

The William R Gaines Jr.
Veterans Memorial Park

2014 Edgewater Drive
Port Charlotte, FL 33952



Beirut PEACEKEEPERS

MEMORIAL TOWER



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Dear Friends,

In a world that never stops moving, it's crucial that we pause and reflect on the moments that have shaped us. Today, we reach out with a heartfelt request centered around such a moment – the Beirut Bombing of 1983. We are on a mission to immortalize this event through the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower, a beacon of history and resilience, taking shape in the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park in Charlotte County, Florida.

Crafted with passion and profound respect by Karl Bernhard of Sweet Sparkman Architects, the Memorial Tower is more than a structure. It's a dynamic, educational space designed to weave the story of heroism, the price of freedom, and the pursuit of peace into the fabric of our future generations. This tower is set to be an educational resource, integrating interactive features along with a comprehensive curriculum

for the K-12 system. This isn't just about remembering; it's about learning and carrying forward the torch of those who've served us with their lives.

The importance of understanding our world's complex tapestry of conflicts—and the sacrifices made within them—cannot be overstated. This memorial is a crucial step towards that understanding, serving as both a testament to bravery and a classroom for the lessons it imparts.

We are at a critical moment, and every donation brings us closer to honoring the Beirut Bombing's legacy. Contributions—be they naming opportunities, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, or heartfelt tributes—each play a crucial role in this endeavor.

This is where we invite you to become a part of this meaningful journey. Your support will not only help preserve these

vital stories of valor but also inspire peace and understanding for our future generations. We are not just building a memorial; we are crafting a legacy of peace, bravery, and education.

Thank you for considering joining us in this important venture. Your involvement means more than words can express—it's the foundation of what we hope will become a lasting tribute to peace and remembrance.

With sincere gratitude, The William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Fund Board of Directors

Stephen R. Deutsch *Thurnell Shields*
Laura Dove *Jon Warmeling*
Michael Gaines *Ken Wint*
Jeff Mosher

Board of Directors 2024-2025



Stephen R. Deutsch
Charlotte County Commissioner

Stephen R. Deutsch conceived of the idea for the Park. His vision, dedication, perseverance, and tireless efforts have led the way for the development of the Gaines Park. Stephen R.'s vast public service and veterans' advocacy career bridges community development and veterans' welfare. His diverse roles reflect a life dedicated to service, enriched by his educational background and nonprofit work.



Michael Gaines
NOK Cpl. William R. Gaines Jr.

Michael, honoring his late brother, has been pivotal to the William R. Gaines Jr. Veteran Memorial Fund since its inception in 2017. The fund's ambitious project, developing a 40-acre park in Florida, underscores his commitment. His extensive board experience, notably as the Chair of the Hillsborough Empath Hospice Board, is invaluable. A proud US Army veteran and University of South Florida alumnus, Michael's life in Tampa, FL, is rooted in family and service.



Laura Dove
Chair, Board of Trustees
James Madison Memorial
Fellowship Foundation

As the former U.S. Senate Secretary for the Majority, Laura's extensive Capitol Hill career has been integral to the Beirut Peacekeepers Tower project. Her work with the Foundation focuses on leveraging her governance expertise for future generations. Her commitment to public service and project development enriches the team's mission.



Jeff Mosher
Marine Beirut Veteran

Jeff transitioned from his military service in 1983 to a decades-long career in nonprofit leadership. Focused on family support, youth programs, and environmental conservation, his broad background is notable. With a passion for the outdoors and aviation, Jeff embodies commitment and dedication in Ohio, where he lives with his family.



Thurnell (Chip) Shields Marine Beirut Veteran

Starting his Marine Corps career at 17, Chip has a storied background as a Communications Specialist and a Beirut bombing survivor. Post-retirement from over two decades in the military, he served 28 years in Hillsborough County Fire Rescue, blending service with dedication. Living in Blairsville, Georgia, with his wife, Chip remains engaged in annual Beirut memorials.



Jon Warmeling Marine Beirut Veteran

After his Marine service, Jon's commitment to veterans' affairs led him to significant public service roles, including judicial positions and leadership in the Ohio Department of Veterans' Services. His dedication, marked by his contributions to veterans' benefit advocacy and leadership within veterans' organizations, underscores his passion. Jon's career is a testament to lifelong service.



