

By Adrian Garcia

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Designed to resemble the shape of the Rocky Mountains, a new memorial commemorating Coloradans who died serving their country is underway in Aurora .

The Colorado Freedom Memorial will list the names of nearly 6,000 fallen servicemen and servicewomen. Organizers broke ground on the memorial Saturday.

"Colorado continues to send its sons and daughter to defend the world's freedom whenever the nation calls," said Rick Crandall, president of the Colorado Freedom Memorial Foundation.

Nearly 200 people, including members of city councils from across the state, service members and Gold Star Families — families who lost loved a one in service — were in attendance at the ceremony at 756 Telluride St., next to the Paul C. Beck Recreation Center.

"The Colorado Freedom Memorial is providing all of us an opportunity to make sure we never forget that loss," Crandall said.

Crandall, a morning radio host for KEZW (1430 AM), formed the foundation after he broadcast live from the American cemetery at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, in 2000.

While in Normandy, Crandall, his wife and two of their friends placed Colorado flags on 88

graves in the cemetery. He wanted to honor those 88 Coloradans in their home state too, as well as other servicemen and women from Colorado who have been killed in action. Crandall said the memorial will list the names of Colorado's fallen service members from every branch of the military, beginning with the Spanish-American War.

Other speakers at the ceremony included Colorado Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards, Aurora Councilwoman Renie Peterson, Buckley Air Force Base Cmdr. Col. Daniel Dant and Rep. Mike Coffman.

"Nobody has ever regretted to me that their loved one wore the uniform of our country and served our nation," said Coffman, who is a veteran and honorary chairman for the memorial.

"It is so wonderful that we are here today to honor the fallen from our home state with this memorial," Coffman said. "It will be a testament to the sacrifices of the men and women who left this soil to defend our country."

According to the foundation's website, construction on the nearly \$700,000 memorial will be complete May 26. Over 12 years, the foundation raised about \$1 million in private funds toward the memorial, its upkeep and an updated database of fallen members of the service.

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