Movement for high schools to honor veterans grows

An effort started in a small town in Morris County New Jersey to honor all people who ever attended their high school and later served in the military continues to grow with the West Point Parachute Team signing on as the latest participant. The Butler High School Mission Honor Expansion Ceremony, recognizing the 2,300+ veterans now installed in the monument, will be held on Oct. 27 on an underutilized section of the high school campus that has become a gathering place for veterans, ancestors of deceased veterans, families, friends and visitors from across the nation.

All veterans who ever went to Butler High School in Butler NJ are invited to gather at the site at 38 Bartholdi Avenue by 10:50 a.m. to be part of a group photo of veterans who will gather around a 30 by 60 foot United States flag for a photo to be taken at 11:15 a.m. in front of the monument.

At 11:30 a.m., the Black Knights freefall demonstration and competition Parachute Team from the US Military Academy at West Point will showcase their unique skills in a precision freefall demonstration at Smith Field in view of the veterans’ monument.

The initiative is a grassroots effort to create a national program to honor veterans at their high schools throughout the country. Stephen Mulligan (class of 1975), is one of five volunteers who started the movement for high schools to honor their veterans wants to see high schools across the nation join in participation. He can be contacted at Stevem3@optonline.net or Stephen Mulligan, c/o Butler High School, 38 Bartholdi Ave., Butler NJ, 07480. The website can be viewed at http://www.butlerboe.org/veterans/.

Mulligan will forward information with an overview of the project on request. He said each school will have a different approach and scope, but the basic project framework is the same. Building off the successful installation of the BHS Mission of Honor Monument, other schools can use this model as a means to establish a Mission Honor Veterans Projects at their own school. The Mission Honor logo has been designed, so it can be personalized for each school by using the school’s colors in the design. The key objective is to honor veterans.

Scott Spellmon, who recently assumed duties as the US Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations at headquarters in Washington DC. is expected to be at the ceremony. He graduated with the Butler High School Class of 1982 and will assist Principal Kevin Kelly in distribution of medals and diplomas to those from the high school who left to serve in the military before graduation. Mayor Robert Alviene of Butler and Mayor Jonathan Dunleavy of Bloomingdale will represent their respective towns.

Forrest Spencer Chilton IV, whose father Forrest Spencer Chilton III was killed in World War II and the namesake of Chilton (Memorial) Hospital, attained the rank of colonel in the US Army before being honorably discharged in 1996. He will read the names recently found of war dead students who attended the high school.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion Color Guard will give a 21 gun salute and taps will be played.

The high school band, the school Gold Choir and current students will participate in the program. An opening prayer will be said by Butler American Legion Post Chaplain Adam Charman (class of 1997). Others participating in the program will include present Butler School Superintendent Dr. Dan Johnson and former Butler High School Superintendent and Army Ranger James Smith.