

News and stories

Funds sought for 'gold star families' monument in Marietta

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Janelle Patterson | [Parkersburg News and Sentinel](#)

MARIETTA — When a service member makes the ultimate sacrifice protecting their nation, the families left behind are known as gold star families.

In Marietta, fundraising for a monument to those families has begun with the intent to place a black granite memorial in Lookout Park this coming spring.

"The official groundbreaking is Oct. 10," said Safety-Service Director Jonathan Hupp. *"It's an open event where the Sgt. Bob O'Malley Detachment #1436 of the Marine Corps League will hopefully get the first of sizable donations to make this a success."*

According to the U.S. Army, the term "*gold star family*" is a modern 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.

"When a family gives one of their own in the service of their country we must recognize the sacrifice they continue to feel," said Bryan Casey, a former Harmar Hill resident and grandson of Hershel

"Woody" Williams, founder of the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation that builds the monuments across the country.

A monument takes about \$50,000 to build, said Casey, but they're built to last for generations.

Currently 22 monuments dot the nation and 36 projects are underway.

"My grandfather when he started this wanted a way to not only recognize the mothers who had lost their children in war, but the families, the brothers, sisters, fathers, cousins, children who have to live on having given up their loved one in service," he explained, blinking back a glimmer of a tear. "One gold star sister in Grove City really brought it home for me... what she said is 'Thank you for finally recognizing the sacrifice our family has made.' It was the first time anyone had recognized them was when that monument went up."

The foundation is working in partnership with the Marine Corps League to raise the funds, and is providing the first \$5,000 needed for the effort.

Then Oct. 7 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the league's members and members of the Mid-Ohio Valley Veterans Outreach program will be collecting donations outside of both entrances to Walmart in Marietta.

"We want this to get funded as quickly as possible," said Bernie Lyons, a member of the detachment. "We've got a commitment from a couple banks so far and the league is ready to donate \$1,500 but we want to hit that \$50,000 soon so that we can get this in by spring."

On Oct. 10 the official groundbreaking will take place up at the park with Woody present and remarks from not only local dignitaries but also Shirley White, founding member of the West Virginia Gold Star Mothers group.

"We'll announce some of the commitments we've had there too and people can bring a check on (Oct. 10) or a card will be accepted that day," said Lyons. "Any amount is welcome."

Secure donations may also be made online at hwwmohfoundation.org/marietta.

If You Go

- * Oct. 7: Donations for the Marietta Gold Star Family Memorial Monument will be accepted outside both entrances of the Marietta Walmart.
- * Oct. 10: Groundbreaking of the Gold Star Family Memorial Monument at 7 p.m. at Lookout Park.
- * Corporate sponsors will be announced.
- * Local Gold Star Families will be recognized.
- * Donations will be accepted by cash, check or card.
- * To donate: Contact Roy Trembly at 304-966-4419, Bernie Lyons at 304-295-6994 or visit hwwmohfoundation.org/marietta.

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

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