

COAST LIFE

SENIOR NEWS

WEDNESDAY

MARCH 11 • 2015

Oh say can you see?

*Oregon Coast Military Museum
volunteers prepare for July 4 opening
by assembling exhibits*

By CHANTELLE MEYER
Siuslaw News



PHOTOS BY CHANTELLE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS

Above, artist Judy Murphy demonstrates her technique for the military museum's World War I display. She completed the floor-to-ceiling mural in one week. Right, the museum has racks of dress uniforms and fatigues. There are examples of standard and formal military gear from the early 1900s through current conflicts.

Volunteers have started to assemble exhibits at the Oregon Coast Military Museum, an achievement six years in the making.

The grand opening of the museum will be on July 4.

"We have quite a collection

now of military memorabilia, weapons, protective gear, souvenirs and uniforms. We even have a World War I sailor's uniform with wool skivvies. It's just amazing what people have donated," said

Gina Cassidy, volunteer

archivist for the museum.

People across the area have donated items dating from WWI all the way up to the current conflicts.

Interactive exhibits will rim the newly sheetrocked interior of the building, starting with WWI and working up.

Judy Murphy is the artist in charge. Her experience comes from years of set designing.

She is the mastermind behind the murals and many of the displays.

"I've got a lot of books upstairs in the archives and photos about the wars, so I really try to make it authentic and like it really was," she said.

Board president Tim Sapp said, "She's had a lot of professional experience."

There also will be a reference library and theater area to show historical documentaries.

"If anyone is doing research, they will be able to come look through our books and videos. We hope to have students come down and see it for special field trips," said board member Tom Benedict.

Volunteers have donated their time, labor and expertise to the building of the museum. Benedict, Jim Parsons and Dorland Neale are just some of the people who have helped with construction and maintenance.



Historic helmets, from WWI-era German and French styles and ranging to newer styles, await the museum's completion. Donated artifacts will be part of displays and exhibits. Archivist Gina Cassidy makes careful notes of each item.

"It's all donated work, donated volunteer time," Benedict said. "That's one thing I love about this community. This is one of the most generous communities I have ever been in. The people want to give, want to help and want to see something succeed. That's what makes this community a good one."

They've come a long way, but they still have a ways to go.

Sapp said, "We want the word to get out there. It's nice to tell them this is coming on."

Benedict said, "We're currently looking for grant writers."

"We're also still seeking artifacts — and cash!" Sapp said. "We rely entirely on donations. We have a website and there's a donate button

right on there."

Donations can be in small amounts or can help sponsor specific items like flagpoles and benches.

They also are seeking artifacts to add to displays, especially military fatigues that can be used on mannequins.

The museum wants to preserve details and stories. Archivist Cassidy records information on each item, then goes through records to verify. She has been able to connect family members with a letter written during World War II.

"We treat everything with respect and appreciation. And it's a lot of fun. I feel very fortunate to work in this capacity," Cassidy said.

Volunteers want the exhibits

to be as hands-on as possible. While they are unsure what that looks like now, they want to show the reality of the military.

A future project might involve recording stories from area veterans.

"We still have quite a few WWII vets in the area," said Benedict. "It would be wonderful to have them sit down in front of a camera and talk about their experience. ... I love listening to them. They can just mesmerize you with some of their stories."

The Oregon Coast Military Museum is at 2145 Kingwood St.

To learn more about exhibits, dates and ways to donate, go to kilroycorps.com or call 541-902-5160.