

News and stories

Camp Shelby Breaks Ground on Gold Star Memorial

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Steve Phillips | [WLOX](#)

CAMP SHELBY, MS (WLOX) - Gov. Phil Bryant joined military leaders at Camp Shelby on Wednesday to break ground on a new memorial outside the Armed Forces Museum. It will honor and pay tribute to Gold Star families, those families who lost a loved one in service to our country.

An overflow crowd, many of them military, attended the ceremony marking the start of the monument project.

"Its purpose, to honor Gold Star families, relatives, and Gold Star children who have sacrificed a loved one in the service of their country," said Camp Shelby commander Greg Michel.

That Gold Star designation dates back to World War I, when families flew service banners. A blue star, which indicated a loved one in the service, was replaced with a gold star if they were killed in battle.

"My Dad said there was a lot of Gold Star families in Mississippi, so they had the banner in their windows with a gold star for their loss so that the state and the community and their neighbors would understand what they were going through," said Bryant.

The Mississippi Gold Star families were the guests of honor. Among them was Jane Green, of Gautier, who lost her son, Maj. Michael Green, in Afghanistan.

“Really special. Especially being the first Gold Star monument in Mississippi. We're really proud, and we're really proud of this museum,” said Green.

Military retiree Hoss Ladner said the monument will bring deserved attention to these special families.

“I hope when they see this monument, that it makes us stop and reflect and take account of our life. To say, what am I doing to continue serving this great nation and others. What am I doing to honor the memory of these families,” said Ladner, who represented the office of Rep. Steven Palazzo.

Loved ones remembered Capt. Tiffany Burns. The West Point graduate died of an aneurysm at age 27. Her Gold Star mom says the new monument is a fitting tribute.

“It means we're being recognized as families of fallen soldiers, and that it's a wonderful feeling,” said Loretta Burns-Knighten.

The fund raising for the project got a kick start from Hershel "Woody" Williams. He is the last Medal of Honor survivor from the World War II battle of Iwo Jima.

Williams donated \$5,000 from his foundation, which was established to create Gold Star monuments across the country.

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