

East Alton shows its appreciation of veterans with memorial, Veterans Day ceremony

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EAST ALTON - When East Alton American Legion Board Chairperson Sue Green and Commander Mike Seitzinger approached East Alton Mayor Joe Silkwood for a veterans' memorial in East Alton, Seitzinger said he "ran with it like a pit bull with a bone."

One of Silkwood's goals once the committee was formed was to have the first steps finished by Veterans Day, despite the initial idea happening as recently as Memorial Day 2017.

While this may seem ambitious, on Saturday morning, an abandoned lot across the street from East Alton City Hall, on the corner of Main and Shamrock, had six new flags raised on poles - one for America, one for its Army, one for its Navy, one for its Air Force, one for its Marines and one for its Coast Guard. Veterans representing each were on hand for each raising. The American flag was represented by eight World War II veterans.

Madison County Judge Sarah Smith, a veteran herself, spoke regarding a tragic loss of a fellow soldier to a suicide bomber, and the 2-year-old child left behind from that horrible event. Smith was recently awarded a Bronze Star - the same honor held by Seitzinger.

Benches for the memorial were provided by Community Seed and feed and RCS construction did much of the work on the site and flagpoles.

"We've had a lot of community support," Seitzinger said. "We've done a lot for the community, giving the police department Tasers and iPads, and building the concession stand at Van Preter Park. Today the community gave back to us. When the mayor said it would be called the East Alton American Legion Veterans Memorial Park, it was one of the proudest moments of my life."

In the future, Seitzinger said a granite memorial would one day stand and show all the veterans who have served from East Alton.

In order to raise funds for that, Seitzinger said memorial bricks are on sale from both the American Legion and the City Hall. Only veterans may purchase these bricks, however, but those can be from anywhere as long as they have served.

