from the beginning, we would not have gotten the support and political leverage that we needed when an issue arose.

CONTACTING TMW

Lesson learned. When our Post signed the contract with TMW, our Post Commander was the one that signed the contract. Then I was selected as the Chairman of the Moving Wall Committee. I tried on several occasions to make contact with TMW and none of my phone calls were ever returned. If I called TMW, the call was returned back to the Post Commander.

We did not understand why this was happening until TMW arrived. As stated before, there are a lot of people that want to get involved. And because of this, several people may call TMW and claim to be apart of your committee. TMW will only speak to those that have signed the contract. This is to keep people that may have other intentions from changing things that you and your committee may not sanction.

Looking back, I commend and applaud TMW for this practice. One person, one voice.

So, make sure that the person that signs your contract is your Chairperson, or make a note on the contract that you wish that all contact be made through your chairperson and list their name. I can tell you from personal experience that TMW will not contact you unless you are listed on the contract. No matter how many times you call them.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

All of the hard work that your committee has done can be a great success or a disaster based on your volunteers. Make sure that you have the right volunteer doing the right job.

We had a volunteer meeting one night about 4 months prior to TMW arriving. This was a meeting to inform all of the volunteers what the jobs were, the rules that needed to be followed, and any other information that needed to be handed out.

One month prior to TMW arriving, we held another volunteer meeting. We had around 130 people at this meeting. So you can see, this can be a very large undertaking.

The chairperson of the committee was the only person to speak during the meeting. If you have more than one person giving a presentation, then your meeting tends to turn into a committee meeting, and there is a chance that conflicting statements can be made. Best just to have one person talking.

TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

SUCCESS

How do you measure success? To us, it did not matter if 100,000 people showed up to see TMW, or if 100 people arrived. What mattered the most, was the one individual that

came to see TMW, whether they had a friend or loved one on the Wall, or knew no-one, that they walked away knowing that we did the best job that we could in our presentation of TMW. That is what matters the most, the way that you honor those heroes that did not return home. Not the number of people that show up to see TMW.

ALCOHOL

We have a canteen (bar) at our Post. We closed it down the night prior to TMW arriving and it stayed closed the entire time TMW was at our Post. There was no drinking allowed at all on the Post property. Seventy-five percent of the public that come to see TMW will be the general public. Those that did not know anyone on the Wall, or those that have no military background.

We did not want to give the public the perception that Veterans are drunks, by seeing a bunch of drinking going on, or seeing that our canteen was open for business. The five days that we hosted TMW, was not the time or place to drink.

CELL PHONES

Leave them at home, or on vibrate. None of the volunteers were allowed to use cell phones while working. And use of a cell phone at TMW was prohibited.

OPINIONS

You have to remember that you are the host of TMW and you and your organization are hosting TMW to the public. We had a large number of Vietnam Veterans that assisted in volunteering. And a lot of our Vietnam Veterans at our Post are highly decorated and did multiple tours in Vietnam. Not to mention, have seen their fair share of combat.

There are going to be a lot of individuals that have different opinions of the Vietnam War than you do. Let them voice their opinion, however screwed up it may be. The last thing you want to do is get into an argument while standing at TMW with the rest of the public looking on.

WAR HEROES

No matter where you live, when TMW comes to town, you are going to have those individuals that are “war heroes” (aka “wannabes”) showing up. Every community has

them and we were no different. The ones that have medals from the chin to their toes and did not earn any of the medals that they wear. Let them be a hero. Don't get into an argument and challenge them while they are at TMW. We had a volunteer party after TMW left. This is the time to stand around and share the stories of the "war heroes" with other volunteers.

APPEARANCE

All volunteers were issued yellow baseball caps. This was to allow the public to know who was a volunteer, if they needed some assistance. The volunteers were allowed to keep the yellow hats as a "keep sake" after TMW left. They were also allowed to place any pins/patches that they wanted on their hats. We also received permission to embroider TMW logo on the front of the hats. We spent over \$2100 for around 300 hats.

NOT TEAM PLAYERS

There are a lot of individuals out there that think they know it all. And they will stand around and do nothing but criticize what you and your committee are trying to accomplish. They will talk behind your back and try to sway people that your committee is doing everything wrong.

