



COURTESY PHOTO

Area companies and veterans made the Vietnam Memorial in Fort Myers a reality. New memorial honors war dead from Southwest Florida

Vietnam claimed 76 area servicemen

BY PETE SKIBA
Florida Weekly Correspondent

Names remain etched in black granite while former comrades reach to touch what everyone calls simply, "The Wall."

Veterans brought the spirit of the Washington D.C. Vietnam Veterans Memorial home to Fort Myers to honor their local fallen comrades.

The Southwest Florida Vietnam Memorial lists the names of 76 dead from five area counties etched into three, black granite, 9-foot-by-8-foot panels.

Organizers recently installed the panels at McGregor and Colonial Boulevards. They would also like the memorial to tell the war's story from letters the soldiers sent home.

"We would like for anyone who has letters from soldiers about the war to let us have copies," said Craig Tonjes, of Lee County Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 594. "We'd like to put the letters on the back of the wall."

Out for their usual afternoon walk last week, Tim Jones and his wife Tena paid the wall a visit. Jones, a U.S. Air Force Vietnam veteran, touched the black granite in a show of respect.

"People who weren't there just don't know what it was all about," Jones said. "These soldiers paid a price for us."

The local memorial takes its design from the national Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C. That wall carries the names of 58,000 killed in the war from 1955 to 1975.

A Sanibel artist proved another connection to the original wall.

Lucas Century developed a granite-etching technique that

SEE MEMORIAL, A10 ►

drought dilemma

Southwest Florida manages record dry spell

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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Drip, drip, drip. That's the sound of Southwest Florida's dwindling water supply being wasted as an ongoing drought persists in the region and the need to conserve becomes even more immediate.

The past two years have been the driest back-to-back 24 months in nearly eight decades, said Jesus Rodriguez, spokesman for the South Florida Water Management District which recently placed tighter restrictions on the use of water. During that time, rainfall was two feet below average.

And scientists don't expect conditions to get better.

Florida's natural dry season which lasts from November until May, will be even dryer because of a weather pattern called La Nina, said Dave Zierden, state climatologist at Florida State University.

La Nina occurs when a large area of the Pacific Ocean cools several degrees. As a result, moisture is forced to the North,

SEE DROUGHT, A8 ►

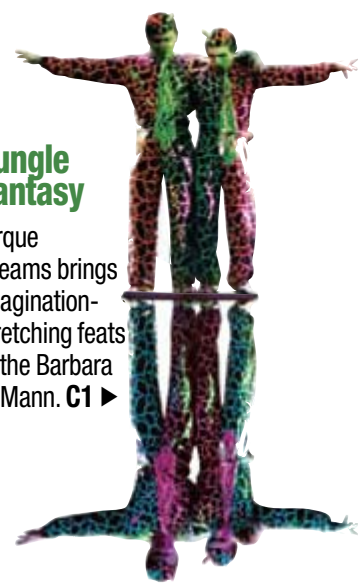
"It's a pretty safe bet that the next three months will be dryer than normal ...there's going to be water supply concerns persisting through the early summer."

— Climatologist Dave Zierden

INSIDE

Jungle Fantasy

Cirque Dreams brings imagination-stretching feats to the Barbara B. Mann. C1 ►



Cattle Baron's VIP party

And other events in Southwest Florida's social scene. C24&25 ►



Pam's Motor City

Pam Oakes has been fixing cars in Lee County since 1995. B1 ►



Love letters

Do you have a love letter you would like to share with Florida Weekly? If so, we would love to read them. We are looking for letters from every generation that speak of one's love and affection. Email's are also acceptable. Be brave folks. We want to share your letters and romantic experiences in an upcoming Valentine's Day story. Please e-mail: loveletters@florida-weekly.com or give us a call at 333-2135.

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