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MISSOULA FIRE DEPARTMENT TRIBUTE TO BE DEDICATED FRIDAY

Public art piece honors the men and women who keep us safe

On Friday, May 7, at 6 p.m., the City of Missoula's newest public art piece will be unveiled and dedicated at Memorial Rose Garden Park.

Noted Seattle artist Stuart Nakamura will be on hand for the celebration of his installation, "Arc of Life: A Tribute to the Men and Women of the Missoula Fire Department, Past, Present, and Future." Speakers will also include Mayor John Engen, Assistant Fire Chief Jeff Logan, City Councilman and Public Art Committee member Dave Strohmaier and Fire Inspector Gordy Hughes.

The event will begin at 6 p.m., with the dedication and speakers at 6:30 p.m. The park is at 800 Brooks Street. The art is being installed at the southwestern corner of the park.

The tribute is a major project of the Public Art Committee, a citizen commission of the City of Missoula chaired by Joan Jonkel. The committee issued an art call for the \$40,000 project last spring. It drew 16 proposals. Committee members chose Nakamura's proposal after interviews with six finalists last July.

"We are very excited about this project that we have been working on with the Missoula Fire Department since 2007," Jonkel said. "We've enjoyed the experience of cooperating with Missoula's current firefighters to develop a project that will honor the spirit of their profession, give a sense of serenity and peace and be an expression of the community's deep appreciation."

Nakamura is a well-known artist in the area of public art who has been awarded numerous public commissions. His work often uses the element of water as a symbol of life and sustenance. In this piece, he used three art elements: a stainless steel and black granite interpretive centerpiece, a

concrete pad with a natural stone path and risers for engraved metal name plates. The installation is meant to be in keeping with the natural elements of the park.

“This is a place for healing, remembrance and praise,” Nakamura said in his proposal.

He fabricated the metal portion of the work in his Seattle studio and hired Missoula contractors to complete on-site construction.

The project is funded by the Missoula Percent for Art Ordinance. The ordinance requires that 1 percent of construction costs of City capital improvements to build or remodel public or City buildings, structures and parks be allocated for public art. The Fire Department tribute was made possible by the construction and remodeling of City fire stations.

Members of the Public Art Committee and the Missoula Fire Department wanted a project that reflects the spirit and history of the Missoula Fire Department’s 120 years. They were also interested in a tribute that honors not only those who lost their lives fighting fires but all members of the firefighting community who respond to emergencies and who commit their careers to serving Missoula.

Memorial Rose Garden Park was established in 1944 by the City of Missoula and the Missoula Rose Society to commemorate members of the armed forces killed in World War II. It is now home to memorials dedicated to service in the United States’ conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Granada, Panama and the Persian Gulf. It also includes the Missoula Law Enforcement Memorial and other memorials. The Missoula Rose Society maintains more than 2,000 rose plants in beds throughout the park.

The Memorial Rose Garden Park Master Plan, adopted in July 2009, provides the long-range vision for development and planning in the park. “Arc of Life” is the first project to be implemented under the new master plan.

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