

COMMENTARY

'Always Lost': Exhibit deserves national audience

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Last summer, Western Nevada College produced an exhibit that honored those who had lost their lives in wars, primarily in Afghanistan and Iraq, but in other conflicts as well. Professors Marilee Swirczek and Don Carlson enlisted the aid of their students and other faculty members and produced a thought-provoking exhibit, a powerful sonata of words, pictures and facts.

The exhibit was a stunning journey into the lives and thoughts of our warriors, of those they loved and those they sought to protect. It portrays a story about men and women who died (more than 4,000), their faces, their eyes and those of us who survived to reflect on the meaning of war.

Hundreds of people attended the "Always Lost: A Meditation on War" exhibit. Many visited multiple times, and some left comments in a book of remembrance: "I have studied war and war documentaries, but I have never seen war in this way. I came in several times and each time it sent chills down my spine." And another: "My third visit — I'm excited about the prospects of this great work."

There were hundreds of others, each with personal reflections that help us remember.

Western Nevada College has an opportunity to put the "Always

Lost" exhibit on the road and share it with the nation. There are two reasons this is important.

First, "Always Lost" is, to the best of our knowledge, the only artistic portrayal of those who lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan in ways that profoundly touch the lives of all of us. It makes personal and real the men and women who sacrificed their lives.

Second, the faculty and students of WNC, a small American college in a small American city, have produced an exceptional work of art. Such art demands to be shared.

The University of Wisconsin has asked to have the exhibit displayed at their university later this summer. Other universities have also made inquiries. The WNC faculty and students have joined together to conduct fundraising activities for packing and shipping to put the exhibit on the road and to publish the written and visual works.

A small group of WNC faculty, staff and students will visit area service clubs and veteran organizations in the next few weeks to raise funds. Individual readers also can make contributions by sending checks payable in any amount to: "Always Lost" attn. WNC Foundation, Western Nevada College, 2201 W. College Parkway, Carson City, NV 89703.

This is an important effort for the community, WNC and the nation. Please help.

• Eugene Paslov is a board member of the Davidson Academy at the University of Nevada, Reno and the former Nevada state superintendent of schools.