

News and stories

Cleveland Gold Star Families Memorial Monument to be dedicated at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Aug 28 2018

Brian Albrecht | [Cleveland.com](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio - A salute to families who have lost loved ones in military action will be dedicated August 31 at the [Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center](#), 10701 East Boulevard.

The Cleveland Gold Star Families Memorial Monument is part of a campaign by Hershel "Woody" Williams to have similar markers placed in communities across the country.

The Gold Star tradition started during World War I when families hung out flags or banners bearing a blue star if a loved one was serving in the military. That blue star was changed to gold if the loved one was killed.

Williams is the last surviving Marine awarded a Medal of Honor during World War II, and he created the nonprofit Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation Inc. in 2013 to carry out his monument campaign.

Thus far there are 39 dedicated monuments and 45 projects in progress.

The black granite monument bears the words "Gold Star Families Memorial Monument, a tribute to Gold Star Families and Relatives who have sacrificed a Loved One for our Freedom" on one side.

The other side has four granite panels dedicated to homeland, family, patriot and sacrifice.

Before joining the Marines, as World War II began, Williams delivered telegrams informing families of their loss in the war. He would later note, "Consideration and recognition of families of those lost in the war was very inadequate."

The monument and Williams' effort is appreciated by Sheila Nowacki, of Painesville Township, whose son, Marine Lance Cpl. Andy "Ace" Nowacki, 24, was killed in Iraq in 2005.

Sheila Nowacki, her husband Denis, and other family members plan to attend the monument dedication.

She said Gold Star Mothers get a lot of attention, but noted that it's the whole family that grieves, "the family that suffers. This loss is not just the moms."

The monument will encompass that sentiment and help with a recovery process that never ends, according to Nowacki.

"There's always a gaping hole there," as she noted.

But this salute will help. "The monument itself is so beautiful, and the setting is going to be a refuge and a place where family members can reflect," Nowacki said.

The monument could also remind everyone of the ultimate sacrifice in military service, she noted.

"I'd like to think that people are going to find some peace there, and know that their sons, daughters, husbands and wives are remembered," she added. "That's probably the most critical piece. I

don't want to see anyone ever forget the ones we lost."

The monument will be dedicated at 10 a.m. outside the medical center's CARES Tower, near East 105th Street and East Boulevard.

The free event is open to the public but visitors are encouraged to register in advance by contacting:

The dedication also will be broadcast on Facebook Live @ClevelandVAMC.