

News and stories

Gold Star Family Monument in works for Parkersburg park

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Evan Bevins | [Parkersburg News and Sentinel](#)

PARKERSBURG — A Gold Star Family Monument is planned for construction in City Park, alongside other military memorials.

Parkersburg Mayor Tom Joyce announced the effort Thursday afternoon in the fifth-floor conference room at the Municipal Building, alongside West Virginia resident Hershel “Woody” Williams, the last surviving Marine Medal of Honor recipient from World War II. He came up with the monument concept, and his namesake foundation encourages and assists with the establishment of the monuments, which are intended to honor the sacrifices of the families of military members who died in service to their country.

“We’ve done a terrific job, I think, of honoring veterans,” Williams said. “But it’s strange that we never did anything for the families.”

Williams said the monuments provide the families of fallen soldiers “some place to go and meditate and know that their loved one is not going to be forgotten.”

Joyce said he was approached by Bernie Lyons, a local Marine Corps veteran who works with Williams’ foundation, and Vinnie Conley,

with the PM Company, both of whom have worked on previous local Gold Star monument efforts. He suggested locating it in City Park, near the existing Veterans Memorial Park.

“It’s about remembering and making sure folks aren’t forgotten for their sacrifice,” Joyce said. “There’ll be components that are specific to Parkersburg.”

The estimated cost of the monument is in the neighborhood of \$70,000, Lyons said, “but if we get some in-kind donations, we can lower that amount.”

Joyce said the city will provide in-kind contributions. Fundraising for the effort will be handled by a committee selected by Joyce and Lyons.

In addition to Lyons and Joyce, the committee includes Conley, Parkersburg Police Chief Joe Martin, a Marine Corps veteran; City Councilman Zach Stanley, an Army veteran; local businessman Jim Murphy, a Marine veteran; Parkersburg Area Labor Council President Andrew Stump, an Army veteran; Marine veteran Roy Trembly; West Virginia Federal Credit Union President and CEO Mike Tucker; and Marietta Safety-Service Director Jonathan Hupp, a Marine veteran who worked with the foundation on that city’s monument, which was dedicated in June.

Vienna dedicated its own Gold Star Family Monument at Spencer’s Landing in November.

“Every community, really of any size, (has) Gold Star families in them, going back to when we first became a nation,” Williams said.

According to the website for the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation, the monument features one side bearing the words “Gold Star Families Memorial Monument, a tribute to Gold Star Families and Relatives who have sacrificed a Loved One for our Freedom,” while the other side includes granite panels with the words “homeland, family, patriot and sacrifice.” The scenes on each panel are intended to reflect a community’s Gold Star families and

heroes, it says.

In the center is a cutout figure representing the loved ones who made the ultimate sacrifice.

No projected completion date for the monument was announced Thursday.

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