



This year's Warriors Walk efforts raised \$40,000 for the Headstrong Project, a non-profit that provides mental health care for veterans.

Warriors Walk 2024: A Triumphant Weekend of Honor, Community, and Patriotism Raises \$40,000 for Headstrong

The 5th Annual Warriors Walk wrapped up with resounding success, leaving participants and organizers with a profound sense of pride and achievement. This yearly event, dedicated to honoring veterans and active-duty service members, brought the community together through a series of heartfelt activities—including a commemorative dinner, a symbolic walk, and a spirited Patriots Party. Most notably, this year's efforts raised \$40,000 for the Headstrong Project, a non-profit that provides mental health care for veterans, bringing the total to \$125,000 raised over five years.

The two-day event, hosted by Warriors Walk - New Lenox with primary sponsor Harry E. Anderson VFW Post 9545, was filled with reflection, unity, and celebration. We extend our gratitude to committee members from the New Lenox and Mokena VFWs, New Lenox American Legion, their auxiliary members, and many others whose invaluable contributions made this gathering possible. All proceeds go directly toward supporting mental health services for veterans, underscoring the ongoing need for community-driven efforts to address the invisible wounds of war.

The weekend kicked off on Sept. 13 with the highly anticipated Warriors Walk Dinner at the Thomas E. Hartung American Legion Post 1977. Over 130 attendees gathered to honor event sponsors, volunteers, and veterans. Guests enjoyed a meal catered by Gatto's Italian Restaurant, with desserts provided by Sugar Shack Cookie Co. Powerful stories of resilience were shared by veterans and military leaders, giving attendees insight into the personal journeys of those who served.

More than 100 people gath-

ered Sept. 14 for the Warriors Walk, a symbolic event starting and ending at the Veterans Memorial in New Lenox Commons. Participants of all ages and backgrounds, including veterans, military families, and supporters, walked side by side, carrying flags and wearing tribute shirts to honor their loved ones.

With various route options available—from the SPC James L. Bartz Memorial Mile to a 20-mile



Warrior Walk coordinator Ryan Brazel.

VFW Post 9545. This event brought families, veterans, and supporters together for a day of unity and celebration, featuring live music, food from local vendors, and activities for children. It was the perfect way to cap off a weekend of reflection and support for veterans.

One of the weekend's most significant achievements was the overwhelming generosity of attendees, sponsors, and donors, who helped raise \$40,000 for the Headstrong Project. This national non-profit

provides stigma-free, cost-free mental health care for veterans and their families. These funds will directly support veterans in need of comprehensive mental health treatment, ensuring they receive the care they need to overcome challenges like PTSD, anxiety, and other service-related mental health issues.

Ryan Brazel, lead coordinator of the Warriors Walk, expressed deep gratitude for the community's unwavering support, saying, "It is official! The Warriors Walk raised and shall donate \$40,000 to the Headstrong Project from this year's event. Thank you to all who donated, sponsored, participated, and volunteered."



Participants register for the 5th annual Warriors Walk in New Lenox.



About 100 walkers joined in the 5th annual Warriors Walk in New Lenox.

stretch along the Old Plank Trail—the walk was accessible to everyone, allowing all to demonstrate their support. Many participants walked in memory of those who lost their lives to suicide, while others joined in solidarity with those who continue to face mental health challenges.

The weekend concluded with the lively Patriots Party at the Harry E. Anderson



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