

KUNR - 88.7 Reno Public Radio NPR

Local Stories

2:54 PM

THU OCTOBER 30, 2014

Honoring those lost in battle: a traveling exhibit



Photographs of service members lost in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars are displayed on the "Wall of the Dead."

Credit Photo courtesy of Western Nevada College

A traveling exhibit honoring veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars is making its way across the Silver State. The [Nevada 150 Commission](#) selected the display as an official sesquicentennial event. The exhibit's next stop is at [Great Basin College](#) in Elko, where visitors will see the faces of nearly 7,000 service members lost in battle. The exhibit is called "[Always Lost: A Meditation on War](#)" and it started as a class project back in 2009 at [Western Nevada College](#) in Carson City.

Amy Roby is one of the founders and says the goal is to personalize the wars that have raged on in the Middle East through stories, poetry and photos. The heart of the

exhibit is the "Wall of the Dead," which includes thousands of pictures of service members.

"It's a deeply personal experience to look into the faces and the eyes of the service members who've lost their lives," Roby says.

When the display began touring there were about 4,500 pictures of casualties on that wall and now the number is close to 7,000.

"The terrible irony is the "Wall of the Dead" is the living part of the exhibition," Roby says. "And it keeps expanding and growing."



From the Pulitzer Prize collection. Photo courtesy of The Dallas Morning News/Cheryl Diaz Meyer.

"Always Lost" also features a collection of Pulitzer-Prize-winning combat photos from the Iraq War. The original project was only intended to be on display for three weeks, but due to an overwhelming emotional response, it took on a life of its own. The traveling exhibit is going on its fifth year and has been on display at nearly 30 venues in several states coast-to-coast. A guestbook that travels with it gives people an opportunity to share their thoughts.

"One person said that you cannot possibly leave this exhibition the same person you were when you walked in," Roby says. "Another person, a Vietnam Veteran, called the exhibition a 'national treasure.'"

Even though "Always Lost" began as a college project, Roby says it has transformed into an actual war memorial and has gained so much attention that it sparked a duplicate exhibit. While the first one is currently in the Midwest, the [Nevada Department of Veteran Services](#) is sponsoring the second one, which kicked off a two-year tour of the "Battle Born" state this summer.