

# News and stories

## Last Medal of Honor recipient from Iwo Jima shares story in Whitehall

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Julia Rose | [WFMZ.com](http://WFMZ.com)

WHITEHALL TWP. - World War II veteran Hershel "Woody" Williams wears his Medal of Honor to honor others.

"I wear it on behalf of them, not me," said Williams.

Williams served in the U.S. Marine Corps, joining in 1943. He received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman for his action against Japanese forces on Iwo Jima. Williams was tasked with using a flamethrower to try to reduce the devastation of Japanese machine gun fire.

"Two of the marines that were selected to protect me lost their lives," said Williams.

Williams says he wears his medal in their honor, not his.

The West Virginia native visited the Fellowship Community in Whitehall on Friday thanks to the Lehigh Valley Veteran History Project. He spoke in front of a packed room, telling his story and even describing the first time he tried to join the military but was rejected.

"I was a pretty well built boy, I had lots of muscle, I'd worked hard all my life, wasn't anything wrong with me but he said I was too short," said Williams.

The height restriction would later be reduced and Williams headed overseas.

The veteran now has a Congressional Medal of Honor and a Purple Heart, but he says the real honor is to help Gold Star families build monuments for their loved ones killed in combat, which he does through his foundation. Williams also travels the country sharing his story to educate and inspire.

"Perhaps some of my experience will give somebody the courage that if the moment in time ever happens in their life, they will react in a positive way and do what needs to be done," said Williams.

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