

News and stories

WWII Medal of Honor recipient to give commencement speech at WVU Parkersburg

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Loyd Price | [The News Center](#)

PARKERSBURG, W.Va. (WTAP) - World War II Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams will give the commencement address at West Virginia University at Parkersburg's spring commencement, on Saturday, May 6, at 10:30 A.M., in the College Activities Center.

This semester, WVU Parkersburg will award 320 certificates, associate and bachelor's degrees to nearly 280 students, pending final grades. More than 130 students are planning to participate in the ceremony. The college will also award two honorary degrees and announce the Alumna of the Year and Bernard P. McDonough Outstanding Faculty Member award recipients.

Hershel "Woody" Williams was born on a dairy farm in 1923 in Quiet Dell, W.Va. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served in the Battle of Iwo Jima. During the battle, Williams displayed "valiant devotion to duty" and service above self as he "enabled his company to reach its objective." His actions, commitment to his fellow service members, and heroism were recognized on Oct. 5, 1945 when he received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Truman at the White House.

As World War II began, Williams delivered Western Union telegrams informing the Gold Star families of the death of their loved ones. He has said that those experiences gave him a “greater appreciation for life and an understanding of a difference in death in the normal world as expected in life, and those lost serving in the military for their country.” He noted that “consideration and recognition of the families of those lost in war was very inadequate.” This observation and his personal commitment to veterans and their families led him to help create the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation in 2012.