

I am Jon Bennehoof, as the Great grandson of two Gold Star Mothers. I grew up in Youngstown, Ohio with visits to Great Grandmas' homes for occasions, just visits, holidays, and reunions, surrounded by family.

Every family gathering that I remember included a remembrance of Uncles Walter or Tom. Both had served in World War II. The memories of their sons were mostly happy memories but you could see the impact of being a Gold Star Mother had on both of my Great Grandmothers. Pictures of their sons were on the buffet or mantle for their entire lives.

In fact, every one of my Uncles on both sides of the family, except for one who was too young, served in the Peace Effort called WWII. Most of them came home. Two Uncles that I will never know and a couple other, more distant relatives, left family behind.

My Uncles served in every theater of conflict. My Dad and his younger brother served in the Pacific. Their older brother served in Europe. Uncles Tom and Don, brothers, both pilots, served in the Pacific theater. Uncle Walter was a pilot in Europe.

My Brother and I both served in Vietnam as did most of our cousins. It took Vietnam 12 years to kill my cousin. He lost both his legs in Vietnam and never recovered. He took his own life due to the Trauma that he experienced, so many times more than his brother, my brother, or I.

We came back, whole, physically.

I share all of this to paint the picture that I understand the environment, the emotion, and the impact of being a Gold Star Spouse, although I am not, and never will be, one.

In 2019 I was approached to join a committee to bring "The Ohio Gold Star Families Memorial Monument: to Columbus. Being intimate with the issue, I did not hesitate. I was conscripted to be the Fundraising Director for the Committee and currently serve in that role. The Monument will be located behind the National Veterans Memorial & Museum, with a dedication on Gold Star Families Day, 9/27/2024.

The purpose of the Monument is to:

- Provide a space Gold Star Families can call their own, to honor their Loved Ones and family
- Gold Star Family Outreach events program
- Scholarships to eligible Gold Star Children
- Advocating for educational benefits for all Gold Star Family members
- Funds raised above that required for the monument support the programming of the Woody Williams Foundation, notably, the scholarship fund for children of Gold Star Families

Only 472,258 battle deceased veterans are registered in Ohio. A third to half of them are WWII veterans, given almost 12 million residents in Ohio, that is less than 4% of the population IF you include the WWII veterans, who are aging out.

With potentially only .3% of our population being given a tax relief, after the loss of their loved one, in the service of our country. Is a SMALL price to pay for their loss and can help establish a stable environment for their family. Less than 1% of the United States population serves in the military. This legislation would not have that much of a financial community impact. Yielding a large impact for this small population.