

News and stories

Medal of Honor Recipient, 91, Works to Expand Monuments for Gold Star Families

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Cristina Corbin | Fox News

For 91-year-old Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams, the idea of building monuments to honor families of the fallen came some 70 years ago, when a plane carrying his closest childhood friend, an Air Force serviceman, disappeared over an Indian jungle during World War II -- never to be found.

Decades later, Williams, the last surviving recipient of the Medal of Honor from the battle of Iwo Jima, would devote himself to placing at least one tribute to Gold Star families in every state -- a project the decorated U.S. Marine called "thrilling and inspirational."

The initiative has so far led to the completion of monuments in five cities -- with an additional 20 planning tributes as a result of Williams' work. On Sunday, a ceremony was held in Fall River, Mass., to break ground on a Gold Star Families' Memorial planned for Bicentennial Park.

"I had a mother at Valley Forge say to me, 'You are the first person who has ever said anything about paying tribute to me over the loss of my son.'" - Hershel "Woody" Williams, retired U.S. Marine and Medal of Honor recipient

"We want to get a memorial monument in every major community," said Williams, who was awarded the military's highest honor for his combat service as a Marine in the Battle of Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945.