

News and stories

Gold Star Families monument to be unveiled in June

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Janelle Patterson | [Marietta Times](#)

Local families who have lost a loved one in the service of their country will soon be honored with a new city monument.

The unveiling of the Gold Star Families Monument will take place June 23 at 11 a.m. at Gold Star Park, formerly Lookout Park, on Harmar Hill.

"We are going to have some big wigs at the dedication like Mrs. Karen H. Kelly, who is a gold star mother and her husband is also a four-star general and chief of staff to President Trump," said Bernie Lyons, a local Marine veteran and member of the Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation.

The project has been discussed formally since early fall last year, and after a grassroots fundraising campaign connected local Marine Corps veterans with the foundation and raised the resources to install the monument.

The term "*gold star family*" is a reference that comes from the service flag first flown by families during World War I as a sign to others that the family had an immediate member serving in conflict. If that loved one died, the blue star was replaced by a gold star.

Williams himself visited Marietta in October to drum up support for the monument, explaining that families whose loved ones in the armed services were killed are to be lauded for their sacrifice as well.

"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 Medal of Honor recipient 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."*

The national effort is the brainchild of Williams and to date, 35 monuments have been dedicated and 42 more are in progress, representing 36 states.

Marietta City Council got onboard with the project last fall by changing the name of Lookout Park to Gold Star Park.

And fundraisers at downtown businesses also brought in community support.

"It made a significant impact," said Lyons. *"We have covered the physical monument but we still need a little more for the benches and concrete around it."*

The plan is to pour a concrete star with the points leading back to the center monument and between the points, four benches will be placed. Then an additional two benches will be placed at either end of the flag poles sitting off of the star overlooking the whole monument.

"I'm hoping for corporate sponsorships for at least six benches," said Safety-Service Director Jonathan Hupp. *"The city of Marietta, Marine Corps League and the foundation have worked tirelessly to raise these funds for the monument and we are now in search of the donors at \$1,250 each. For that price, it covers the cost of the bench, an engraving and the perpetual upkeep of the park."*

The benches would not be possible without the generosity of Kirby Monument Company in Parkersburg."

Hupp said donations for the benches are tax-deductible and can be conducted through the city per Internal Revenue Service guidelines under Section 170 (c) (1).

"We will be issuing you a receipt for your tax records," he said. "The benches will be installed (by city crews) to allow for reflection and remembrance at the monument."

Recently council has also authorized the pursuit of grant funding to extend the walking path at the park to draw recreational walkers around the new monument.

But that's not the only possible funding source.

"The Original Pizza Place on Second Street is allowing us another fundraiser on June 5 in which a portion of the sales go to support Gold Star Park," explained Hupp.

"The proprietors require patrons to leave their receipt and tell (the cashier) it's for Gold Star Park. Corporate and business entities and large groups can also call in orders and say the portion can go to the park."

The fundraiser will run from 11 a.m to close on June 5.

Lyons also said tickets are dwindling for a boat ride the evening of June 23 aboard the P.A. Denny where a reception will be held in honor of the completion of the memorial.

If you go:

Gold Star Park Fundraiser:

June 5, The Original Pizza Place, Marietta, 11 a.m. to close.
Leave the order receipt and direct the cashier to put the
donation toward the Gold Star Park.

Gold Star Monument Unveiling:

June 23, Gold Star Park, Harmar Hill.
11 a.m

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