

OBSERVER

Trail planned to honor Purple Heart recipients

By M.J. Stafford

November 3, 2025



A trail to honor Chautauqua County's Purple Heart recipients is in development.

The advisory committee envisions a three-year project that will create a trail from the Dunkirk Lighthouse and Veterans Museum to the Yorkers Museum in Sherman. According to a press release shared with the OBSERVER, the plan is to gather donations, grants and sponsorships this year; complete the Dunkirk Lighthouse site in 2026; and finish the Sherman site in 2027.

"The Chautauqua County Purple Heart Trail will be a lasting tribute to the veterans who shed their blood for our many freedoms," the trail committee stated in the press release. It reports that there are at least 771 Purple Heart recipients from the county, but "no

comprehensive list has ever been made" of all the recipients. All U.S. military personnel who are killed or wounded while serving receive a Purple Heart.

The Dunkirk site is supposed to include park benches, American Eagle statues, educational kiosks and a memorial monument. The trailhead at the museum in Sherman will have similar items.

The trail will also have a stop in the Mayville Cemetery, at a memorial gazebo honoring Chautauqua County's deceased veterans. The memorial contains bricks honoring individual veterans.

The 41-mile trail will apparently use existing roads and paths, including Route 20, Route 380 and the Great Lakes Seaway Trail along Route 5.

State Sen. George Borrello and State Assemblyman Andrew Molitor have offered letters of support for the project, offering assistance if needed.

"Such a project is critical to this region's quality of life and economic development strategies because it creates an inclusive space for remembrance and reflection at the historic Dunkirk Lighthouse and Veterans Museum," Borrello wrote. He stated that the trail advisory committee hopes to raise \$29,099 in three years for the project.

Molitor wrote that establishing the trail "reflects the values of our community, which has long held deep respect for veterans. He said the integration of the Purple Heart Trail into the county's existing trail system "will not only raise awareness of our veterans' sacrifices but also invite residents and visitors to engage with our region's history and natural beauty in a meaningful way."

"A sponsorship, donation or grant of any size is greatly appreciated," the trail organizing committee states in its release. "Send all checks made out to Dunkirk Lighthouse or Village of Sherman with 'Purple Heart Trail' in the memo line."

The Dunkirk Lighthouse address is PO Box 69, 1 Lighthouse Drive, Dunkirk, NY 14048. The village of Sherman office address is PO Box 629, 111 Mill St., Sherman, NY 14781.

Jim Kurtz is a contact person for sponsorship opportunities. Email him at jamesvkurtz@gmail.com.