Ken Wint NOK Captain Walter Wint

Representing a personal family connection to the Beirut tragedy, Ken's involvement underlines a commitment to honoring military sacrifices. With a career devoted to supporting youth, his contribution adds depth to the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower project. Residing in South Florida, Ken's story amplifies the memorial's message.

Educational Advisors to the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower

The Board of Directors would like to offer recognition and gratitude to, Mireille Rebeiz, Ph.D., James Breckenridge, Ph.D., and the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower Ambassadors. This project would not happen without their tireless effort, passion and dedication. Education Ambassadors are responsible for developing the Beirut Bombing curriculum that will be included as part of this memorial and with future plans to incorporate into the K-12 and higher education systems.



James G. Breckenridge, Ph.D. Former Provost for the U.S. Army War College, Beirut Veteran

As an Army Captain Dr. Jim Breckenridge served as the FASTAB commander at the time of the Beirut Bombing. He witnessed the explosion and was one of the first on the scene afterwards. Jim's work with the foundation is focused on helping to write and tell the military role and history of the Multinational Force from 1982-1984 in Beirut, Lebanon.



Mireille Rebeiz, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Dickinson College

As a citizen of both Lebanon and the United States, Dr. Mireille Rebeiz has a deep understanding of the importance of the Beirut Peacekeepers impact on history. Mireille grew up in Beirut in the 1980's and heard stories of the Marines' role in preserving peace for the people of Lebanon. Her research and desire to share the history of the Multinational Forces impact from 1982-1984 led her to becoming an integral part of developing the educational material for the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower.

The Moment

On the morning of October 23, 1983, the lives of many were forever changed when two truck bombs exploded in Beirut, Lebanon. These attacks targeted buildings housing members of the Multinational Force, a peacekeeping operation during the Lebanese Civil War, specifically American and French service members.

The devastating blasts resulted in the deaths of 241 U.S. military personnel, 58 French paratroopers, and six civilians.¹ This tragic day marked the most significant loss for the United States Marine Corps since World War II's Battle of Iwo Jima.

The first explosion ripped through the barracks of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, claiming 241 American lives - including 220 Marines, 18 Navy sailors,



in History

and 3 Army soldiers. Moments later, a second bomb targeted the Drakkar building home to the French military contingent, killing 58, including 55 from the 1st Parachute Chasseur Regiment and three from the 9th Parachute Chasseur Regiment.

This incident stands as the most substantial single-day loss for the French military since the Algerian War ended.

In the aftermath, survivors embarked on a heart-wrenching search through the rubble for their comrades. The impact of this event has had a profound and lasting effect on Marine leadership, leading to significant changes in security measures and the approach to troop deployment.



Scan to
learn more



The Inspiration &



In October of 1983, amidst the backdrop of a turbulent Lebanon, 14-year-old Michael Gaines lost his older brother, William "Bill" R. Gaines Jr., to the devastating Beirut barracks bombing. As with many others impacted by these event, this marked the beginning of Michael's lifelong commitment to honoring the legacy of military veterans and first responders. Motivated by his brother's ultimate sacrifice, Michael enlisted in the military at 17, and years later, helped initiate the development of a memorial park in Charlotte County, Florida. On February 23, 2019, the Charlotte County Commissioners and Administration officially dedicated the formerly known "Sunrise Park" to become the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park. This space has become more than just a place of remembrance; it is a vibrant community place of gathering, that commemorates the fallen while celebrating life.

The Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower, standing at 45 feet, emerges as a beacon

The Design

The Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower is a tribute, standing 45 feet tall in the heart of the park. This three-story structure houses interactive displays that narrate the peacekeepers' involvement in Beirut, from 1982 to 1984, offering visitors a comprehensive timeline of significant events. Designed with a focus on honoring the sacrifices of veterans, first responders, and specifically those lost in the 1983 Beirut bombing, the tower symbolizes a "view of freedom."

