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News / Ottawa

Inaugural canoe kayak challenge to pay tribute to slain military sentry

The memory of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo, the sentry who was fatally shot at the National War Memorial, will be honoured during a canoe and kayak memorial challenge.

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FILE PHOTO

The memory of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo, the sentry who was fatally shot at the National War Memorial in downtown Ottawa on Oct. 22, 2014, will be honoured during an upcoming canoe and kayak memorial challenge and fundraiser at the Rideau Canoe Club on Oct. 1.

By: Erin McCracken Metroland Media Published on Sun Sep 25 2016

The memory of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo, the soldier who was fatally shot at the National War Memorial in downtown Ottawa, will be honoured at an inaugural canoe and kayak challenge featuring his name.

It's been almost two years since that Oct. 22, 2014 tragedy shook the foundations of Ottawa and beyond, and organizers are hoping the inaugural Cpl. Nathan Cirillo Memorial Cup Canoe & Kayak Challenge, featuring an afternoon of canoe and kayak races for teams and individuals, will entice the community to come together.

"It was a major tragedy and I think it hit everybody from east to west (and) the States," said Barbara Boucher, director of the Canine Citadel Society's Ottawa-based Boots 4 Pups chapter, which is organizing the event with Canoe Kayak Canada.

"I think it hit everybody that this could happen to somebody who was ... standing guard."

The Oct. 1 event will be a tribute, but also serve as an opportunity for more people, especially youth, to get out and enjoy an active lifestyle. It will also help generate much-needed funds to support military veterans and first responders living with

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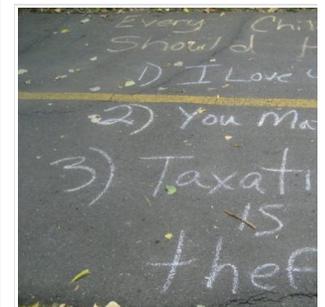


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post-traumatic stress disorder.

Event proceeds will go towards the training of service dogs for sufferers of PTSD and occupational stress injuries, which is what the Citadel Canine Society of Canada and Boots 4 Pups specialize in.

Already the Ottawa branch has paired one trained dog, a second dog is currently undergoing training, and the organization recently received another application for a trained dog.

The demand for such a service here is significant, said Boucher, but the cost is high. The price tag to train a dog is between \$3,500 and \$5,000.

"Whatever we raise from now to December will help us target a third dog," said Boucher, a Gloucester resident.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

A moment of silence will be held following the inaugural challenge to honour Cirillo's memory and sacrifice. The Memorial Cup that will be awarded following the challenge will also feature his name.

Boucher said she was touched and inspired when she learned Cirillo's family approved the Citadel Canine Society's application to use the reservist soldier's name for charitable events out of some 400 other applicants.

"Nathan loved rescue dogs, he was always rescuing dogs," Boucher said. "And he had two beautiful dogs."

It was this connection that cemented her own desire to volunteer with Boots 4 Pups about a year-and-a-half ago.

She and her team of volunteers are now in the final homestretch before the paddlers take to the waters of the Rideau River off the shores of Mooney's Bay Park. But the hard work continues, collaborating with supporters and making important community contacts.

Well-known Hunt Club Park painter Katerina Mertikas has donated a print of her Nathan Cirillo painting, "Honouring My Father," as well as a copy of the *We Stand on Guard* children's book she illustrated.

Silent auction bids will be accepted for the package during the afternoon races.

Another Ottawa artist, Anne Jarbough, plans to create dog and paws paintings and will contribute 50 per cent of the sales of her artwork during the canoe and kayak challenge to Boots 4 Pups.

Once participants finish their four-kilometre loop along the river route, organizers will begin eyeing next year. The goal is to grow the Memorial Cup Challenge in the future.

"Next year we'll make it bigger and better," Boucher said.

EVENT DETAILS

The Memorial Cup Challenge is open to everyone.

For details or to register, go to boots4pups.ca, or rideaucanoclub.ca.

Registration is \$20 and people can sign up to participate the day of the event on Oct. 1, beginning at 1 p.m. The challenge gets underway at 2 p.m.

The Rideau Canoe Club is located at 804 Hog's Back Rd.

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