

# Honoring Our Own Fallen Heroes

## Vietnam Memorial Dedicated in Memory of 15 Brentwood Grads

A permanently installed monument inscribed with the names of 15 fallen heroes of the Vietnam Conflict, all of whom were graduates of Brentwood High School, was unveiled at a ceremony on Veterans' Day outside the two high school buildings. It was the bittersweet result of months of planning by the Brentwood Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee.

Hundreds of former classmates, family members and friends attended the memorial ceremony and watched as the monument was dedicated to those killed in Vietnam. Now located by the flagpole between the two Brentwood High School buildings, the monument replaces an aged memorial from the 1960's dedicated to Brentwood graduate Richard Lancaster. Lancaster's plaque was given to his family during the ceremony, and his name is now listed on the new monument along with Michael Cacciuttolo, Peter Colicchio, Nicholas Fritz, Joseph Funk, Gary Guasp, Daniel Hommel, Edward LaBarr, John Rosa, Frank Sardina, David Scolnick, James Seidensticker, Lawrence Sotan, Jose Vazquez and Thomas Wynne.



The Brentwood Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee purchased the granite, triangle-shaped monument through the contributions of friends, family and community members; various fundraising efforts raised \$20,000 in just four months. The groundbreaking for the monument was held on Memorial Day, and the committee's goal of seeing it completed by Veterans' Day was met.

The Brentwood School District administration and Board of Education believe it is tremendously important to remember

our graduates who died, and what they sacrificed. Board of Education Vice President George Talley, who is also a Brentwood Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee member, comments, "Vietnam veterans didn't initially receive the recognition they deserved. This is our way of recognizing them and giving current students a better understanding of what the veterans sacrificed for our country." The new monument will serve as a visible and lasting reminder of those who gave their lives in service.

## SPC Jose L. Ruiz Remembered

On November 7, a memorial service was held at Brentwood High School for SPC Jose L. Ruiz, the fourth individual from Brentwood Schools to die in recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Members of SPC Ruiz's family, the school community, local government officials and military personnel came to honor his life and his service, and to unveil a plaque that now hangs on a wall in the high school alongside memorial plaques for the other three slain soldiers.



SPC Jose Ruiz in Iraq.

## Brentwood Honors Brothers in Arms BY CARA TABACHNICK

Thomas Wynne was just 20 years old. Edward LaBarr was 21. And Michael Cacciuttolo was 19. The three, along with 12 other Brentwood High School classmates, were killed in action during the Vietnam War.

On Friday, former classmates, families and friends gathered at the school to dedicate a memorial in their honor. Alumni, who had raised funds to replace an older plaque, used Veterans Day activities to unveil the new memorial. Hundreds of people braved the fall chill to attend the ceremony outside the school.

Classmate and Vietnam veteran Frank Canarelli, 57, whose son Anthony has completed two tours of duty in Iraq and is about to embark on a third, gave the keynote address.

"I don't know why I am here and the others are not," Canarelli said, his tears drawing sobs from some in the audience. "I just trust in God and I hope that one day it will all make sense."

Many speakers drew parallels between Vietnam and the Iraq war, noting that a memorial for U.S. Army Pfc. Jose Ruiz, the fourth Brentwood graduate to be killed in Iraq, was dedicated last week. The Vietnam veteran also noted that returning soldiers today are treated with respect and gratitude.



"Brentwood produces tough kids," said Hal Wilson, 57, a 1966 graduate. He said he was there to honor his friend, David Scolnick. They had been buddies since seventh grade and enlisted in the Marines together. They had been separated upon their departure to Vietnam, he said. Scolnick went first and was killed by a mortar round, Wilson said.

Margaret Wynne, who came from Ohio, to honor her son, Thomas, said: "He was the clown of the family. Everyone loved him."

Wynne's grandson had completed a tour of duty in Iraq and will be going back for his second, she said. "It's nice to get some recognition for them," a sister, Barbara Wynne, 53, of Hicksville, said.

Cacciuttolo's sisters also attended the ceremony, as did LaBarr's sister, Susan Marshall, 51, of Brentwood. "He was whatever you wanted a big brother to be."

The Cacciuttolo sisters said Michael was the only boy, and his mother's favorite. "But he was also everyone's favorite," his sister, Carol York, said. "We still miss him."

The other Brentwood graduates honored are: Richard Lancaster, Jose Vazquez, James Seidensticker, Peter Colicchio, Frank Sardina, Nicholas Fritz, Gary Guasp, Daniel Hommel, Joseph Funk, Lawrence Soltan and John Rosa.

"For a long time, guys came back and no one would say they were in the Vietnam War," said veteran Pat Hughes, another Brentwood graduate who was instrumental in raising funds for the new memorial.

"We wouldn't have been able to do this 30 years ago," he said. "Time heals all wounds."

