

News and stories

The Gold Star bond

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Janelle Patterson | [The Marietta Times](#)

Select circle includes any relative who has sacrificed a loved one in Armed Forces

It's said a person dies twice, once when life passes from their body and a second time when no one says their name anymore.

That's the wisdom Gold Star mother Shirley White, of West Virginia, imparted upon the attendees of a groundbreaking ceremony for a new memorial to Gold Star families in Marietta a few weeks ago.

A Gold Star Family member can be any relative: mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, adoptive or foster parents, wife, husband, child, stepchild, adopted child, brothers, sisters, half brothers or sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces or nephews who have sacrificed a loved one in the U.S. Armed Forces.

A Gold Star Families Monument is to be erected between the tree line and the playground at Lookout Park in Marietta, close to the parking lot. Fundraising is currently ongoing for the tribute to families that have sacrificed a loved one in defense of the nation. It's a \$50,000 project the Sgt. Bob O'Malley Detachment #1436 of the Marine Corps League has taken on in conjunction with the

Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation and the Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments initiative.

"We still have about \$25,000 to raise," said Bernie Lyons, of Vienna, a board member of the foundation. *"These families sacrificed a son or a daughter in the name of this country and we owe them recognition for that."*

The loss of a loved one to military service is a pain that many Washington County residents live with daily.

Frank Christy, 70, of Marietta, remembers his best friend, his cousin Lt. Richard Christy, a Marietta native, who was killed in action during the Vietnam War at 26 years old.

"I still miss him everyday," said Frank. *"I can barely talk about it now, but we had all these plans for what we would do when we really grew up. We talked about how with him being a pilot I could eventually start a business and he could lead... he was such a great leader."*

Frank choked back tears as he shared the memories of his cousin, who was shot down over Cambodia on Feb. 17, 1972, while on a forward air control mission flying low to spot enemy movement and call in fighters.

Richard's sister Janet Christy Silvester, 69, now of Fort Walton Beach, Fla., even married Richard's closest friend from the Air Force Academy.

"My husband called my brother for permission," she explained. *"He was killed just two months before we got married."*

Silvester said she had just graduated from Marietta College and was at her parents' home when the worst fear of military families was fulfilled: the two uniforms approaching the door offering their condolences.

"My brother was supposed to come back from Vietnam for the

wedding," she said. "It took me a lot of years to come to terms with it. I lost my faith when he died... it wasn't until we were stationed at the Air Force Academy and I got to talk to him at his grave that I came to terms with it, knowing he died doing what he thought was right."

She said returning to Marietta, like she did this past weekend, is especially hard nowadays as she is the only immediate family member left alive.

"But years later you just love talking about him, that's how you keep him alive," she explained. "He would have been a great father and a great husband. Our kids have grown up knowing the stories of their Uncle Richard and through them he will live on even after I'm gone."

The Christys are one of the many families that have lost a loved one in battle, but Lyons said the monuments, which dot the nation, are also used as a place to find peace for those who lost comrades in arms.

"I have a friend, Jim Yonley, in Vienna, that served in two wars, both Vietnam and Korea," he explained. "He goes to the Vienna monument to remember the guys he lost. Those were his friends and that's where he finds peace."

Marietta Safety-Service Director Jonathan Hupp, also a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, said the park on Harmar Hill will serve as a refuge for those looking to remember those lost.

"It's for the 146 individuals from Washington County who are Gold Star recipients," he explained.

The monuments are the brain-child of Medal of Honor Recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams. He was in Marietta for the groundbreaking and not only gave a rousing speech with the likeness of a sermon at the event but also sat humbly and talked about the sacrifice of comrades in arms have made both on the battlefield and because of their service. These monuments dotting

the country honor both their service and their families' service and sacrifice, he said.

"Every one of those who have died in combat, or lost their life because of their military service had a mom and dad, and cousins and siblings and friends that mourn their loss," the 94-year-old from Ona, W.Va., explained. "This honors those loved ones in their grief... this is not about me, it's about them. We honor them."

Peoples Bank pledged \$15,000 for the Marietta Gold Star Families Monument, projected to cost \$50,000 to build, and an additional \$100,000 for other monuments to be built in other locations in Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky.

"Peoples Bank is honored to support the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation and the Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments initiative," said the bank's president and CEO Chuck Sulerzyki. "To pay tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country is a true privilege."

Roy Trembly and Dave Smith are the committee co-chairs for the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument to be erected in the coming spring. Both are also Honorary Board Members for the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation. To learn more about donating to the Gold Star Family Memorial, please contact Trembly at roytrebly@gmail.com or 304-966-4419 or Smith at n2851l@earthlink.net.

Donations will be accepted by cash, check or card by any member of the Sgt. Bob O'Malley Detachment #1436 of the Marine Corps League, by Bernie Lyons at 304-917-8900 or online at hwwmohfoundation.org/marietta.

How to donate

- Contact Roy Trembly at 304-966-4419, Bernie Lyons at 304-917-8990, any member of the Sgt. Bob O'Malley Detachment #1436 of the Marine Corps League or visit hwwmohfoundation.org/marietta.

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Source: Sgt. Bob O'Malley Detachment #1436 of the Marine Corps League.

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