

News and stories

Gold Star monument in works for Walla Walla

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Union Bulletin

Walla Walla native Penelope Linterman presented a special program to members of Sunrise Rotary Club regarding the Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments, tributes being installed across the country, reported Rotarian John McKern.

Hershel "Woody" Williams, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient from World War II, started the project. In 2010, he co-founded the nonprofit Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation to honor Gold Medal families, relatives and children throughout America.

The monuments preserve the memory of the fallen and stand as a reminder that freedom is not free.

So far, 33 monuments have been dedicated and 50 are in progress. They will be in 36 states. The one proposed for Fort Walla Walla will be the first in Washington State. The Walla Walla site approved by city authorities is on Fort land at the corner of Myra and Dalles Military roads, Penelope told the group.

Considered too short by the Marine Corps at 5-foot six-inches, Woody was only accepted into the 21st Marines, 3d Marine Division toward the end of the war. He deployed to the Pacific Theater and

landed on Iwo Jima where he kept flame-thrower units supplied with fuel containers. Finding everyone had been killed on the six-man team he supplied, Woody asked to operate the flame-thrower himself.

A squad brought him more fuel containers and Woody burned out a half dozen pillboxes and saved the lives of innumerable U.S. Marines. More marines who brought him fuel cells were killed.

For heroic efforts that saved many of Woody's comrades, President Harry Truman awarded him the Congressional Medal of Honor on Oct. 5, 1945.

Woody didn't forget comrades he left behind. He felt bad they were not adequately awarded, and their families were not awarded due respect for their losses.

In addition to the monuments, the Foundation offers scholarships to Gold Star children, sponsors outreach programs and events and informs communities about Gold Star families and the sacrifice they have endured.

Penelope is the local contact and Pacific Northwest liaison. She can be reached at 360-670-7629, or at dameafiddle@gmail.com. Local donations can be made to HWWMOH Foundation, Fort Walla Walla Project, P.O. Box 2983, Walla Walla, WA 99362.

Online donations can be made to the Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation, at hwwmohf.org in Louisville, Ky.

Walla Walla Sunrise Rotary meets at 6:45 a.m. each Wednesday for breakfast and community interest programs at the St. Francis Community Center, 722 W. Alder St. For more information, contact President Wiley Warner at wyliewarner@hotmail.com.

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