



ST. PATRICK'S DAY

SEEING GREEN

WHETHER YOU WANT TO PAINT THE TOWN GREEN OR BRING THE KIDS OUT FOR SOME GAMES, THERE'S NO REASON TO WAIT TILL MARCH 17 TO CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY

BY EILEEN SOLER
Special to The Miami Herald

You don't need the luck of the Irish to find a place to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The partying starts early at some local pubs, and Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood will both be having parades this week. For those who can get into the spirit of the holiday on March 17, there won't be a shortage of festivities.

"Everyone can be Irish for a day — even the O'Gonzalezes," said Sheila Hynes, co-chairman of Saturday's Fort Lauderdale St. Patrick's Day Parade and Festival. She said it's the first one held in the city since 1993.

Hynes, who was born in Ireland, said it's "guaranteed" that the festival will be everything Gaelic.

St. Patrick's Day marks the feast day of the Catholic patron saint of Ireland who brought Christianity to the Celts of the Emerald Isle. In Ireland, people commemorate the day by attending church services. Many celebrants here may go to church, but the holiday has



WAR VETERANS

Disabled vets to be honored

■ A Pembroke Pines man is behind a national effort to build the country's first memorial for all living and deceased disabled veterans.

BY JULIE LEVIN
Special to the Herald

Though Victor Biggs never served his country in uniform, he wants to show his gratitude to those who have. It's one of the primary reasons the Pembroke Pines man is at the forefront of a national effort to honor America's disabled war veterans.

Biggs is the executive director of the Disabled

Veterans LIFE Memorial Foundation, a Delray Beach-based nonprofit group with the sole objective of raising money to build the nation's first memorial for all living and deceased disabled veterans.

"Our goal is to help America honor our nation's servicemen and women who went into battle very bravely, risking their lives, their livelihoods and sacrificing their futures and safety to defend our freedom," said Biggs, a 23-year resident of South Florida.

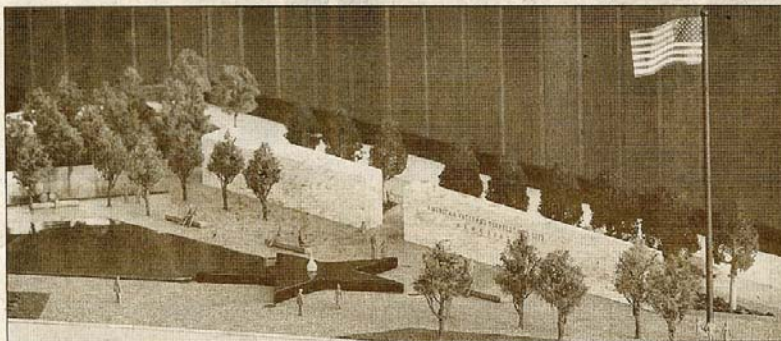
Biggs estimates there are 1.7 million veterans in Florida, with an estimated 118,000 thousand calling Broward County home. Citing figures for 2007, 9 to 12 percent of veterans, he



BIGGS

•TURN TO DISABLED, 2

WAR VETERANS



HOW IT WILL LOOK: This is an artist's rendering of the planned memorial to disabled veterans that will be built in Washington, D.C.

Group to honor disabled

• **DISABLED, FROM 1**

said, return home permanently disabled in some way.

Biggs recently traveled to the nation's Capitol to be on hand for the Feb. 25 launch of the 2010 American Veterans Disabled for Life Silver Dollar, the first commemorative coin issued by the U.S. Mint in 2010. A surcharge of \$10 from the sale of every coin will go directly to the fund for building the memorial.

"This is the best way to say thank you to anyone you know who is a veteran," Biggs said.

The foundation is hoping to break ground on the memorial in Washington, D.C., sometime this year, once it has raised the final 5 percent of the estimated \$86 million dollars needed to build it.

It will sit on a two-acre site within full view of the United States Capitol, adjacent to the National Mall, and across from Independence Avenue and the United States Botanic Garden.

The focal point of the memorial will be a star-shaped reflecting pool, its surface broken by a single eternal flame. Its purpose is to honor the three million living disabled

More information about the coin

A surcharge of \$10 from the sale of every 2010 American Veterans Disabled for Life Silver Dollar will go to the fund for building the memorial.

The collector proof and uncirculated silver coins have a maximum mintage of 350,000 coins.

The United States Mint is offering a special introductory price of \$39.95 for a proof coin and \$33.95 for an uncirculated coin until March 29.

After March 29, the proof coin will cost \$43.95 and the uncirculated coin will cost \$35.95. Shipping and handling charges are additional.

To purchase a coin, visit www.usmint.gov or call 800-USA-MINT. Hearing- and speech-impaired customers may order by calling 888-321-MINT (6468). For more information about the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, visit www.avdlm.org.

veterans from all branches of service, and conflicts, and the million that passed before them.

While Biggs didn't serve in the military, his brother was in the U.S. Navy.

"He basically served for me and I always wanted a way to give back," said Biggs, who is also a member of the Flamingo Road Church, where son Vaughn is a worship pastor.

Biggs says his role is a continuation of work he has done in South Florida, helping to provide a safety net and vocational training programs for South Florida's homeless population, which includes many veterans. The National Coalition

for Homeless Veterans estimates that 23 percent of the homeless population are veterans.

Biggs' efforts with nonprofit agencies include the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Food & Shelter Program, United Way of Miami-Dade County, Broward County Continuum of Care, and the Second Chance Society. Biggs also has extensive senior management experience working with the Salvation Army and the North Miami Beach Police Department.

"This project lets me say thanks to the veterans for giving me the freedom that I have," Biggs said.