

## News and stories

### World War II vet pushes to recognize Gold Star families at AF museum

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Barrie Barber | [Dayton Daily News](#)

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE—Before he enlisted in the Marine Corps and went on to face fierce fighting in the Pacific in World War II, Hershel “Woody” Williams learned about loss of war as an 18-year-old taxi driver in West Virginia.

It would fall to him to deliver a Western Union telegram to the families of the fallen with the news from the war front.

It was, he said, a “traumatic experience,” as was the loss of a boyhood friend who died in the war. And it sowed the beginning of what the sole-surviving Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipient in World War II would start decades later: Monuments across the country dedicated to the families left behind.

Williams was among those expected at a ceremonial ground-breaking Thursday, Sept. 28, at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force for a future Gold Star Family Memorial Monument in the outdoor memorial park.

“We thought the museum would be an ideal place because of the vast number of people that visit,” the 93-year-old veteran said in a telephone interview. “... The Gold Star Memorial Monument

recognizes the families of all of those who sacrificed their lives in the Armed Forces at any time in our history.”

By next week, 25 monuments across the country will be in existence when the newest is unveiled in Bay City, Mich, said Chad Graham, who is Williams’ grandson and president and director of operations of the Louisville, Ky.-based nonprofit, the Hershel “Woody” Williams Medal of Honor Foundation. The family launched the foundation, which also offers college scholarships to children of Gold Star families, in 2010.