

COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 99

District is planning memorial gardens at both high schools

By **EVAN SHIELDS**

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DOWNERS GROVE – Community High School District 99 is considering installing memorial gardens at both high schools honoring those who died in wars.

Jenne Dehmlow and Chris Esposito, social studies department chairs at Downers Grove North and Downers Grove South, respectively, approached the board during its Oct. 5 meeting to make a presentation about the gardens.

Both gardens would honor the 70 District 99 graduates who have died in combat. Esposito said there are plaques all over the schools that honor academic achievements of students.

“Yet, currently, there is no permanent recognition for District 99 graduates who gave the most,” he said.

The Forest Avenue circle at Downers Grove North and the west events entrance at Downers Grove South have been identified as possible locations for the gardens.

The gardens would include two

peace poles, which would have the names of the deceased carved on them. The district plans to ask for community input on the project, and plans to talk to the Veterans of Foreign Wars about the project.

The total estimated cost of the two gardens is \$75,000. Plants and labor costs, which are estimated at \$25,000, will be donated to the district. Dehmlow said that leaves a fundraising goal of \$50,000. The plans involve using no district funds for the project. She doesn't believe raising the money will be an arduous task.

“The limited conversations we've had, people just come out of the woodwork wanting to show support,” Dehmlow said.

Dehmlow said if neighbors have concerns, then an alternate site for the garden could be along Main Street. Board member Rick Pavinato said Main Street is far too busy for a peaceful garden.

Board member Michael Davenport said he felt this was a “long overdue” honor, and the project would get good traction in the community.