

Southwest Minnesota State University

'Always Lost' Display in Whipple Gallery

Published Monday, November 3, 2014



Veterans Resource Coordinator Justin Guggisberg hangs photos from the "Always Lost" display

A new exhibit — “Always Lost: A Meditation on War” — will be on display in the William Whipple Gallery from Nov. 3 through Nov. 10.

The William Whipple Gallery is located in the McFarland Library on campus.

The display features photographs of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars after Sept. 11, 2001, as well as poems and prose. It precedes SMSU being named a Yellow Ribbon Corporation on Nov. 10. A ceremony marking that designation will take place in the Bellows Commons at 11 a.m.

“Always Lost” goes back to 2008, when Western Nevada College sociology professor Don Carlson saw a roster of 4,000 men and women killed in Iraq. He approached English professor Marilee Swirczek, and together they came up with the idea for “Always Lost.” The title is from an observation by American writer Gertrude Stein: “War is never fatal but always lost. Always lost.”

The heart of “Always Lost” is the Wall of the Dead — individual photos and names of the more than 6,500 U.S. military war casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001. Included in the display are 2004 Pulitzer Prize-winning Iraq War combat photos by David Leeson and Cheryl Diaz Meyer.

“Always Lost” has evolved into a powerful meditation on the effect of war on each of us, and has become a sacred space in which to contemplate the personal costs and collective sacrifice of these particular conflicts, and, consequently, of all wars.