

New statue going up at Jackson High

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By end of May, a bronze figure will be standing guard over the east entrance of Jackson High School.

A 6-foot, 7-inch double-sided bronze statue will symbolize the school's mascot in a historically correct fashion.

Students requested diversity -- so there will be a male and female Viking.

Facing Wildwood Avenue, a male Viking figure will hold a staff with a Jackson High School pennant, portraying the heroism of the Viking, but without the violence of the traditional sword. The female side of the statue will feature a Viking holding a scroll with a yet-to-be-determined message.

"She is more about education, whereas he is more of a heroic figure," said Kenneth M. Thompson, a Blissfield sculptor who is building the statue with Leslie Adams of Toledo.

Thompson said they wanted to convey a message of leadership, rather than violence.

Scheduled to be unveiled May 23 -- graduation day at JHS -- the statue cost \$72,000, which came from private sources, Superintendent Dan Evans said.

About \$34,000 came from a fundraiser dating to 1999 when alumni and community members spent \$150 to \$200 to buy a seat in their name or others' names in the high school auditorium.

Another \$10,000 came from the trust of Roger Spencer, the 1933 class president and son of Dean Spencer, one of the founding principals in the late 1920s, JHS Principal Pam Fitzgerald said.

Dr. Harish Rawal, a Jackson neurosurgeon, committed \$25,000 last year, and the rest is coming from other donations raised in recent years, Evans said.

Rawal said he donated to the cause because administrators said it would boost school spirit.

"Whenever there's excitement for the school, I'm there," said Rawal, who also recently gave \$50,000 to a Jackson High School scholarship fund, and \$1 million to Jackson Community College for its health occupations center, which now bears his last name.

Thompson and Adams have been working on the project for about a year, starting with a life-size clay model last spring. It was used to make a rubber mold.

Then, they applied a layer of wax over the rubber mold, creating a "support mold."

From there, the sculptors used the wax mold to create a ceramic outer mold with 2,000 pounds of ceramic mix. Once the ceramic hardened, they poured in hot bronze, creating the final cast.

The statue will be mounted on a slab of granite rock carved into a half-sphere to resemble a globe. On the rock, continents will be carved out. The male figure will be standing on the Northern Hemisphere, the female will stand over Eurasia, Thompson said.