



Staff Photo by Morris Stephenson

A memorial monument for two Franklin County canoers, who drowned last summer in the Blackwater River, will be dedicated during a special service on Sunday, July 11.

Dedication for canoers memorial set for Sunday

By MORRIS STEPHENSON
Staff Writer

A dedication service for a monument honoring two Franklin County canoers who drowned last summer in the Blackwater River has been set for Sunday evening.

Linda Underwood, the mother of one of the victims, said the service will be held at 6 p.m.

A monument, complete with benches and landscaping, is located at the Blackwater River wayside on the southbound lane of U.S. 220, just past the bridge.

The memorial is just downstream from where Chris Odum, 38, of Union Hall drowned on June 6, 2009, and Nicole Underwood, 21, of Ferrum died July 23, 2009.

Both were victims of a deadly hydraulic in front of a low-head dam near the Town of Rocky Mount's water treatment facility.

In early June, a monument to the two canoers that included pictures of both and inscriptions was put into place.

Fundraisers were held by family members to prepare a piece of granite that came from

the Jack's Mountain area and a base of white granite that came from a quarry in Georgia.

Staff members of the Franklin County Recreation Department later added two benches to the site, along with mulch and a stepping stone path from the wayside to the monument that is close to the river.

After the drownings, the town and county joined together in a project that eliminated the hydraulic with a large amount of rip-rap placed in front of the dam.

Additional lighting was added to the site, and lighted warning signs were erected upstream of the dam. Two river accesses were added, one above and the other below the structure. A rope supported by bright orange plastic barrels was also strung across the river above the dam as an extra precaution.

Following Sunday's ceremony, light refreshments will be served.

Recreation officials said parking at the wayside is limited and are urging people to "car pool" to the site.

Additional parking will be provided by James "Chubby"

Arrington, who lives adjacent to the wayside. Arrington said he will have the entrance beside his house marked with parking signs and more signs once people turn into his driveway.

"I'm more than happy to provide the additional parking area. It's just a short walk from my house to the memorial," he said.

People also are asked to bring their own lawn chairs as seating for the service will not be provided.

I saw first hand a level of care and attention that inspired me to become an OB GYN nurse. Susanne is amazing. It is worth the drive home to have her as my provider.

Jasmine Gilbert