They are out there; trust me and we had this issue to deal with also. And for whatever reason, they try to derail what your committee is trying to accomplish. Maybe they were not selected to be on your committee, or maybe they were dropped on their head as a baby. But for whatever reason, they are there. And you are going to have to deal with the issue when it arises.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

GETTING THE "RIGHT" VOLUNTEERS

Each community is different in the people that you have available to volunteer. Since we are a VFW Post and had the American Legion assisting, we were able to get mostly military veterans to volunteer. That is really all we wanted in the way of volunteers, just military veterans and their families.

You will have all kinds of people wanting to volunteer. So just having all veterans and their families may not work in your community.

Know the limitations of those that you choose and what they are capable of doing. Several of our Vietnam Veterans asked to be escorts; while others stated that it would be too emotional for them to be an escort.

Check with the local Boy Scouts. They are a great help and it gives the kids a lesson in history to be apart of this event. We used the Boy Scouts in all of our ceremonies to assist in putting out chairs, seating people, starting us off in the Pledge of Allegiance, and other jobs.

SET UP

The weekend before TMW arrived, we conducted a dry run of everything. We set up all the tents and everything that had to be in place. We constructed our frame and walkway. This was all done one week prior to TMW arrival to ensure that we had everything. The last thing you want to happen is TMW arrives and you discover that you have forgotten a tent, or something else.

The volunteer stations were broke down in the following manner; fallen heroes tents, information tent, counselor tent, escorts, rovers, and parking.

We had one volunteer for each of the positions that was in charge. That way, the chairman of the committee, or the person in charge of all the volunteers did not have to meet with everyone and try to explain each and every job.

Have a meeting with all those that are in charge of each of the stations. Then have them meet with their respective volunteers and pass on the information.

We went so far as to have a class with all the volunteers on how to look up names and be able to find that name on the Wall. The last thing that you want to happen is for a volunteer to take a grieving family member to the Wall, and your volunteer can't find the name because they don't know how too.

FALLEN HEROES TENTS

We had four tents set up. The first was fallen heroes from A-M and the second tent was fallen heroes L-Z. The other two tents were for North Carolina fallen heroes. Make sure that your volunteers know how to look up a name in the book. The majority of the

individuals that come to see TMW are going to come to find a name of someone that lives in your state. Your state tent is going to see the most people trying to find names.

A lot of people only know someone on the wall by a nickname, or don't know how to spell the last name. Work with that person as best you can in order to find who they are looking for. It is going to be a very emotional process.

If you have someone that has gotten in the wrong line, like they thought the fallen hero was from your state, and come to find out that there are not. Do not ask that person to go back to the end of the line at another tent. Find a volunteer to go look in another book for that person.

The volunteers working the tents, should ask people while they are looking up a name a few questions. Like, "did you serve with this person", "are you related", or other type questions. Once you have found the name, ask the person if they would like to be escorted to the location on the Wall. The majority of the public think that the names on the Wall are in alphabetical order, while they are actually in the order that they were lost.

Computers are great to have set up at your tents. You will have people that cannot remember the name of someone on the Wall. They will only know a partial name and may know when that person was killed in action. The names on TMW are listed in order the fallen heroes gave their lives. With the help of the computer, you will be able to search by day, month, year, or even by panel. We ran into this situation several times. And I can tell you that there is no better feeling knowing that you just helped someone find a name of a friend. No special software is needed, only access to the Internet. A wealth of information can be found by going to the official web site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Also, the best source of information can be found within your own Vietnam Veterans. A lot of our Vietnam Veterans could tell you what years were represented by each panel. We had several individuals that did not know the exact name of a person located on the Wall, but knew when they were killed. In turn, our Vietnam Veterans were able to narrow down the search to specific panels just by knowing the years.

ESCORTS

We had all our escorts standing behind the fallen heroes tents. When a volunteer located a name and the person wanted to be escorted to the Wall, that volunteer would turn

around and hand the escort a piece of paper with the location of the name. The escort would also be told a little about the person that wants to find the name.

Escorts need to stay with the person that they are escorting only as long as they are needed. Some people just want help finding the name and that is it. Then they want to be left alone. So your escorts should not be staying too long at the Wall. Plus they are going to be needed back at the tents to escort someone else.

INFORMATION TENT

This is the command center. Where all the phone numbers of law enforcement, medical and other numbers should be kept. All volunteers should know to come to this tent, if there is an issue.

