

News and stories

New memorial in Veterans Park Honors Families of Fallen Soldiers

Morgan Eads | [Lexington Herald Leader](#)

More than fifty people gathered Tuesday morning and watched as a new Lexington monument built to honor fallen soldiers and their families was unveiled.

Mothers of soldiers killed in combat, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient, and several local and state officials helped dedicate the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument, which now stands near the entrance of Veterans Park.

The memorial is the 18th dedicated by the Hershel “Woody” Williams Medal of Honor Foundation. The foundation is working to place similar memorials in cities across the country.

Williams, 93, who received the [Medal of Honor for his actions in the Battle of Iwo Jima](#), delivered the remarks at the dedication. He is the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient who fought in that battle. He told the crowd that the event Tuesday was not for him but for the families and mothers of men and women who died while serving in the military.

“It makes no difference how old you are or how old you get,” Williams said. “If your mother is living, you are still her boy.”

A group from the [American Gold Star Mothers](#), a national organization of mothers who’ve lost sons or daughters in military service, helped unveil the black granite monument.

Sally Edwards and Lue Hutchinson both lost their sons in Operation Desert Storm. They are now members of a Kentucky chapter of American Gold Star Mothers.

“Without the friendship and support of each other, I don’t think we’d have made it,” Edwards said.

Edwards and Hutchinson were once called bookends when they attended an event together, they said. Edwards’ son, Jonathan “Jack” Ross Edwards, died in the first day of Operation Desert Storm, and Hutchinson’s son, William Thomas Butts, was killed hours before the cease-fire that marked the end of the conflict.

When Butts was killed, Sally Edwards contacted his family, said Christine Bowe, Butts’ sister.

“Only in Kentucky would a letter addressed to ‘the family of William Butts, Falmouth, Ky.,’ reach the person,” Bowe said. “But it did, thanks to a rural route mail carrier who knew exactly who it was.”

Since then, the women have been active in the organization.

“It’s important for us to help remember everybody else’s pain, too,” Sally Edwards said. “And we’re so pleased to have people who want to remember and support patriotism. Our children have to learn patriotism.”

Several at the dedication Tuesday expressed their hope that the monument would help others remember the sacrifice of military members and their families.

"I love that Lexington has this in a public park, where kids are going to see this and they're going to play around it and they're going to go, 'What's that all about?'" said Cathy Mullins, president of a Kentucky Gold Star Mothers chapter. "They're going to grow up knowing about veterans."

Mullins' son, Brandon, was killed in Afghanistan in 2011.

Bowe said it's important for Gold Star mothers, Gold Star families and residents to come together for events like the dedication.

"You see moms here that their loss is fresh," Bowe said. "There's a mom (who) just lost a son in 2015. I think it's important for her to see they've trudged one step at a time and they're here and together in this community of Gold Star Mothers."

Mayor Jim Gray, Lt. Gov. Jenean Hampton and Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes were among the speakers at the dedication.