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Veterans fly high above St. Nazianz

Legion, Lions coordinate banner project to honor locals who have served in military

By Jacob Puestow

Many people believe that recognizing veterans for their service shouldn't be reserved for a few holidays.

American Legion Post 477 and the St. Nazianz Lions Club collaborated to put 30 banners honoring deceased veterans on utility poles along Main Street and Fourth Avenue in St. Nazianz.

Displayed in time for Memorial Day, the goal is to have them continue to hang through the Fourth of July, though no removal date was given.

Nancy Schnell Rivera, member of Post 477, said the main goal was to highlight veterans of their local community.

"People probably aren't aware–I'm one of them, I wasn't aware–how many veterans are in the community," Rivera said.

"I think that's one of the main things that we got out of this that (we) probably hadn't anticipated–the conversations it started within the village, which is very cool."

The banners feature pictures of the veterans along with their name and military branch, but not their years of service.

"It just would've been too much if we had asked for years of service or anything like that, because a lot of the families really don't know," Rivera said. "That would've been really hard."

Plans to add more banners for 2026 are already underway, and Rivera thinks the number of applications will be very high.

"I know people really are looking forward to 2026 so they can get applications for their family members again," she said.

Plans are also being made for 30 more banners to go up before this year's Veterans Day.

The plan for then is to display banners honoring living veterans, along with five honoring deceased ones that didn't go up for Memorial Day and "two or three military members who are currently serving," according to Rivera.

So far, the banners have proven to be a point of pride for St. Nazianz, drawing people from around the county and getting folks talking.

Rivera pointed out a fun design quirk the organizers implemented–splitting up veterans from the same family so that they weren't grouped together.

"We purposefully did not put all the last names together… because we wanted people

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Banners

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to walk through the village and to recognize and see all of the different banners and see all of the different names," she said.

Gene Radder, village president, was happy to see the banners.

"Those veterans have finally gotten the recognition they deserve," he said.

He recalled that the village board had to approve the Legion post's plans to put up the banners, saying that members were "more than happy to approve them."

The plan did take a while to manifest, however, largely due to getting approval from Wisconsin Public Service Corp. to use its poles.

The idea was first proposed in 2023, but it took longer than expected while the utility company went through its approval process.

"We had to go through every single pole in the village..." Rivera said. "We had to choose which poles we thought would work.

"We tried to take the poles that had lights on them; that didn't necessarily work all the way."

Another challenge, perhaps the reason the task took two years, was the cost of the brackets of $180 each, which the Legion post and Lions club managed to cover.

Rivera emphasized that this task could not have been accomplished without the collaborative effort with the Lions Club.

"The post, we could not have done it ourselves, and we really (appreciate) the Lions' support," she said.

St. Nazianz Veterans with Military Banners on Display

Air Force
- Jerry Gnadt

Army
- Anthony Dewane
- Alois Endries
- Alois Gnadt
- Ben Gnadt
- George Gnadt
- John Gnadt
- Jerome Gutman
- Allan Koenig
- Bob Meyer
- Harlan A. Meyer
- Leonard Meyer
- Paul Meyer
- Ray Meyer
- Norbert Muehlbauer
- Gaylord Stebnitz
- Stephen C. Wagner
- Glenn Wenzel

Marines
- Dennis Brand
- Kevin M. Worth

Navy
- Mildred Dietrich Berkey
- Ronald Christel
- Norbert E. Dietrich
- Walter J. Dietrich
- James Endrias
- Robert Koenig
- Isidore Meyer
- Roger Noworatzky
- Lawrence "Squeak" Schaller
- Fred A. Stiefvater

While the brackets were paid for by the two groups, the banners were paid for by the friends and families of the deceased veterans, for $75 each. That cost may go up due to price increases to buy the banners.

"We were very unsure whether or not there would be an interest there, but that was unfounded," Rivera said. "There was plenty of interest."

Many people quickly came to submit applications, and all were very excited.

Cheryl Saunders, who was the first applicant, actually called Rivera about the idea after visiting Kiel with her daughter.

"I contacted Nancy out in St. Nazianz here and (I was) talking to her about it and said 'That would be so nice if St. Nazianz did the same thing,' " she said.

"She said, 'Actually, we're in the cahoots with Kiel to try to get the same thing for St. Nazianz.' I was delighted."

Saunders, whose father is honored on one of the banners, called the banners in St. Nazianz "absolutely beautiful" and a "nice tribute to the families."

Rivera noted that Saunders was "very, very excited about her dad being up."

Bob Domagalski, a member of the Manitowoc County Historical Society, sponsored three of his uncles and is proud of the results.

However, he did have one minor note that there weren't enough poles to hang more banners.

"It'd be nice if they could've had space for more, because I guess there's a backline of people who'd like to have banners made," he said.

Regarding the success of the current banners, those wishing to apply will have to do so as soon as they can.

"I think now that the word is out there, we'll fill the application list rather quickly," Rivera said.

So far, the banners have been a great success and have gone far for, as Rivera described, "just a thought, an idea somebody had."