

Steel remnant of World Trade Center arrives for future memorial

By JOE LAMBE

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A bagpiper led the motorcycle escort Monday for a flatbed truck loaded with a ton of steel from the World Trade Center, and citizens and Overland Park firefighter and police honor guards welcomed it to a new home.

The steel stayed on the truck so people could touch what will become part of a public monument at the fire training center in Overland Park.

June Stenslie of Overland Park touched it, stepped back and described her feelings.

“Awe, reverence, an opportunity to be a part of history,” she said. “It seems like it was just yesterday.”

The steel was saved for possible use in a memorial. About a year ago, firefighter Trevor Miller applied for it from a Port Authority of New York and New Jersey program.

The port authority approved the request about two months ago. The problem became how to pick up and transport the steel at no cost.

MIQ Logistics volunteered to get it done. The truck carrying the steel to the training center stopped briefly Monday at the company’s world headquarters in Overland Park so city officials could thank them.

“A lot of people came and walked up to it, put their hand on the steel and said a few prayers,” Miller said.

There are no large, public 9/11 memorials in the area, he said, and he wanted to “set something up that everyone can come to and actually touch it and see it.”

But now comes another challenge: Firefighters want to get the memorial designed, created and in place by the 10th anniversary of 9/11 this year.

The steel looks like an I-beam with cross sections where other beams had been, said Jason Rhodes, a fire department spokesman.

They hope Julie Bilyea, an art expert with the city, will “work some miracles” to design and create the memorial in time, he said.

Bilyea remembered its ties to so many dead victims and firefighters.

“It’s no stretch of the imagination to assume some of their ashes are right there,” she said.

She will need donated landscape architect and construction services for the site near the fire training center.

The steel is among the last being released by the port authority. Many other communities are also using remnants for various kinds of memorials, said Steve Coleman, a port authority spokesman.

Overland Park’s piece will be stored in a hangar while the memorial takes shape. Then it will be near a tree planted just west of the front door and dedicated to the 2,753 trade center victims, including 343 firefighters.