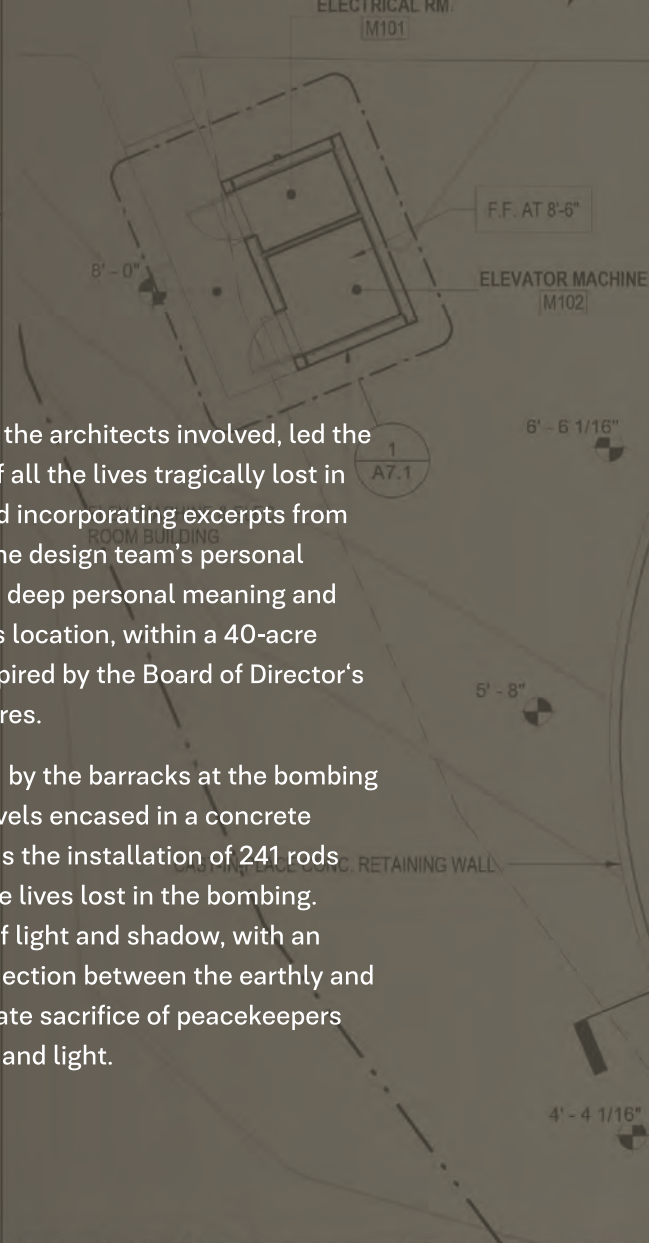
At its peak, visitors can appreciate expansive views of the surrounding park, community, and Charlotte Harbor, serving as a poignant reminder of the freedoms protected by the fallen.

