

NEVADA APPEAL

WNC seeks community support for exhibit

'Always Lost' plans to hit the road but needs financial help

By [Teri Vance](#)

tvance@nevadaappeal.com



Nevada Appeal File Photos

Lauren Jiles, left, and Lindsey Jiles look at the “Always Lost: A Meditation on War” exhibit when it was on display last year at Western Nevada College. The exhibit displays photographs of all military members killed in the War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

You can help

To donate to the Always Lost exhibit, go to www.wnc.edu/foundation or contact the WNC Foundation at 445-3240. Reference the “Always Lost” campaign.



Tom Softich talks last year about his son Army Spc. Noah C. Pierce who suffered from post traumatic stress disorder and committed suicide in July 2007 after two tours in Iraq.



The “Always Lost” art exhibit displays photographs of all military members killed in the War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan. Organizers received requests from organizations across the country to display it.

Courtesy

What started out as a class project at the local college has grown into an intimate look into the War on Terror that has gained national attention.

Organizers are asking the community to help turn the popular exhibit into a traveling display.

“Always Lost: A Meditation on War,” began as a collaboration between two Western Nevada College professors. Don Carlson assigned his sociology students to collect statistics and analyze war from a social perspective.

Marilee Swirczek’s writing students reacted to the photos and data through poetry and prose.

Kevin Burns, a student and former Marine, lead the effort to find a photo of every person killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has continued to do so even after the exhibit was taken down.

What started as 2,300 casualties has now reached 5,000.

“We have spent thousands of hours finding the faces of those killed in the wars for the Wall of the Dead,” he said. “We are diligent. It has become our mission to ensure we include photos of all the service men and women who have given their lives.”

The exhibit was on display at the college last summer and gained momentum as others heard about it.

Veterans attending the college volunteered to tell their own stories through photos and prose.

The mother of Spc. Noah Pierce, who took his own life after returning from two tours in Iraq, heard about the project in Minnesota and contacted organizers to include her son’s story.

Classes to raise money for traveling exhibit

Jack Piirainen, who oversees the public safety operations at Western Nevada College, will donate his time and expertise to benefit the “Always Lost” traveling art exhibit. Piirainen will teach CPR and basic life-support classes July 24 and Aug. 7. He will donate his compensation to the fund to help the exhibit on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan travel to other colleges and universities around the United States. A military veteran, Piirainen said he wants to be part of the effort. “I was a part of this class and have poems in the show,” he said. “The emotional roller coaster I experienced during the semester was something I have not experienced before. It is something I will never forget.”

Piirainen’s classes will include:

Heart saver CPR, AED and First Aid: \$45 – Designed for those seeking certification who are not health care providers. It includes AHA card.

Basic Life Support for Health-Care Providers: \$45 – Designed for health care providers who are seeking certification. It includes AHA card.

Friends and Family CPR/First Aid: \$25. Certificate only. Designed for those who do not require a certification but want to learn the skills.

The classes will meet Saturdays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and 1-4 p.m.

Students can choose either July 24 or Aug. 7.

Contact Piirainen at 775-813-1650 to schedule a session.

“Thus, what began as a consideration of the effects of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars on the U.S. population evolved into a powerful meditation on the effects of war on the individual – on each of us,” Swirczek said. “‘Always Lost’ has become a sacred space in which to contemplate the personal costs and collective sacrifice of these particular conflicts, and consequently, of all wars.”

After an overwhelming response from the community, the show, which was scheduled end Aug. 14, 2009, was extended until Sept. 3, 2009.

Not only was it well received locally, but across the country as well.

“Colleges, universities, veterans’ organizations, and others from across the country began to submit requests for ‘Always Lost’” Swirczek said..

She is working with Burns and other committee members to transform the show into a traveling exhibit, with interest from as far away as Canada and Minnesota to just up the road at the University of Nevada, Reno.

“For a small school to be able to give something to the universities across the country is humbling,” said Anne Hansen, spokeswoman for the college. “What I like about it most is it’s a teaching and learning experience. Isn’t that why we’re here?”

The Nevada Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts have awarded WNC a grant to support the project. However, the funding requires that 100 percent of the \$3,051 grant award be matched through community donations.

Volunteers are working to keep the images current and prepare the show for transport.

Donors are needed to help fund the remounting and packing of the images and literary works for shipping and display. To donate, go to www.wnc.edu/foundation or contact the WNC Foundation at 445-3240. Reference the “Always Lost” campaign.