

Motorcycle ride will benefit memorial drive

By **DAVID HINCHEY**
Chronicle Staff Writer

COVENTRY — Jean Risley, the Coventry resident looking to build a Vietnam War Memorial in town, is having a motorcycle fun run in an effort to raise money for the memorial project.

The ride is Sunday and starts with 9:30 a.m. sign-ups at Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School. It will feature coffee and refreshments donated by Starbucks.

"It's going to be awesome," Risley said, adding she believes the weather for Sunday's event is expected to be good.

"I'm really overwhelmed," she said on the support she's received from people for the memorial and for the motorcycle fun run.

Risley said she's raised more than \$17,000 and she's hoping the money raised from the motorcycle fun run Sunday will allow her to make the \$25,000 down payment on the memorial.

The total cost of the memorial is approximately \$40,000.

Risley had approached the town council back in July 2006 with the concept of building a memorial in town to honor the 612 Connecticut servicemen who lost their lives in the Vietnam War.

She has designed the monument to look like the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., with granite panels and the names etched into the stone.

The council supported the idea and, last November, voted to place the memorial on the town green at the intersection of Cross, Lake and High streets.

However, the vote stirred controversy in town, as the town's appointed veterans commission — the Coventry Veterans Memorial Commission — opposed the location of the monument.

The commission said, among

other things, the city of Hartford would be a more appropriate site for the memorial because the city has the infrastructure in place to handle a larger volume of traffic and parking.

The commission also said the town's small, rural atmosphere did not lend itself to be used for statewide memorials.

It also argued the town already honors local veterans and there are other wars Coventry veterans may have fought and/or died in that are not currently honored, including the French and Indian wars, Spanish American War, Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Risley's brother, Robert Tillquist, fought and died in the Vietnam War in November 1965 and was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for valor, according to the Connecticut Vietnam Veterans Memorial Inc., web site.

The ride officially starts at 11 a.m. at the middle school and will last about an hour, as state comptroller Nancy Wyman, will wave the green flag.

The ride ends at the Corner Store of Coventry, at the corner of South Street and Forest Road, as Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and Linda Schwartz, Department of Veterans Administration commissioner, will speak at 12:30 p.m.

The cost to ride is \$20 per bike, \$30 if riding with a passenger, which includes a hamburger or hot dog for lunch.

For more information, contact Jean Risley at Rwrisley@snet.net or visit the CVVM Inc., web site at <http://www.cvvm.org>.

Donations can be addressed to: CVVM Inc., care of Paul Jatkowski, Treasurer, 91 Upton Drive, Coventry 06238.