

News and stories

Marine Corps League donates monument to the Donel C. Kinnard Memorial State Veterans Cemetery

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Ben Calwell | [Kanawha Metro](#)

In a solemn, yet upbeat ceremony at the Donel C. Kinnard Memorial State Veterans Cemetery in InSTITUTE, the Department of West Virginia Marine Corps League donated a new monument in honor of Marine Corps members buried in the cemetery.

The Oct. 2 event involved Marine Corps League Detachments from around the state, including Huntington and Charleston. The Charleston and Kanawha Valley area was represented by the Herbert J. Thomas Detachment No. 947.

The guest speaker was World War II Marine Corps veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams, who also celebrated his 94th birthday on Oct. 2.

The new monument was placed along the Memorial Walk at the Donel C. Kinnard cemetery, which is at 130 Academy Drive, near the campus of West Virginia State University.

The effort to get a Marine Corps monument installed at the cemetery was spearheaded by Richard Shank II of Huntington, chairman of the Marine Corps Monument Committee and past department commandant of the Marine Corps League in West

Virginia.

“We’re dedicating a Marine Corps monument to honor the memory, service and sacrifice of all the Marines laid to rest here at the cemetery,” Shank said, prior to the dedication ceremony.

The Marine Corps monument will also serve as a comfort to visiting families.

“We wanted to have a lasting tribute for their families as they come and visit in here at the cemetery,” Shank said.

The new Marine Corps monument was a collaborative effort of Marine Corps League detachments from throughout the state.

“This has been a combined effort of all 13 detachments in the state,” he said.

Shank said efforts to get the monument installed began in January 2016.

Of the finished monument, Shank said, “We’re really happy with it.”

The Marine Corps monument is in the Memorial Walk area, next to the Gold Star Families monument.

The idea for the monument came about when the Department of West Virginia Marine Corps League presented a certificate to a Marine Corps League honor guard at the cemetery.

“We walked down the Memorial Walk, and we were like, ‘Hey, this needs a Marine Corps monument,’” Shank said. “We have several Marine Corps League members buried over here.”

The Herbert J. Thomas detachment organized the dedication ceremony, said Jean Lamb of Cedar Grove, the detachment’s adjutant and paymaster.

“All the detachments are involved, but we organized it in terms of physically setting it up. We did the program and all the invites. We did the organization of it to get it going today,” Lamb said. In honor of Williams’ birthday, “we have a little cake that we’re going to cut with a sword,” she said.

Owen Stout of Dawes, commandant of the Herbert J. Thomas detachment, gave credit to Shank for spearheading the monument installation.

“He’s the one who really got it going, and all the detachments pitched in and helped him with it,” Stout said.

The Department of West Virginia Marine Corps League is an all-volunteer Marine veterans organization and has been active in West Virginia since 1947.

Some of the many programs they support include legislative programs supporting veterans’ rights and benefits, Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services, Toys For Tots and the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument Foundation.

Marine Corps League detachments support one another as well as other veterans organizations and community-based programs.

Recognizable by their red blazers at various veterans’ events, it’s not unusual to see Marine Corps League members providing color guard and honor guard details.

For more information, visit www.mcleaguedeptofwv.org.

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