

# News and stories

## Gold Star memorial to honor sacrifice of fallen soldiers, families

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Lici Beveridge | [Hattiesburg American](#)

Leonard Scardino is one of several people who has been working to raise money to build a memorial for families who have lost loved ones serving in the military service.

Scardino of Oak Grove knows what it's like to feel that kind of loss. His son, Army National Guard 2nd Lt. Anthony Scardino, was killed in 2014 during a training accident at Fort Gordon in Georgia. He was 27.

"This means a lot to our family," Leonard Scardino said. "Right now we have 1,100 Gold Star families in Mississippi. Since the Gulf War started, we've lost over 400 service members to the war."

A Gold Star family is one whose father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter or other loved one dies in military service to his or her country.

Anthony Scardino had served on two tours — one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan — before he was assigned to the 442nd Signal Battalion, 15th Regimental Signal Brigade at Fort Gordon for leadership training.

His father, a memorial committee member, this week said the money needed has been raised, the granite purchased and the tribute is being etched. The memorial will be unveiled in May during a ceremony at the Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby.

"It's very emotional, but I'm doing this for all Gold Star family members," Leonard Scardino said. "It's hard to get up and talk to them because people normally when they lose their soldier want to back off into the woodwork and just deal with it.

"I'm hoping to stand up for them so they'll have a place they can go to and also to be able to let the world know when a soldier goes down, the family also has to deal with it the rest of their lives. We respect that, we understand that and we appreciate that."

Scardino recently presented the Forrest and Lamar county supervisors with plaques, thanking them for their contributions to the memorial.

"The board is proud to have been part of that endeavor," Forrest County Board President David Hogan said. "That monument will be placed at Camp Shelby in remembrance of the (men and women) who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms."

A groundbreaking, attended by military and state dignitaries, was held a year ago.

Retired Col. Hoss Ladner, speaking on behalf of Rep. Steven Palazzo, said in an earlier story the memorial could help ease the pain of losing a loved one to war.

"We often talk about the sacrifice of the veteran and the military member, but those of us who serve, we know the sacrifices and challenges our families go through," he said. "They're the ones who stay back home and keep it going when we're away for a long time, worrying about us and praying for us and in some cases having to live with the pain of ultimate sacrifice."

There will be five memorials throughout the state, Scardino said,

through the help and guidance of the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation, which gave \$5,000 to get the memorial started. Forrest County and Lamar County supervisors also contributed to the effort.

The other memorials will be in Meridian, Tupelo, the Jackson area and on the Coast.

**If you go**

The unveiling and dedication of the first Mississippi Gold Star Memorial will be at 10 a.m. May 16 at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby.

For more information, visit [hwwmohf.org/camp-shelby-ms.html](http://hwwmohf.org/camp-shelby-ms.html).

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