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New Hayward 9/11 Memorial Designed by Cal State East Bay Alumnus

September 8, 2015

Cal State East Bay alumnus Michael L. Emerson doesn't golf or fish – instead he uses his free time to design and help build monuments and memorials all over the country. His latest project is a 9/11 memorial set to open in downtown Hayward in early November.

A Marine Corps veteran who served in the Gulf War, Emerson has worked on so many projects over the last decade-plus that he says he's earned the nickname "Monument Man." But it wasn't until the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, that Emerson was inspired to take up this unusual hobby.

"I was as devastated as anyone else and wanted to do something," said Emerson, who earned his bachelor's degree in economics from CSUEB in 2009.

Soon after, he focused his efforts on creating a 9/11 memorial in Union City to honor those who died aboard United Airlines Flight 93. According to SFGate.com, it was the first permanent memorial created for that particular flight, which crash-landed in Shanksville, Penn.

"It's a way to make sure future generations remember 9/11," Emerson said.

As the 14th anniversary of Sept. 11 draws near, Emerson's Hayward project continues to progress. The memorial will consist of four monoliths, one representing each hijacked plane in the attacks – Flights 11 and 175 that crashed into the twin towers, Flight 77 that hit the Pentagon and Flight 93 that went down in Shanksville.

The memorial also has a local touch. It will honor Hayward police and fire personnel that have been killed in the line of duty by inscribing their names on the side of the center pillar.

Like his other projects, Emerson has worked to get everything donated, from the concrete to the labor.

Community members can sponsor the bricks that will surround the monoliths and pillars to help fund the project. Small bricks are \$100 each and large bricks are \$150.

Emerson also designed the veterans' memorial in Castro Valley and has contributed to several projects in Washington, D.C. He continues to attribute his motivation back to 9/11.

"I see America before 9/11 and after 9/11," Emerson said. "It's a very different world. It just opened up a spark in me of patriotism and I just wanted to give back to my country and community."



An artist's rendering of the 9/11 memorial in Hayward.

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