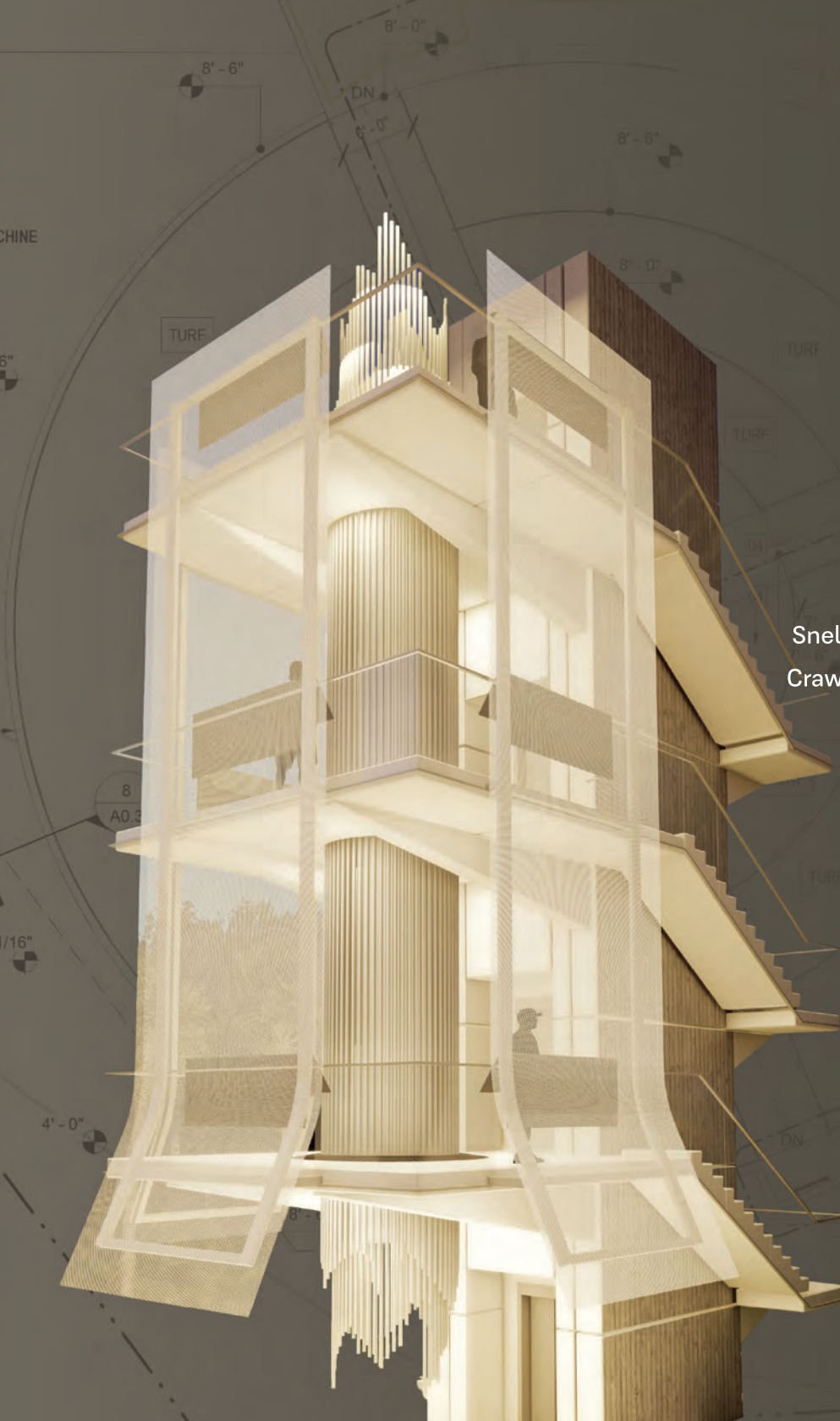
The design, conceived by Sweet Sparkman Architecture and Interiors, had to meet three primary challenges to be considered successful:

- Properly commemorate veterans and first responders, particularly those lost in Beirut.
- Enhance the visitor experience at the former Sunrise Park.
- Blend aesthetically into the park while memorializing the military's sacrifices in Beirut thoughtfully.

The Board of Directors alongside the architects involved, led the project with respect and honor of all the lives tragically lost in the Beirut bombing. This included incorporating excerpts from Bill Gaines letters to home and the design team's personal stories to infuse this project with deep personal meaning and historical awareness. The tower's location, within a 40-acre Veterans Memorial Park, was inspired by the Board of Director's vision and the site's unique features.

The structural design, influenced by the barracks at the bombing site, comprises three elevated levels encased in a concrete exoskeleton. A standout feature is the installation of 241 rods, representing the lives lost in the bombing. This installation casts patterns of light and shadow, with an oculus above symbolizing a connection between the earthly and the divine, highlighting the ultimate sacrifice of peacekeepers through an interplay of darkness and light.





Location:

William R Gaines Jr.
Veteran's Memorial Park,
Charlotte County, Florida

Architect:

Karl Bernhard,
AIA, NCARB
*Sweet Sparkman
Architecture and Interiors*

Builder:

Willis Smith Construction

Engineering:

Snell Engineering Consultants
Crawford Williams Engineering
Herston Engineering

Project Size:

Three Stories, 45 ft.
approx. 6,800 sq. ft.

SWEETSPARKMAN
ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS

The Designer

With a focus on community projects and high-end residential work, Sweet Sparkman contributes extensive architectural expertise to the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower. Their commitment to design excellence aims to honor the sacrifices through their architectural vision. For more about their projects, visit sweetsparkman.com.

WILLIS SMITH
CONSTRUCTION

The Builder

Willis A. Smith Construction, Inc., a privately-owned construction management company located in Sarasota, Florida, specializes in professional commercial building services. Since its establishment in 1972, the firm has delivered high-quality construction solutions across Southwest Florida. Achieved through a tailored and comprehensive service approach which addresses the unique requirements of each project as demonstrated with the Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower.

