

# Park honoring Grand Island war hero Charles DeGlopper due for \$750,000 upgrade

By [Jonathan D. Epstein](#) | News Business Reporter

on May 30, 2016 - 4:55 PM, , updated May 30, 2016 at 6:36 PM

In a fitting Memorial Day tribute, a small Grand Island park dedicated to a World War II hero will be more than doubled in size and broadened in scope to pay homage to a range of other service members who called the suburb their home.

VFW Memorial Post 9249 and the American Legion on Monday unveiled a \$750,000 expansion of the Charles N. DeGlopper Memorial Park that will feature an additional statue, benches, plaques and pavers. The new items will join a single memorial plaque and flagpole, along with some memorial trees, that currently fill the park at the intersection of Grand Island Boulevard and Baseline Road.

A star also will be inlaid in the ground as a tribute to all five military branches, and personalized memorial pavers lining walkways will be available for purchase and sponsorship by individuals and families. Officials also want to put up a wall with the names of military veterans and current service members from Grand Island.

“We’re going to make it larger to acknowledge all the Grand Island natives that have served our country, past, present and future,” said Kaitlin Brunner, spokeswoman for the park and the expansion committee. “We’re going to take it up quite a notch. Individuals can come and pay respects.”

The small park opened in 1962, on land owned by the American Legion.

After acquiring additional adjacent land where a former gas station was torn down, plans call for breaking ground for the expansion in the next couple of weeks and opening next summer, “as long as the fundraising goes well,” Brunner said. The enlarged park would total more than 50,000 square feet, or a little more than an acre, on a triangular site.

The expansion committee and town officials announced details of the project during the town’s Memorial Day Service on Monday morning. The expansion will be privately funded and all donations will go through the VFW, so they are tax-deductible.

DeGlopper served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and is the only Grand Island resident to have ever received the Medal of Honor – the highest award given by the military. He was killed in action June 9, 1944, during the Battle of Normandy, just three days after Allied forces landed on the beaches to begin the invasion of the Nazis’ “Fortress Europe.”

DeGlopper and a group of fellow soldiers got separated from the rest of their battalion, and found themselves under attack by the Germans, Brunner said. Rather than hide, he went into the open and fought the Germans alone, continuing to shoot until the rest of his group could safely rejoin the others. He died in the battle.

He was the only soldier from the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment to receive the Medal of Honor, and the only World War II soldier from the 82nd Airborne Division to receive the honor for action in Normandy. The VFW post, a transport ship, a road at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and most recently the Fort Bragg Air Assault School have all been named for DeGlopper.

“He sacrificed his life to save the rest of his battalion,” Brunner said. “Because of his heroic actions, they were able to continue.”