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Legacy project gets \$3,000 grant

The U.S. Armed Forces Legacy project in Tonasket has received a \$3,000 grant from the state Department of Veterans Affairs, thanks to Mike Gregoire, Gov. Chris Gregoire's husband.

According to Michael Stewart, legacy treasurer, the organization was denied when it first applied for the grant. To find out why, a few members of the team started making phone calls.

One of those calls was to Mike Gregoire's aide, who told the group Gregoire would be in the area sometime this year. Gregoire learned of the legacy project through information and pictures that had been sent to him, Stewart said.

Gregoire traveled with veterans affairs director John Lee to present new programs for younger veterans and their families.

In late May, the two came to Okanogan, met with commissioners and legacy project representatives to discuss veterans' programs, and then toured the legacy project site.

Lee and Gregoire must have liked what they heard and saw, Stewart said, because a week later, the two changed the decision around for the \$3,000 grant.

The project has an estimated cost of \$300,000, Stewart said. In its three years of operations, the group has raised about \$63,000 through in-kind donations, memberships, fund raising and community support.

Workers have placed basalt columns around one side of the project and built a wooden frame in the center of the site at the south end of Tonasket. Water and septic have been hooked up, Stewart said.

The next step for the project is to construct tall concrete pillars that will hold walls of names of veterans, Stewart said. Five basalt columns will be added around the wooden frame to represent the five branches of the military. An information center will also be built on site, according to plans.

More information is available at www.veteranlegacyproject.org or www.usaflegacytonasket.org.