The Projects

The Park

The Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial Tower, set within the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park, underscores the value we place on freedom—a principle profoundly respected in the American ethos. This landmark not only serves as a tribute to those who have laid down their lives for liberty but also educates visitors on the significant role of peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon. By threading through the park and ascending the tower, individuals can immerse themselves in the historical narrative of international peacekeeping efforts, paying respects to the brave souls who endeavored to maintain peace.

The park spans 40 acres, offering a serene peninsula that juts into Charlotte Harbor, and commemorates the sacrifice of veterans and first responders from diverse backgrounds and eras, including those lost in Beirut on October 23, 1983. The summit of the tower presents a breathtaking view, symbolizing the cherished freedoms we have today, and inspires visitors to contemplate how they can contribute to their communities.

Key Features of the Park Include:

- A play area with a military theme beside a pavilion suitable for family gatherings.
- A Splash Pad under development, dedicated to First Responders.
- New ADA-compliant kayak launch for water access, with beautiful views of the bay.
- The notable Liberty Tree, marked by a commemorative freedom stone.
- Memorials honoring Gold Star Families and the sacrifices of fallen soldiers.
- Tributes to the bravery of first responders and the service of all military branches.
- Trails for nature walks and exercise, complete with Health Stations.
- Installment of a flag pole retrieved from Beirut.



The "Classrooms"

Integrating the Lessons of Beirut into Schools:

The foundation's board is in the process of collaborating with local educators to integrate a curriculum on Contemporary American History into K-12 education. This curriculum encompasses the story of the 1983 Beirut bombing and its context within the broader challenges of 21st-century terrorism. With the construction of the Memorial Tower providing a tangible link to these lessons, students will have the opportunity to engage firsthand with survivors' stories and participate in interactive sessions right at the Memorial site.

Plans are underway to introduce virtual reality-based lessons broadening the educational impact to school districts nationwide, enriching students' understanding of historical events and their relevance today.

For information on how you can help support this curriculum being included in classrooms, please contact us.

The Goal

Total Project Cost: \$5.0M

Match Opportunity: \$2.0M

Total Fundraising Goal: \$3.0M

Phase 1 construction has begun.

Phase 2 expected to start with your support.

After several construction setbacks including COVID-19 delays and the destruction of Hurricane Ian, we are pleased to announce Phase 1 is underway.

Your Contribution

Every Donation Makes a Difference:

The Beirut Peacekeepers Memorial stands as a symbol of honor and remembrance for those who've given everything for our freedom. This project showcases the strength of the American spirit, brought to life through a unique partnership between the public sector and private citizens.

With the help of a \$2 million matching grant approved by the state legislature and Governor DeSantis, we've made a great start. But to bring this vision fully to life, we need your support. Whether big or small, your donation counts. By joining forces, we can meet our \$3 million fundraising goal and complete a memorial that will educate and inspire for years to come.

The Board of Directors would like to recognize and extend gratitude toward each of the Charlotte County Commissioners and Charlotte County Government Administration for their continued support. This project was made possible in large part from their many ways of contributing.





Ways to Contribute:

Direct Financial Support:

Give a one-time or recurring donation of any size to help us reach our goal. Contributions can be made by check, credit card, or direct bank transfer for your convenience.

Legacy Contributions:

Include the memorial in your will or life insurance policy to ensure your support lives on, leaving a lasting legacy of respect.

Corporate Sponsorships:

Businesses can accelerate the project's completion and show commitment to honoring heroes through sponsorship opportunities.

Memorial Tributes:

Pay tribute to a loved one's memory or service by donating in their name, a meaningful way to honor their impact on our lives and freedom. (See all naming opportunities on the following pages.)

The William R Gaines Jr. Veteran's Memorial Fund is a registered 501(c)(3) which is able to accept all forms of donations including but not limited to: Cash, Checks, Credit Cards, Stocks and Bonds, Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRT), Charitable Gift Annuities (CGA), IRAs/401(k) and other assets. Your contribution qualifies for tax advantages under federal law.

For more information:
tower@wrgainesjr.org
941.218.0654

Naming Opportunities

Every space and feature within the memorial offers a unique chance to leave a lasting mark in honor of those who've bravely served for our freedom. With your support, the memorial will not only be a testament to courage and sacrifice but also a serene haven for reflection and education.

Your donation isn't just a name on a plaque; it's a profound gesture of remembrance, teaching future generations the values of bravery,

sacrifice, and unity. It's about creating a space that tells stories of heroism and dedication in every corner, from tranquil trails to reflective benches.

