Ribbon Cutting Ends Official Dedication Of National Memorial Of Military Ascent

by Staff Report
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GRAFTON — The National Memorial of Military Ascent was officially dedicated Saturday morning in Grafton during a June 6, 2026, ceremony marking the 82nd anniversary of D-Day and opening the site to the public for the first time.


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The ceremony concluded with an official ribbon-cutting, after which guests were invited to visit the monument and view the memorial’s tribute to veterans and the American spirit of service and sacrifice.

Veterans, military families, elected officials, community leaders, donors and supporters attended the event to honor the sacrifices of U.S. service members.

The memorial’s centerpiece is 12 life-sized bronze Army Rangers ascending a limestone bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. The design was inspired by the U.S. Army Rangers who scaled the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc during the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944.

Lt. Gen. Jered P. Helwig, deputy commander of U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, delivered the keynote address. According to event information, Helwig reflected on military service, leadership, sacrifice and the importance of preserving the stories of those who defended freedom.

Grafton Mayor and National Memorial of Military Ascent Commissioner Col. (Ret.) Michael R. Morrow welcomed attendees and spoke about the planning, fundraising and collaboration behind the project. During his remarks, Morrow recounted the story of the Rangers at Pointe du Hoc, whose actions inspired the memorial.


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This monument is made possible in large part by the generous contribution from Jayne & John Simmons
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Organizers also recognized individuals and organizations for contributions to the project, including Jayne and John Simmons and Simmons Hanly Conroy; Ben Allen; Carolina Bronze Foundry; Henderson Associates Architects; Tarlton Corporation; Bollinger Services; Sheppard, Morgan & Schwaab Engineers; and other donors, founding members, volunteers, and community partners.

Leaders shared plans for the next phase of the project, which will include the construction of the NMMA Military Museum. According to the event information, the museum will feature educational exhibits and artifacts, including a Vietnam-era SEAL Team Assault Boat built in Grafton in 1968 and donated by John and Donna Jadwinski.

(Photos by Laura Snyder).


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