

VETERANS REMEMBER LOST ALUMNI



BILL WECHTER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

From left, San Dieguito High School Veterans members Jim Wheyland, Sam Hernandez, Alessio Ramirez and David Gonzales, who are working to install a war memorial near the entrance to San Dieguito Academy. Below are photos of three San Dieguito Academy students who will be memorialized in the school's project.

San Dieguito memorial project gains momentum

■ Group has identified at least 17 students killed in America's wars

ADAM KAYE
STAFF WRITER

ENCINITAS — Sometimes the magnitude of the project brings a tear to his eye.

David Gonzales, 61, understands the bittersweetness of nostalgia. Sometimes it keeps him up late.

Gonzales is chairman and chief executive officer of San Dieguito High School Veterans, a group that has identified at least 17 students who were killed in America's wars since the school opened in 1936.

In February, the group's plans for a war memorial on the Santa Fe Drive campus will come before the school board.

A wall of black granite and matching bench would bear names, insignias and the words: "All gave some, some gave all."

Gonzales hopes the school board finds the design as pleasing as he does.

"This has basically consumed my life," said Gonzales, a Solana Beach resident and

property clerk at Cal State San Marcos library. "I'm married to this project."

The school now known as San Dieguito Academy was his alma mater. He graduated in 1959, the same year as some of his six schoolmates who were killed in the Vietnam War.

The memorial project got a lukewarm response from school district officials when Gonzales first proposed it in 2001.

But Gonzales persisted, and today the concept of a Vietnam War memorial has expanded to include the names of students who died or remain missing in wars from World War II to the present.

Gonzales has ushered the project through meetings with school officials. His cohorts, Sam Hernandez, Charley Gibbs, Alessio Ramirez and Jim Wheyland, have backed him up.

Remembering the men

Researching the lives and deaths of San Dieguito's veterans has steered Gonzales from the Internet's virtual labyrinth to far-flung halls of records. Phone calls with friends and relatives have resurrected memories of fallen friends — friends who died on the



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