

News and stories

Gainesville monument to honor Gold Star families

Dec 7, 2017

Megan Gray-Hatfield | [Gainesville Daily Register](#)

Gainesville City Council members on Tuesday unanimously approved placement of a Gold Star Families Memorial Monument at Leonard Park.

Bobby Balthrop, an honorary board member of the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation, requested the monument be erected at Leonard Park, north of the main pavilion, south of the current war memorial and west of the Leonard Park exit road.

“No one would ever discount the ultimate sacrifice so many have made for giving up their very lives for our freedom,” Balthrop said. “However, there’s another group among us that are deeply affected by that same sacrifice. These are moms, dads, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and extended family. Due to their ongoing sacrifice and suffering, Medal of Honor recipient Hershel Woody Williams has made it his life’s work to erect monuments, an example you see here, in their honor across the nation.”

The foundation launched four years ago on Williams’ 90th birthday, according to Brent Casey, Williams’ grandson and the foundation’s executive director.

Williams has been visiting Gainesville as part of its Medal of Honor

Host City events for years and has longed to place a memorial monument in the city, Casey said.

Gainesville will be the third city in the state to have a Gold Star Families Memorial Monument. Casey said Cedar Park was the first city in the state to have a monument and McKinney is expected to have a dedication ceremony for theirs on Dec.16.

There have been 30 sites established in 4 years and 53 more, including Gainesville, are in-progress, Casey said.

“Our goal is to get at least one in all 50 states,” Casey said.

Balthrop said donations to help fund the project will be sought soon.

The average cost for a monument is anywhere from \$48,000 to \$52,000, according to Casey. He said the foundation provides \$5,000 of in-kind and monetary donations toward the project.

During a phone interview Wednesday afternoon, Casey said his grandfather was at the hospital with a relative but was excited to hear the monument’s placement had been approved.

“Gainesville is near and dear to his heart,” Casey said. “We are just grateful to the city of Gainesville for having the foresight and wanting to recognize Gold Star families.”