



## Iowa Western restoring Vietnam helicopter for Papillion veterans memorial

The UH-1 Huey helicopter served from 1969 to 1972, flying 3,180 hours in Vietnam.

[Alex McLoon](#)

Reporter

### **COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa —**

"Operation Restore Huey" started when Nebraska veterans purchased the medivac helicopter from the Vermont National Guard in Bennington, Vermont.

When the frame of the iconic chopper arrived, it was a shell of its former self, missing parts and pieces. So students and staff at the Iowa Western Aviation Maintenance Technical school are tasked with restoring it.

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"We strictly train mechanics, but all aspects of aviation are in high demand right now — mechanics especially," instructor Dillon Driscoll said about the industry. "There's never been a time better than now to get into the aviation maintenance field."

The Huey is drawing students to stay after class to help order parts of unlikely markets like Facebook to replenish the stallion helicopter.

Once finished, the [Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation](#) will fashion the helicopter as its centerpiece [for a new park in Papillion](#). Ground is set to break March 29, National Vietnam War Veterans Day, and set for completion in 2023.

"If you talk to anybody that's been over there, the sound the Huey, the rotors and stuff, they just never forget that,' said veteran George Abbott of the Memorial Foundation.

As students turn wrenches and install parts, John Veberwyk and Britt Edwards aspire to aviation endeavors.

"I'm hoping to work for an airline at a base out in Des Moines," Edwards said. "I already have an interview set up before March 18."

"I really want to go to a big airline, or eventually work up to a space program," Veberwyk said. "So that would be my big dream, NASA or SpaceX."

The operation aims to install the helicopter in August.