This was the first tent that the public came to before getting to TMW. We had a register book there and asked all to sign in, with their name and where they were from. We also asked if they knew someone on the wall. If they did, we would ask if they needed to look that person up. If they answered “yes” then we would send them to the right tent to look up the name. If they did not know anyone, and just wanted to see TMW, then they stayed in the line and proceeded.

PARKING

Parking can be a nightmare. We are a small town and parking was limited. We were able to get a field next to the Post, which could have parked about 500 cars. But as luck would have it, it rained the first two days TMW was at the Post, and the field was nothing but mud. So, have a back up plan. We were lucky that we had planned for this weather, months in advanced.

We had gone to each local business and asked if we could use their parking if needed. We had a permission slip that each owner signed. Plus we told them that all the cars in their parking lot meant that people might shop in their stores. So it was a win, win for all.

The Post had limited parking, and we designated that solely for handicap parking, and for those Gold Star families that we had identified. You will need a volunteer to man a position to control handicap parking, if you fall into this type of parking category.

ROVING

This was a catchall position. Rovers were to walk around and assist wherever needed. To make sure that the grounds were clear of any trash, to assist in escorting if there are not enough escorts, to provide security and ensure that everything is running smoothly.

PERMITS

Make sure that you know what your local governments laws are concerning this type of display. We had to get a special use permit in order to host TMW. Make sure that you start this process as soon as you find out that you are hosting TMW. It can take time, a lot of time, to get the proper permits.

Some towns, cities, and counties, will try to classify TMW as a rally, or mass gathering. It is not, and if it is classified as such, you will have a nightmare in trying to get everything together in order to get your permit.

Remember that each local government is different. This information is only based on what we did to obtain our special use permit.

We had to go before the local governing board and explain the following:

That this was not a gathering, that people come and go, and that people do not stay for long periods of time.

That there was no on site meal preparation. All of our volunteer meals would be prepared off site and brought in to the Post. If you decide to cook onsite for your volunteers, then you have to get the health department involved, and good luck with that venture.

That local law enforcement and EMS will be on site during peak times. Those being in the evening, weekends and during any ceremonies.

That the parking situation was addressed and resolved. Remember that we went to all the local businesses and had them sign a release form.

That there was adequate restroom facilities. We had 10 porta johns donated while TMW was at the Post. We did not want the general public coming and going through our VFW Post.

Remember that all of these issues were addressed and resolved prior to going before the local governing board. If you don't do this, the board might reject your permit application and make you fix the issues prior to returning back to the board.

Also, there is usually an application fee associated with the permits. Have your government body waive those fees. You are honoring those that gave their lives for this great Nation. My philosophy, I wasn't paying the government anything to honor fallen comrades.

WEBSITE

If you are able, set up a web site. TMW web site will link your site to their web page. Plus having a web site gives you the ability to post a lot of information for the public to see.

You and your committee are more than welcome to view our website, www.vfwpost2423.com and click on our Moving Wall website. You are more than welcome to use anything off of our website to create your own website. Please don't cut and paste our entire website, try to make yours a little different.

Once you have completed your website, contact the Webmaster at TMW and ask to have yours linked.

MOVING WALL ARRIVES

ESCORTING

TMW will contact you about 2-3 weeks out from when you are scheduled to host TMW as to where you want to meet. If you plan on doing an escort, it is best to know where TMW is coming from and set up a staging location.

TMW has been traveling the country for over 20 years. They know what they are doing. Don't panic if you feel TMW should have contacted you sooner. They will contact you about two weeks out and schedule with you a meeting point.

We were able to contact the State Highway Patrol and use a truck weigh station on the interstate as a staging location. The Highway Patrol closed the weigh station for about 4 hours for us to use.

It is an impressive sight to see hundreds of motorcycles going down the interstate escorting TMW into town. This event takes a lot of planning and coordination between motorcycle clubs and Law Enforcement.

We searched on the internet for Vietnam motorcycle clubs and to our surprise found that there were about 12 different clubs in our area. We contacted all the clubs in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. All you can do is inform them and hope that they come and you have a large turn out.

We also contacted the local schools and had the students line the street of our town just prior to entering our Post. The a lot of local businesses and factories had their workers lining the streets with American flags as the escort rolled by. Very impressive site to see all those people lining the streets.

