

News and stories

Digging begins for Michigan's first monument to lost veterans' families

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Jacob Hamilton | [MLive Michigan](#)

BAY CITY - Bay City's Battery Park already features monuments to the county's military members and veterans, but this fall will see a monument to the sacrifices of their families - the first memorial of its kind in Michigan.

Crews from Serenus Johnson Construction Co. began digging at noon Thursday, Aug. 24, for the monument's 5-foot concrete foundation, which will be poured next week. Fourteen-foot lights will also be installed to illuminate the monument.

The black granite monument made by Bailey Monument Co. in Kentucky will be installed in mid-September. A dedication ceremony is planned for Gold Star Families Day, Sept. 30, at 11 a.m.

The Michigan Gold Star Families monument will commemorate the sacrifices of the families who have lost members at war. The terms "Blue Star Family" and "Gold Star Family" are believed to have originated with the hanging of flags bearing blue stars in the windows of households who had a member in active service in WWI. The gold star title came to those whose family members were lost as casualties of war.

The memorial holds special meaning for Keith Markstrom, president of the Bay Veterans Foundation and a Vietnam War veteran who is a Gold Star nephew - his uncle perished in WWI. Markstrom says the Gold Star designation's origins are particularly relevant to Bay City, which, at a population of about 60,000, many of whom were young and eligible for the draft, sent many young men overseas for WWI.