

# News and stories

## **New Gold Star monument in Kaneohe honors families of fallen Hawaii servicemen and women**

Mar 18 2018

Elyssa Arevalo | [KHON2](#)

HONOLULU (KHON2) - It's a first of its kind in the state - a monument that honors families that lost loved ones in the military who died while in service to our country.

It was unveiled at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe on Saturday.

The monument is a tribute to Gold Star families - that means the family of a military member who died during service - and it's part of a nationwide project started by a World War II veteran and Medal of Honor recipient.

It's a community that no one wants to be part of but everyone is connected in the same way.

Mothers and fathers without their sons or daughters, siblings without their brothers or sisters, and spouses without the love of their life.

The Gold Star Family memorial at the state veterans cemetery honors the sacrifice of military families who were left behind.

"As a country and as a society, we really haven't done our duty to honor those who lost for us to keep America free," Hershel "Woody" Williams said.

Williams is a WWII veteran who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

We're told there are about 400 known Gold Star families across Hawaii.

Kathy Ignacio is one of them.

Her husband, Jason, served in the United States Army and passed away in 2012.

"Jason was from Guam and such a laid back island boy, loved Hawaii. This is where he's laid to rest at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery," Ignacio said.

One by one, Gold Star family members were recognized. The loved ones they lost were pinned close to their hearts.

The symbol of sacrifice is Williams ongoing mission to honor these families across the country through his non-profit, Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation.

He said his ultimate goal is to get a national Gold Star Family memorial in Washington D.C. and even a federal holiday.

"So that we can start educating our youth that what they have is because someone else sacrificed for," Williams said.

Until then, Ignacio said she's grateful for the Hawaii memorial.

It's a reminder that we are remembered, that the community hasn't forgotten us," she said. "It truly helps in the healing process, in the grieving process, knowing that we're not alone. It feels alone but we're not alone."

The Hawaii memorial is the 33rd monument in the United States.

Williams will be speaking on Sunday during the 10 a.m. service at Ohana Baptist Church. A meet and greet with Williams will start at 9 a.m. Their address is 2879 Pa'a St.