SETTING UP TMW

Because TMW is about Vietnam Veterans that did not return home, we only had Vietnam Veterans setting up the Wall. No one else was allowed to assist in setting up of the Wall. This was a very emotional time. But it was an honor for those Vietnam Veterans to assist in this process. We had several that had brothers, or friends on certain panels. Because of this, several Vietnam Veterans wanted to place the panel that had their friend or loved one on that panel. Inform the staff of TMW what panel you want to set in place and they will tell you when that panel comes available. Make sure that you have grief counselors on hand during this time.

Every community is different. It was our decision to only have the Vietnam Veterans set up TMW. It was a request made by our Vietnam Veterans, of which I honored. TMW is about healing, by all generations. Don't feel like you have to only have Vietnam

Veterans set up TMW, do what is best for your community, and those that you have available to set up TMW.

MEDIA REQUESTS

Once the media becomes involved with TMW coming to your community, they will want to do all kinds of interviews. They primarily want to interview Vietnam Veterans. We made it clear to the media, that they were not to hound anyone for an interview. Talk with your Vietnam Veterans prior to TMW being set up, and find out which ones would be willing to do an interview.

We also had a media area, where they could set up their cameras and take pictures. We did not allow any media up near the Wall itself. The last thing that we wanted was a Vietnam Veteran or family member needing time for themselves, and looking up to a camera stuck in their face. So the media was only allowed to stand in one area.

Trust me, you are going to have all kinds of requests from the media when TMW arrives. Not only from the media, but other organizations as well. Case in point. At 0530, the morning we were scheduled to set up TMW, I walked out of our Post and right in front of me, parked in front of the location TMW was going to be set up, was a bass boat on a trailer.

It seems that the bass boat was going to be raffled off, with some of the proceeds going towards veterans. Now imagine if you will, the first live news cast of veterans setting up TMW, with a bass boat in the middle of the picture. Needless to say, the bass boat was escorted off of the property.

No prior coordination was done to see if we would allow this type of publicity. People are just going to show up, thinking they can get their cause attached to your cause.

IDENTIFYING LOCAL FALLEN HEROES

We had 18 Fallen Heroes from our County. We placed markers at the base of the wall at each location where a name appears. It means a lot if you have a mother or father from your community show up and see that their son/daughter was remembered by you taking the effort to identify their location.

Mr. MURPHY

Remember, what can go wrong, will go wrong. Murphy is always in town. It is how you handle the situation when it arises, that makes all the difference. Plan for every possibility. When we hosted TMW in Oct, the State of North Carolina was going through the worst drought in recorded history. And of course the day TMW arrived, it decided to rain for two days. We had planned for rain and had a bunch of extra tents on hand. You will need them if you have a ceremony and it starts to rain.

TAKING DOWN TMW

We closed TMW to the public at 2 pm. After that, we cleared the entire area, including media. We had all the Vietnam Veterans gather in the park with a preacher. There they said a pray and walked past the wall one last time as a group. This was very touching, and a memory that will last forever.

Then only the Vietnam Veterans took down the wall.

ITEMS LEFT AT TMW

All items that are left at TMW need to be sent to Michigan to the warehouse. You will need to plan for this and have boxes ready to ship the items.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW (AAR)

About a week after TMW has left your community, have your committee meet one last time. This is for the AAR. Talk about all the things that went right, and all the things that needed improvement. Do this for several reasons. If you ever host TMW again, you will know what needs to be improved, or left alone. But also, if you or your organization every host any other large events, will have the stepping-stones already in place to make that event a success.

GOOD LUCK

As stated in the beginning, the purpose of this is to help you come up with ideas in ways to host TMW. By no means are we the experts in hosting TMW. Please feel free to use this guide as a base plate for your ideas in hosting TMW.

To me, there are three main reasons for hosting TMW. To honor those that made the ultimate sacrifice, to honor those Vietnam Veterans that are here with us today, and to educate the public and our children of the sacrifices that were made during the Vietnam War. Freedom is not free, it comes at a price, and the price of that freedom is written on the Wall.

Best of luck

Brian

Brian M. Boze
VFW Post 2423
Chairman
Moving Wall Committee
Hosted 25-29 Oct 2007

