

A Six-Year Journey, True Community Effort

By Mary Chavoustie

Sculptor Craig Campobella is passionate about The Lone Star Monument and Historical Flag Park, not only for the 13 flags that will unfurl on April 21, or even for the bronze monument and bust he so painstakingly created. The award-winning sculptor and park visionary is passionate about the people of Montgomery County who joined together as a community, giving from their hearts and pocketbooks, to create a lasting tribute to the great state of Texas.

"Imagine this," begins Campobella. "You have uprooted your family to go into a new land and make a better life. You work your tail off, making your farm or homestead, and then one day, someone in a government building, a thousand miles away, wants to take everything away from you. The men you know – husbands, fathers, sons and brothers – volunteer to fight, but are outmatched and outnumbered. Finally, you're victorious; you win a decisive battle at San Jacinto that gives back your rights and produces a territory that would forever be known as Texas."

"I wanted to be able to shake the hands of those proud and heroic men," he said. "I wanted to find a way to say, 'Thank you!'"

For the artist, The Lone Star Monument and Historical Flag Park, recognizes the bold sacrifices and heroic actions of the men and women of the Texas Revolution. Thirteen important battle and rally flags will fly atop 35-foot flagpoles in what is

"more like an outdoor museum than a park." Visitors will stand face-to-face with a rugged figure called "The Texian," a 14-foot bronze sculpture carrying a bronzed red, white and blue Lone Star Flag.

Conroe businessman Russell Miller put his money into the project in 2007. "I was at a meeting of The Friends of Conroe and Mr. Campobella was the guest speaker," he recalls. "He talked about a salute to Montgomery County and Texas in the form of a historical and educational park."

Miller was so convinced he paid for the bronze casting. "The subcontractors I talked to all felt the same way, everyone discounted as far as they could to make sure it could happen," says Miller.

Jay Ross Martin offered a building, free of charge, to the sculptor for a year so he could work on the bronze pieces.

Charlie Irvine of Signs, Etc. felt a tug at his heart, too. "I was hooked. I can already see the positive impact on the community and it hasn't even opened yet."

City of Conroe administrator Paul Virgadamo, as well as numerous other City Council Members, have been fair and enthusiastic leaders for the city, with a willingness to make the park a reality.

"If we make a list of all the help that has poured in for this project," says Campobella, "it would be close to a hundred people and businesses. I know for a fact that over \$300,000 of in kind services, donations of time and effort,



Dr. Charles B. Stewart in clay before heading to the foundry.

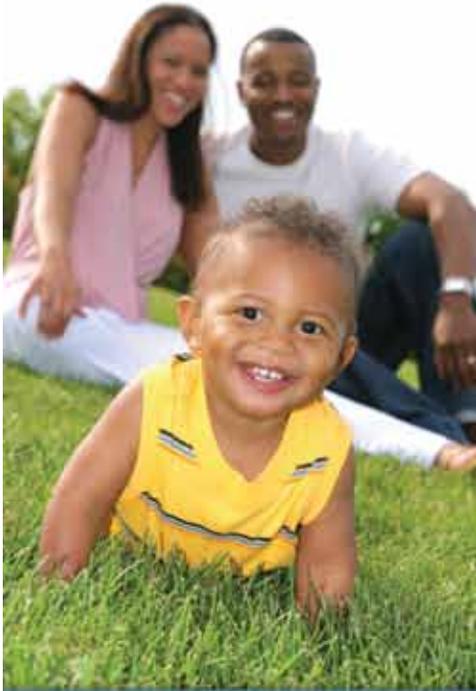


The Texian in clay before heading to the foundry.



Continued on page 42 ↔

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legal expertise and more have paved the way for all this to happen. Quite frankly, I have never seen anything like it."

The Lone Star Monument and Historical Flag Park dedication and unveiling ceremonies will begin at 5:30 p.m. on April 21. Guests include country music icons Clint Black and Marty Stuart with a free concert by Gary P. Nunn following the unveiling.

"Bring your folding chairs," says Campobella. "It will be a Texas night like none other."

The Lone Star Monument and Historical Flag Park is located next to the Montgomery County Library on I-45N, south of State Highway 105. Learn more at www.texasflagpark.org. ♦



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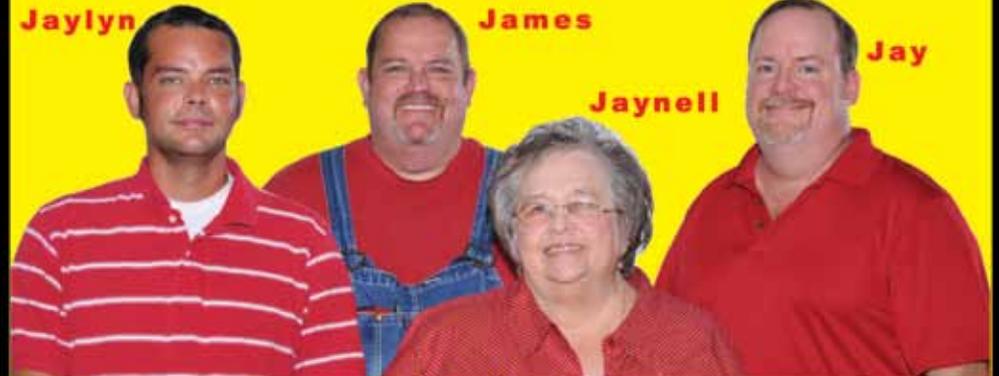
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