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Golf outing raises money for Fallen Heroes Memorial

BY STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County sheriff's deputies at the Independence Township substation had driven the streets of the Oakhurst subdivision but not its fairways.

Wouldn't it be neat, Oakhurst resident Paul Cloutier thought three years ago, if police could get better acquainted with the community's golf and country club as part of a fund-raiser?

Cloutier gathered residents and they brainstormed. The result is an annual golf outing — three years running, each September — in which the deputies are the guests and the Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial is the charitable cause.

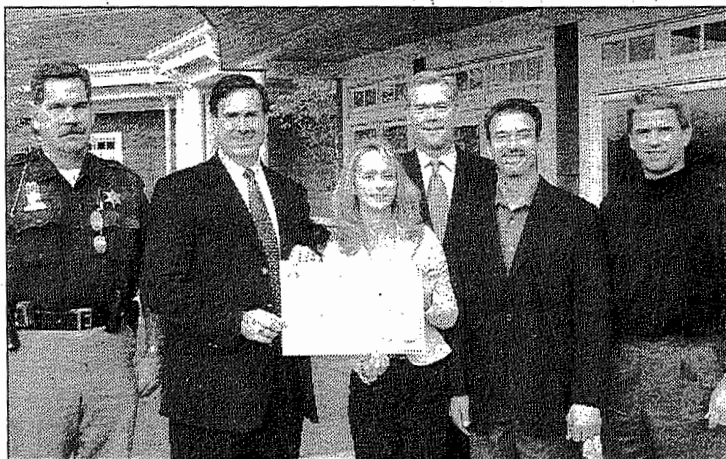
The memorial, which honors police officers and firefighters from across the state who have died in the line of duty, is being erected at a site within the Oakland County complex in Pontiac. The golf outing has raised more than \$13,000, including \$5,170 this year, toward the project, which costs more than \$100,000, Cloutier said.

"There was no doubt in my mind the residents and members of the community would get behind this event," Cloutier said.

Phase I of the memorial — statues of a police officer and firefighter on their knees mourning a lost colleague — has been completed, Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said.

Phase II, which will include a granite base and a granite wall upon which the names of Michigan's Fallen Heroes will be diamond-etched, has yet to be erected, he said.

Bouchard, Independence substation commander Lt.



Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard (second from left) and Deputy Paul Biddinger receive a check from Oakhurst Country Club representatives Cheryl Callahan, Dave LewAllen, Paul Cloutier and George Bowman.

The memorial, which honors police officers and firefighters from across the state who have died in the line of duty, is being erected at a site within the Oakland County complex in Pontiac.

Dale LaBair and Deputy Paul Biddinger attended a dinner Oct. 6 at the country club in which the check was presented.

Bouchard said the memorial hits close to home for him because five of his classmates from the 1978 Lansing Police Academy have died in the line of duty.

"(Across the nation) every 51 hours an officer dies," Bouchard said.

"It's important for families to have a place to go, to show children of lost moms or dads, and understand the sacrifice they made."

LaBair has known a few fallen officers. None worked in the same substation as he,

but one lived next door to him: Gary Davis, the Bloomfield Township officer killed in a traffic accident while transporting an alleged drunken driver to jail in May 2004.

Biddinger said the Oakhurst community's charity is an example of a caring township, which he has an appreciation for serving.

"The township as a whole is a tremendous place to work," Biddinger said. "(Residents) generally care about their law and order and respect the law enforcement."

George Bowman, head pro at Oakhurst, just wishes he'd see the deputies more out of uniform.

"Every situation we've had, (the police) have been 'Johnny on the Spot,'" Bowman said. "We just wish they'd play more. It's a sign of a good sheriff's department, I guess. They're working too hard."

Donors may send corporate or personal checks, payable to the Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial Fund, to 1201 N. Telegraph, Pontiac, MI 48341. Call (248) 858-1947 for more information.