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Flame effort brightens suddenly

I put the word out in Thursday's blog post and Friday's paper about a grassroots fundraising effort to restore the flame atop the **Liberty Memorial**.

Well, good news. Since that column appeared, the level of financial commitment has soared. Instead of the few hundred dollars in the kitty, there is now more than \$5,000 committed. That and a pledge to match up to half of the \$45,000 needed for the flame to burn year around.

When I say burn, I mean it figuratively. It's not a real flame, of course. It's steam illuminated with colored lights. The steam system was turned off in March due to City Council budget cuts.

The Liberty Memorial Association turned it back on just for this weekend, but plans were for it go out again after Monday. Now, who knows, thanks to the folks at **Pioneer Services, a Kansas City financial services firm**.

Pioneer officials read where KC resident **Jeannie Carlson** had launched a campaign to raise money to keep the flame going on the **World War I** memorial.

As I reported Friday, she suggested that, perhaps, 1,000 people could donate \$45 each.

Pioneer Services, decided to speed things along. After all, the company's main customers are members of the Armed Forces and their families. This would be a way to honor them, too.

So on Friday, the company launched a website, savetheflame.org, and gave \$5,000 to the effort. That's enough to keep the flame going until July 4, said Denise Rendina, a spokeswoman for the National World War I Museum.

Better yet, the company said it would match other institutions up to a maximum of \$22,500. Half the bill to light the flame for a year, in other words. Should the full \$45,000 be raised by the Fourth, the flame will stay on through July 4, 2009.

"Then we'll have to figure out what to do next," Rendina said Saturday.

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It's a great gesture that, with the generosity of others, should produce the result that Carlson was looking for when she looked out her window, saw the flame snuffed out and pledged to do something about it.

As I wrote in Friday's column, that's all it takes sometimes to plug the holes that government can't or won't fill.

Submitted by Mike Hendricks on May 24, 2008 - 12:02pm.

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