Naming a part of the memorial is more than a donation; it's a lasting tribute to someone special or a testament to your family and/or organization's commitment to honoring heroes. This opportunity allows you to help create a legacy of remembrance and respect that will inspire generations of visitors.

For further details on how to leave your mark, including donor recognition, placement, forms of payment and/or additional specifications to make your contribution, please contact us at tower@wrgainesjr.org or 941.218.0654.

Join us in crafting a tribute that endures, honoring those who have safeguarded our freedom with their unyielding courage.



The Barrier: \$1M

01
Unit
Available

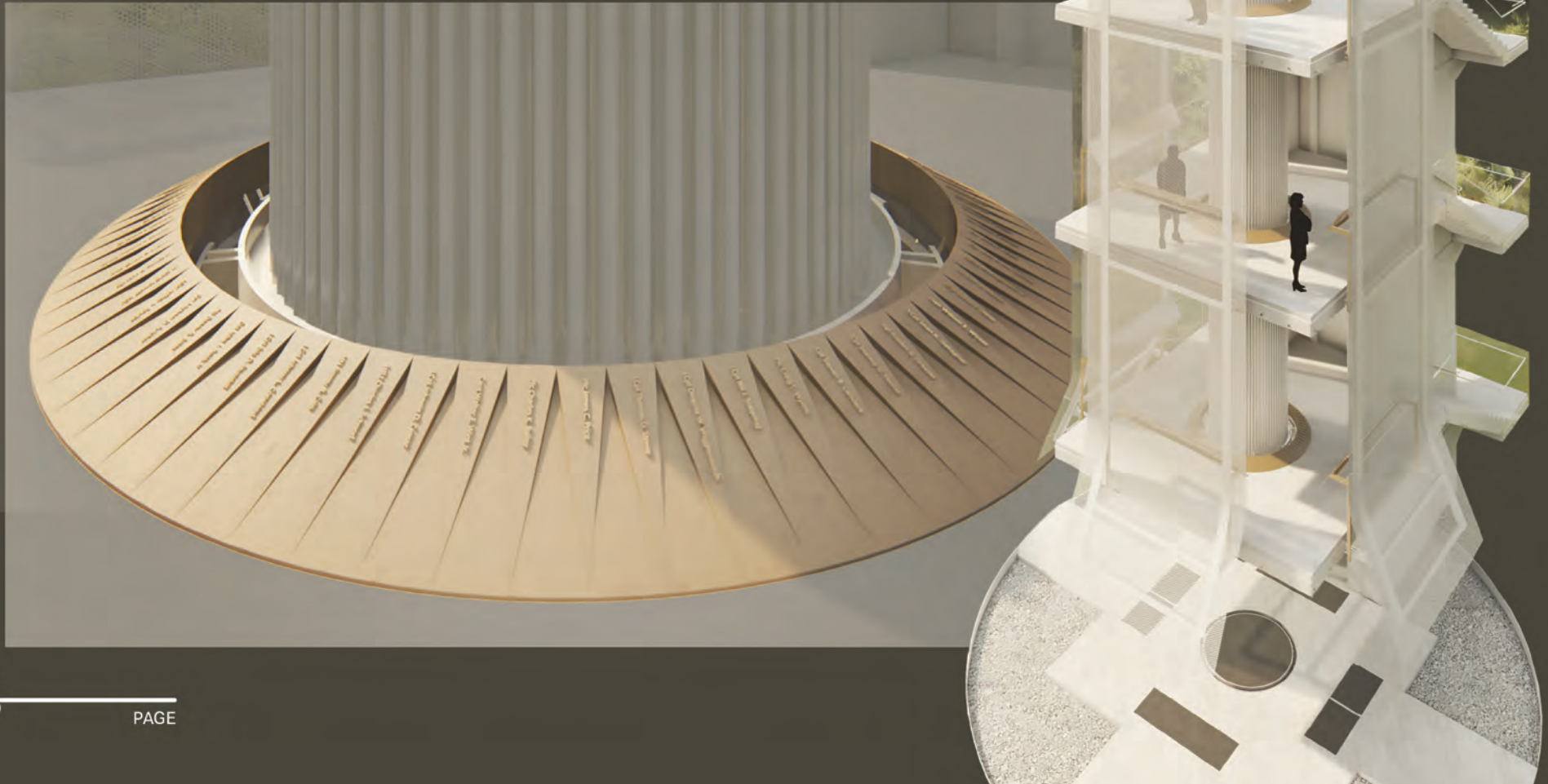
Seize the esteemed chance to name the central monument structure. This towering beacon, inspired by historical barracks and posts, stands as a symbol of resilience and remembrance. Your name here will symbolize a dedication to peace and the valor of those who served.



