

April 24, 2006

Section: News

Page: 1B

Workers killed on job to be honored

Liz Anderson

Staff

The Journal News

Union group wants Kensico Dam Plaza as site for memorial

Liz Anderson

The Journal News

CORRECTION: An list of area workers who died on the job last year misspelled the first name of Fernando Morais, who was killed in a Bronx construction accident last year, on page 7B April 24. The list also gave the wrong age for Morais, who was 36

Local leaders who are to gather Wednesday in Valhalla to memorialize workers killed on the job are hoping that, a year from now, they'll have an actual monument there to gather around.

The Westchester-Putnam Central Labor Body, AFL-CIO, is proposing to construct a Workers Memorial at Kensico Dam Plaza, across the park from where the county's Sept. 11 memorial is taking shape.

The monument is intended to honor both current workers and those who have died on the job - at union or nonunion work sites, said Paul Ryan, head of the regional division of the AFL-CIO.

A preliminary design for the monument, from Putnam County artist Anthony Padovano, shows a circular base with three ascending tiers, measuring 30 feet across in total. In the center is a 10-foot-high white marble pedestal featuring a crouching figure whose back is bowed by a piece of an I-beam.

"What we were looking for was something that would represent all of labor, from teachers to utility workers to firefighters. ... We really needed to find something that would represent labor and labor's struggle," said Karen Magee, chairwoman of the union group's Community Services Committee, which solicited design ideas. Committee members wanted something that was unisex, and "generic enough, simple enough, but profound in its look," she said.

The figure is "holding the weight of the world on his back, I guess," Ryan said.

The base may change as the union works with the Westchester County on a final design, Magee said, particularly if the county feels it might be too tempting to skateboarders.

The Kensico Plaza site is a fitting one, and not just because it is centrally located, free and open to the public year-round, Ryan said. As County Executive Andrew Spano noted at last year's memorial ceremony, it is also a site where many workers died during the mammoth dam's construction.

The union has raised about \$15,000 toward an estimated cost of \$60,000 to \$70,000 to complete the project, said Magee, who also serves as president of the Harrison Association of Teachers. The union expects to cover the cost itself, and is asking the county only to

donate space, she said.

Spano has publicly endorsed the project, Magee said, and county legislators have agreed "in concept" to the idea.

"It's starting to come together," she said.

Peter Tartaglia, a spokesman for the county Parks Department, said county officials had seen the preliminary design, but a final proposal would still have to be submitted and reviewed by the Parks Department and the county Planning Board.

Nationally, an average of 15 workers were killed each day on the job in 2005, and 16,923 were injured, according to figures from the AFL-CIO, which uses the annual event to promote worker safety.

Reach Liz Anderson at ecanders@lohud.com or 914-696-8538.

10 killed in past year

Ten local workers who died in the past year will be honored on Workers Memorial Day:

- Wilson Acevedo, 41, fell 12 stories from a roof in Yonkers in February.
- David Bucnis, 41, crushed to death while unloading a load of pipes in White Plains in June.
- Thore Christensen, 59, caught in a trench collapse in New Rochelle in April 2005.
- Hernando Morais, 35, died while installing steel at a project in the Bronx; worked for a Yonkers company, April 2005.
- Jose Mori, 59, crushed by the bucket of a front-end loader in June.
- Charles Murray, 29, a Hastings-on-Hudson Department of Public Works employee, electrocuted while working on a streetlight in August.
- Victor Oliveria, 43, struck by a car while collecting garbage for the New Rochelle Sanitation Department in November.
- Sander Prenga, 36, struck by a falling concrete form at a construction site in New Rochelle in March 2005.
- Jerome Palumbo, 47, died of a heart attack after being struck by a truck that tipped over in the Bronx, while he was working for a Mount Vernon company, in April 2005.
- **John Paul Rodrigues**, 24, fell off a moving garbage truck in Ossining in July.