

Town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island



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For Immediate Release  
July 30, 2025

**PRESS RELEASE**

**North Kingstown's Veterans Memorial Park Transformation Complete**

**North Kingstown, RI** — The Town of North Kingstown's Veterans Memorial Park, centrally located across Boston Neck Road from the historic Town Hall, has benefitted from the camaraderie and hard work of many residents, municipal staff members, and community-based organizations, coupled with generosity from several local benefactors upon approval and acceptance from Town Council with support from the Town Manager.

What was once a well-intentioned but overlooked small public space dedicated as Veterans Memorial Park in November of 2007, has transformed into a beautiful permanent tribute to late local service members from many generations. The overhaul began in late summer 2024, with significant land clearing and beautification projects undertaken by members of the Department of Public Works, including Joseph Paquet Brian Boettger, and Alex Tutsch. Clearing overgrown shrubs, weeds and the planting of new grass allowed them then to unearth an existing brick pathway bordering the park's Boston Neck Road frontage. Soon thereafter, in September 2024, WWII veteran and centenarian George Silva generously donated a 20' nautical flagpole for display of an American flag flanked by a POW/MIA flag and a Rhode Island state flag, quickly installed by DPW members in time for the annual Veterans Day parade.

Spearheading the shared vision of the park's renovation was retired U.S. Navy commander Randy Wietman, current Historic Wickford (HistWick) Association President, who worked alongside Town Council members including fellow veterans Matthew McCoy, and Commander David Ainslie, of VFW Post-152. Together, they enabled the relocation of the Never Forget Memorial Garden and marker from Wickford Village's Updike Park to a prominent location within the park. The Never Forget Memorial Garden is a noted tribute to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, intended "for those that have no other place to mourn and remember loved ones that served and sacrifice for freedom and liberty." It is now maintained by the park's steward, Veterans of Foreign Wars North Kingstown Post-152.

In the fall of 2024, while celebrating the Town of North Kingstown's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the institution of our Legacy Tree Program, an American Linden was planted by members of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary committee, Mike Donohue and Randy Wietman, within Veterans Memorial Park. The tree was selected on a recommendation from Peter Morgan, North Kingstown Tree Warden, and planted by Brynn McNamee of the Department of Public Works, will grow quickly

to provide additional shade and fragrant flowers, attracting songbirds, blue jays, and a host of other natural pollinators.

Gardens were replanted at the park in spring of 2025, in a collaboration between HistWick, the VFW/NK Post-152, and Plum Beach Garden Club, with patriotic-themed annuals and perennials that are maintained and cared for throughout the year. Significant contributors to the garden's transformations in time for Memorial Day 2025, were Peter Morgan, and his spouse, Carol, who cared for the plants and trees until they became more established.

A final addition to the Park's refurbishment was the addition of a Wickford Walk sign educating visitors of Wickford Depot, once a stop for the Sea View Trolley and the Newport & Wickford Railroad and Steamship Line, both ceasing operations through the park by the 1940s. The sign, commissioned by HistWick, features beautifully detailed art by Guy Cassady and informs readers of the only tangible reminder of Wickford Depot that remains is the "everyman" Civil War soldier monument. It had been installed in 1912, in front of the Depot, but was moved in 1929, to the front lawn of the North Kingstown Town Hall – across the street - where it remains today.

A large, previously dedicated memorial is in place for those who gave their lives in the service of their country in past conflicts and wars, honoring 38 local servicemembers during World War II, eight during the Korean War, and 17 during the Vietnam War. Individual memorial markers are also in place for the late CPT Matthew J. August, US Army, who perished during his service to the country in Operation Iraqi Freedom on January 27, 2004, and the late LT Matthew S. Coutu, US Army, who made the ultimate sacrifice in Operation Iraqi Freedom on June 27, 2005.

A beautiful spot to rest, give thanks for service, and reflect, North Kingstown's Veterans Memorial Park now includes pathways linking memorial markers with well-maintained gardens and a bench, very recently donated by NK VFW Post-152. It is accompanied by the Wickford Walk signboard recognizing the historic purposes of the park's land. The last piece of the park's impressive transformation will be the addition of a crosswalk to safely allow pedestrians access from Town Hall; the request for this was approved by RI Department of Transportation earlier this year and will be completed according to RIDOT's project priorities in our immediate area.

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*For questions, please contact Kate Glass, Director of Communications & Executive Assistant/Office of the Town Manager: [kglass@northkingstownri.gov](mailto:kglass@northkingstownri.gov) or (401) 268-1501.*