Cast Bronze Rings: \$150,000

03
Units
Available

Encircling the core tower, these rings will bear the names of the fallen, arranged randomly as a poignant reflection of the search through the wreckage. The names of each service member who served and perished in Beirut from 1982-1984 will be commemorated at the Tower. Tribute will also be paid to the service members and fallen of the multi-national forces.



Timeline Display Panels: \$75,000

09
Units
Available

At the raised platforms, integrated with the veil elements, three display panels will present a timeline of events with descriptions and photographs. Meticulous research and interviews were conducted to provide an accurate portrayal of the events. Your backing will ensure the memorialization of this crucial piece of history to be passed on to present and future generations.



The Procession: \$35,000

03
Units
Available

Name one of the introspective paths leading to the heart of the memorial. These paths, crafted for contemplation and solitude, guide visitors to the core message of the memorial – the enduring legacy of peace.



Flagpoles: \$25,000

07
Units
Available

The chance to name one of the seven flagpoles on the plaza is a heartfelt way for donors to contribute to the commemoration of peacekeepers. The American flagpole, the tallest, will stand first, followed by the Army and Navy flags. Subsequently, the pole from Beirut with the Marine flag will be spaced out slightly with an area for a plaque. Another space will follow, then the Coast Guard, Air Force, and Space Force flags.



Legacy Rods: \$2,410

241
Units
Available

Symbolizing their spirit, 241 polished rods are suspended from the monument center, embodying the fallen and their sacrifice as "Rays of Light." These polished rods suspended from the monument center represent each fallen Peacekeeper. At the tower base, six stones bear the names of Marines killed before the bombing.



Park Benches: \$2,500

06
Units
Available

Establishing lasting tributes in public places for honor and remembrance, the six benches surrounding the memorial offer a serene spot for reflection.



Brick Pavers: \$250-\$750

375
Units
Available

Brick Size:
12x4 in.

Level A: \$250 (Name Only)

- 1 line of text (20 spaces/characters)

Level B: \$500 (Additional Text)

- 2-3 lines of text (20 spaces/characters per line)

Level C: \$750 (Text with Artwork)

- 1-3 lines of text (20 spaces/characters per line)
- 1 or 2 pieces of artwork (left & right side, with text in the middle)
- Donor will receive a REPLICA 4x4 in. Keepsake Tile/Coaster



Other Naming Opportunities:

Memorial Plaques:

Personalized plaques within the memorial grounds, a timeless tribute to loved ones or organizations devoted to freedom and service.

Benches and Seating Areas:

Providing a place for reflection while honoring or memorializing individuals or groups.

Gardens and Landscaped Areas:

Sponsoring a beautifully landscaped area or garden, creating tranquil spaces for contemplation and remembrance.

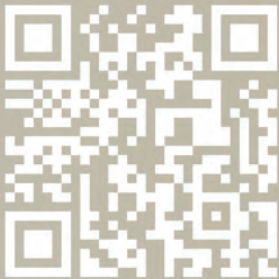
Walkways and Paths:

Dedicating a walkway or path within the memorial park, where each visitor step can serve as a reminder of the contributions and sacrifices honored by your donation.

Educational Displays and Exhibits:

Sponsoring interactive displays and exhibits in the tower or park, offering vital historical context and stories of service and sacrifice.

A Tower with a View of **FREEDOM**



**Scan to
learn more
about this
project**

The William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Fund Inc. is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. The tax identification is 81-5393249.

I believe in our mission here,
I believe we belong here; this is a matter
of principle, not politics or money or
even lives. It's the principle of freedom,
of peace for the majority.

—William R. Gaines Jr.

FOR MORE INFORMATION & UPDATES:

beirutpeacekeepers.org

3280-36 TAMiami TRAIL, UNIT 121
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33952

TOWER@WRGAINESJR.ORG

941.218.0654