

Excerpts from the *Veterans Memorial Park* email thread

On Fri, Nov 13, 2020 at 4:13 PM Patrick W. OLeary <poleary@twc.com> wrote:

Friday November 13, 2020

Ms. Holder,

I serve on the board of the **Hershel “Woody” Williams Medal of Honor Foundation**. Woody is a WW II Marine Corps veteran who earned the Medal of Honor for his bravery during the battle for Iwo Jima. He was presented the medal by President Truman on October 5, 1945, three days after his 22nd birthday. Woody is 97 years old, he lives near Huntington, West Virginia.

In 2013, Woody launched his foundation with a mission to place monuments in communities to honor, recognize and increase awareness of Gold Star Families. He was in Pensacola this week to dedicate the 75th monument at the Veterans Memorial Park.

While at the park on Thursday morning he discovered the notes and drawings your students left at the park’s newest monument, the *Gold Star Families Memorial Monument*, that Woody dedicated on Wednesday November 11th. I found your name and the name of the school on one of the notes.

He was impressed with your student’s artwork and messages for veterans. He was pleased to read that many of the students thanked veterans for their freedom. When Woody enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1943, it was because he wanted to help preserve our freedom.

During WW II there were 472 Medal of Honors awarded, there are only two living recipients - Woody and Charles Colidge who lives in Tennessee. Charles served in the U.S. Army in Europe and Woody served in the Pacific. He is the last U.S. Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipient from WW II.

He did read all the notes and even signed a couple. He asked me to return them and to express his gratitude to the students.

The U.S. Navy uses a term to express a job well done – *Bravo Zulu*. The students of Bellview Middle School have certainly earned a “*Bravo Zulu*” from a special Marine.

Please share an address that I can use to return the notes to the students.

Thank you

Pat

Below is a link to this year’s Commandant of the Marine Corps birthday message, Woody is featured in the video because this is the 75th anniversary of the battle for Iwo Jima.

Commandant’s 245th Marine Corps Birthday Message – (8:01)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAjz7U7uZPw&t=83s>

Below is a link to a website that list Woody's Medal of Honor citation

The Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation website

<https://www.cmoths.org/recipients/hershel-woodrow-woody-williams>

I have attached a PDF file with a few pictures of Woody from his time in Pensacola.

Patrick W. O'Leary

Louisville, Kentucky USA

Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)

Email: poleary@twc.com

From: Holder, Stephanie <Sholder@ecsdfi.us>

Sent: Sunday, November 15, 2020 22:07

To: Patrick W. OLeary <poleary@twc.com>; Adams, Melia <madams@ecsdfi.us>; Tara Palasciano <tpalasciano@ecsdfi.us>; Heather Vandervort <hvandervort@ecsdfi.us>; Tammie Davis <tdavis@ecsdfi.us>; Lisa McMillian <LMcmillian@ecsdfi.us>; Laura Ivie <LIVie@ecsdfi.us>; Lynn Robinson <writeone50@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: Veterans Memorial Park notes

Oh WOW! What an honor! He may be touched to know that my students are ESOL Students. I am their reading teacher. They are learning to read and speak English. They are from all over the world! All of them are truly grateful to be in America. They have never experienced our kind of freedom. It is my privilege to teach them about the meaning of our pledge to our flag and what Veterans Day means. My dear friend Lyn Robinson, a retired teacher from Bellview Middle has been putting these cards out for many years and continued it after she retired. Her father served and she has always been passionate about continuing this small gesture of thanks to all of those that serve. Our students are very excited every year to make these cards and are even more touched when it is recognized. We are very honored to have a small part in thanking our Veterans! Thank you so very much for reaching out to me. I hope you don't mind that I will be sharing this email with

our Principal, Assistant Principal, Mrs. Robinson, and the other teachers at BMS that had students make cards (Heather Vandervort, Tammie Davis, Laura Ivie, Lisa McMillian). Our school address is Bellview Middle School, 6201 Mobile Hwy., Pensacola, FL 32526 . Many blessings!

Stephanie Holder—ESOL Reading Grades 6,7 & 8
Bellview Middle School
941-6080 ext. 410303

From: **Patrick W. OLeary** <poleary@twc.com>
Date: Sun, Nov 15, 2020 at 9:58 PM
Subject: RE: Veterans Memorial Park notes
To: Holder, Stephanie <Sholder@ecsdf1.us>, Adams, Melia <madams@ecsdf1.us>, Tara Palasciano <tpalasciano@ecsdf1.us>, Heather Vandervort <hvandervort@ecsdf1.us>, Tammie Davis <tdavis@ecsdf1.us>, Lisa McMillian <LMcmillian@ecsdf1.us>, Laura Ivie <LIVie@ecsdf1.us>, Lynn Robinson <writeone50@gmail.com>

Ms. Holder,

Thank you for the reply. I will ship the documents back to you Monday.

I will share with Woody the background of your students. One of his daughters is an ASL teacher in Huntington, West Virginia so he knows that teachers are special. I have known Woody for over ten years and have heard him give credit for his patriotism to one of his teachers that taught him about how freedom is precious. He grew up in a very rural part of West Virginia in the 1920's, he attended a one room school house and had the same teacher for the first eight years of his education.

Please share my email with others at the school, it is a great story that is worth sharing.

Again, thank you for the reply and for your efforts to support veterans. We live in a great country but it will only remain that way if young men and women volunteer to protect and defend her. We can never totally thank veterans for what they have done for us but we should take every opportunity to thank and honor them for their service. The cards your students are leaving at the Veterans Memorial Park are a wonderful example of thanking and honoring veterans.

Woody is 97 years old and became a Marine in 1943. He is still helping protect and defend America with his work with Gold Star Families.

I have attached a picture of Woody in front of the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument at Veterans Memorial Park.

Pat

Patrick W. O'Leary
Louisville, Kentucky USA

Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)
Email: poleary@twc.com