

Historical center celebrates Mountain Post legacy

by Devin Fisher
Mountaineer staff

A 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art museum will pay homage to the accomplishments and sacrifices made by past, present and future Soldiers assigned to the Mountain Post.

Expected to open in 2013 outside Fort Carson's main gate, the \$18.7 million Mountain Post Historical Center will ensure the accomplishments and sacrifices of the Soldiers assigned here since Camp Carson stood up in 1942 are not forgotten, said Ed Soriano, Mountain Post Historical Association president.

"(The MPHCA Association) thought it was necessary to have some enduring, long-lasting legacy that would pay tribute and recognize the contributions

and sacrifices all our great men and women (who have served here) have made throughout the 67-year history of Fort Carson," Soriano said. "Over time we begin to forget about the kinds of contributions and sacrifices they made. This (historical center) will not let us forget them."

Filled with artifacts from 1942 to present day, the MPHCA will serve as an icon at Fort Carson similar to the Cadet Chapel being the symbol of the U.S. Air Force Academy on the north side of town, he said.

The MPHCA will honor every unit that has called Fort Carson home through interactive exhibits, demonstrations and displays.

"It's going to be unbelievable," Soriano said. "People will be absolutely amazed and impressed with what we are going to put in there."

The MPHCA will include artifacts from World

War II, Vietnam, Korea, Bosnia and operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, he said.

Soriano beamed with excitement as he noted the interior of the MPHCA was going to be designed by renowned exhibit designer and museum planner Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, designer of "The Price of Freedom: Americans at War" display at the Smithsonian.

He said visitors will likely experience a Vietnam-era display that's hot and humid and in contrast to a Korea exhibit that is bone-chilling cold.

"They create the environment," Soriano said. "You'll step into a time warp and find yourself in the jungles of Vietnam, the frozen part of Korea on the

See Historical center on page 3

I
N
S
I
D
E

Military



Page 7

Community



Page 11

Happenings



Page 29

News

Historical center

from page 1

Yalu River or the heat of the desert in Desert Shield/Desert Storm.”

Soriano recalled visions calling for a Mountain Post museum when he served as the commanding general, 7th Infantry Division and Fort Carson from 1999-2001, that never came to fruition due to budgetary constraints.

The MPHCA Association organized in 2004 and began the process to make a historical center a reality.

With a board of directors and board of advisers made up of about half civilians and half retired military, the association has made a lot of progress in the past several years to include hiring architectural and design firms and deciding on concepts and layouts for the facility.

Despite the hard economic times, Soriano is confident the MPHCA will succeed in its capital-raising campaign and open its doors in 2013.

“There are a lot of causes to support, but I believe this one is as good as any,” he said.

Soriano noted the MPHCA is a community effort.

“Colorado Springs is the

most supportive community I have seen in my 35 years in the Army. There is a real strong linkage between this community and the military ... I think all this does is just bring us even closer together. This community appreciates the military; there is no doubt about that.”

The MPHCA will be located outside the main gate facing Cheyenne Mountain in proximity to the visitor’s center, the Global War on Terrorism Memorial and the Kit Carson statue.

Soriano said the MPHCA will provide a service for the Soldiers and Families of Fort Carson as well as residents of the surrounding communities.

“Every Soldier ought to know the history of their unit, and this will give them that opportunity,” he said. “The MPHCA (experience) will instill a lot of pride, commitment and tradition for the Soldiers as they identify with an organization, unit and their team.”

Soriano expects the MPHCA to educate elementary through college

groups on the history of Fort Carson and the Army.

From school groups to community members, Soriano said the MPHCA can help educate “today’s generation (that) is losing sight of military history and its impact on the United States.”

A 3,200-square-foot 4th Infantry Division and Fort Carson temporary museum will be erected near the visitor’s center in late fall to begin showcasing artifacts. The first signs of the actual MPHCA are planned for fiscal 2011 when construction begins on the historical center operations and support facility. Soriano said the construction of the MPHCA will follow as the building is constructed on top of and around the operations and support facility.

“(The MPHCA) is going to be a great facility,” said Steve Ruhnke, 4th Inf. Div. and Fort Carson museum curator. “The Army doesn’t have a presence of this magnitude in this area of the country.”

For more information on the project, to include volunteer opportunities, visit the MPHCA Web site at <http://www.mountainposthistoricalcenter.org>. For information on donating artifacts to the museum, contact Ruhnke at 524-0915 or e-mail steven.ruhnke@us.army.mil.



Courtesy Mountain Post Historical Association

Artist rendering shows the future Mountain Post Historical Center.