

Veterans memorial fund reaches goal

By **RUSSELL VERMILYEA**
Chronicle Staff Writer

COVENTRY — A financial goal to build a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in town has been reached, but there is more to go.

Resident Jean Risley, who is leading the fund-raising effort, said this morning that in a year approximately \$44,500 was raised and the memorial will be constructed for about \$38,000.

But, she added, the \$44,500 is minus costs for such expenses as conducting the fund-raising events, mailings and the cost of legal services.

She also said further costs would include bronze emblems of the various military services on the memorial's base, instead of etched emblems, landscaping, benches and walkways.

Risley said she is waiting for a price on the bronze emblems.

Risley said she was motivated to promote the idea of a memorial in 2006 by the death of her brother, Robert Tillquist, in Vietnam and by her work with students at Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School.

The students, she said, were conducting Project 612 — biographies of the 612 state military personnel who died in Vietnam.

"I went in for an interview about my brother and they just kind of kept me like a room mother," she said.

Risley, a retired real estate office manager, said her brother was drafted and trained as an Army

medic.

He then trained at Fort Benning, Ga., and was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, Airmobile, in Vietnam.

He was killed, she said, at age 23 in 1965 during the Pleiku campaign in the central highlands.

The state Vietnam Veterans Memorial Inc. web site says he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for valor.

Risley said her brother is listed in the book about the 1st Air Cavalry in Vietnam, "We Were Soldiers Once ... And Young," by Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore (Ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway (Random House, 1992).

The book was made into a 2002 Paramount Pictures movie starring Mel Gibson as Moore.

The memorial will be of granite, 15 feet long and 6 feet high, with the names of the 612 engraved on panels.

It will be situated across from Patriots Park on the memorial green at the intersection of Cross, Lake and High streets. Risley said she would like to begin work in September and hold a dedication next May.

She said she thanks supporters of the monument project, which will be "so worthwhile. I think it's going to be great."

To make a contribution, call Risley at 742-8841, or send checks made out to C.V.V.M. Inc. to Paul Jatkowski, 91 Upton Drive, Coventry 06238.