

News and stories

Gold Star Families Memorial unveiled at Camp Shelby

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Army National Guard 2nd Lt. Anthony Scardino of Oak Grove was killed in a training accident Aug. 9, 2014, at Fort Gordon in Georgia. He was 27.

"We opened our front door to two military soldiers from Camp Shelby in full dress uniform," Scardino's father, Leonard Scardino said. "They had come to tell us our son had died. At that moment, we became a Gold Star family — a group of people that never want to be part of it."

Gold Star families are those who have lost family members through their military service.

"This signifies loss, pain," he said. "This signifies that our sons, daughters, husbands, wives are no longer going to be with us as they should be. But this group of people became important to us because they know what we're going through."

Mississippi's Gold Star families now have a place of honor to recognize the sacrifices made through the loss of their loved ones in service to their country.

The Gold Star Families Memorial Monument was unveiled Wednesday at Camp Shelby's Armed Forces Museum.

"For all the Gold Star families that have existed throughout the ages, their grief is just as real, the moment is just as urgent as that time when someone appeared at the door and we realized we lost another American hero," Gov. Phil Bryant said during the unveiling ceremony.

"Today we stand proudly to honor these families, to honor their loss."

Jenny Smith of Brandon, a Gold Star mother, shared the pain of losing her son, Marine Staff Sgt. Jason Rogers, who was killed April 7, 2011, in Afghanistan. He was on his fifth combat tour.

"That day changed our family forever," she said. "Our family has never been and will never be the same, but we adapted, and there is always that piece missing from our souls."

Smith said the memorial will help assure her son and all the other military members killed during their service will be remembered for generations.

"As a Gold Star family, our biggest fear is that our family member will be forgotten," she said.

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