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Boy in Blue Cemetery Walk: Bringing historic stories to life

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MANKATO — The Boy in Blue Memorial Committee is bringing life to the stories of Mankato area Civil War and Dakota War soldiers who are buried in Glenwood Cemetery in Mankato.

The committee will host a public cemetery walk on Saturday, complete with volunteer re-enactors.

"It's a good year for history in Mankato," volunteer Sara Brave Heart said while waiting to begin practicing the cemetery walk. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 as well as 151 years since the beginning of the Civil War.

The Boy in Blue Memorial Project works on raising money to rebuild the Lincoln Park monument, which was dubbed "Boy in Blue" and stood as a memorial for those in Blue Earth County who stepped forward to volunteer themselves as soldiers in the Civil and Dakota wars.

The committee is made of volunteers who hope to see the monument erected in the years of the Civil War anniversary. Julie Schrader of Minnesota Heritage Publishing has been with the committee since it began more than a year ago. She and project director Bryce Stenzel, who knew each other previous to the project, along with other community volunteers have put their hearts and souls into this project. They hope to continue telling the stories of the individuals that were so important to Mankato.

"It's important to know what their stories are so they are not lost," Schrader said.

Brave Heart will be a tour guide along with five other volunteers. When visitors arrive on Saturday, historical interpreters will be ready to tell the stories of each character being depicted.

Volunteers of all ages are involved in the cemetery walk, making the stories even more realistic. Brave Heart's three children will all be involved in the reenactment.

Cyrus Brave Heart, 11, is no rookie when it comes to re-enacting historical figures. Adopting a historical persona, he said, makes history more fun to learn.

"It was a really bloody war and a lot of people died. It's history that's important for all ages," he said.

Ambry Brave Heart, 8, has also been involved in re-enacting several historic figures.

"I like to see how many people care," she said as she walked throughout the graves.

All proceeds will go toward funding the Boy in Blue Memorial Project. To learn more about the Boy in Blue project and future events, go to www.boyinblue.org.