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## Communities remember fallen first responders

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Efforts to create or improve memorials to Michigan's emergency first responders are under way as survivors plan services to mark the eighth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

At a candlelight vigil in Pontiac on Friday, those honoring Michigan first responders who have died on duty will see \$150,000 of new lighting, landscaping and paver walks at the 7-year-old Fallen Heroes monument located beside Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard's office. The memorial honors police, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and others who respond to 911 calls.

"Every year or so, we try to make major improvements," said Mandy Andrews, a spokeswoman for Bouchard, who led fund-raising for the memorial.

Four new names will be on the monument's wall this year, including three from metro Detroit: Detroit firefighter Walt Harris, killed at a fire in Detroit in 2008; Oak Park Police Officer Mason Samborski, shot to death on duty last year, and FBI Special Agent Paul Sorce, who died in March after an on-duty car accident. With their addition, the count will total 780 Michiganders who died as long ago as 1864, Andrews said.

In Macomb County, firefighters say they've raised the \$60,000 needed to build a memorial to the county's first responders who've died on duty. They lost a spot long reserved at Freedom Hill County Park in Sterling Heights when the park became mired in litigation, then closed in 2008 because of county budget cuts.

Today, those firefighters plan to propose a new location for the monument. Organizers now hope to "put it in front of the Macomb County courthouse" in Mt. Clemens, said Roseville firefighter Bob Woonton, who said he'll meet with Macomb County Commission Chairman Paul Gielegem.

"If that doesn't work, we'll ask every community in Macomb County to see who has space," Woonton said.

Gielegem said Friday that he was "certainly open to a meeting with them."

In 2010, thanks to a bill that passed this year, Michiganders can donate through on their state income tax form to a planned Michigan Law Enforcement Memorial in Lansing.

Expected to cost about \$3.5 million, the memorial would honor all Michigan police who died on duty, said Oakland County Treasurer Andy Meisner, who cosponsored the bill in 2007 as a state representative.

Meisner said he planned to check off the donation on his taxes "every year, for sure."