



**"The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to
tell their story for them."**

Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*

During the past 5 years, the Gold Star Mission Team have been honored to learn and share many stories of our Fallen Heroes, we've heard along this journey! It is only fitting this year to include this quote from the Polish-American poet Czeslaw Milosz, as this was the first International Gold Star 500.

Twenty-eight folks from Poland, including: military, veterans, students and Gold Star Families, spent about 10 days with the Gold Star Mission Team, and together we completed the 2022 Gold Star 500! The Gold Star Mission hopes to not only continue this relationship, but continue building upon it in the future!

The Gold Star Mission Team is grateful to the many dedicated volunteers, event participants, sponsors and donors for their continued support! This annual report highlights many of the accomplishments of everyone involved in the Gold Star Mission!

Please accept of sincerest appreciation for your help making 2022 another very successful year for the Gold Star Mission!

Always Remember, Never Forget

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From the President

ALWAYS REMEMBER!



In 2017 a small group of veterans formed the Gold Star Mission, and hosted the first GSM 500 in an effort to support and raise awareness for Gold Star Families.

In less than six years, this organization has grown to host several events each year, connecting with many communities. It has hosted Gold Star Families from Poland as riders and volunteers during the 2022 GS500. Over 200 scholarships have been awarded to those seeking higher education, each in the name of one of our Illinois Fallen, each telling a part of his or her story.

On January 1st, 2019, I was coined “The Volunteer” and joined the Executive Board as Secretary. Never would have I expected to be asked to be Vice President, let alone President of such a great organization. My unexpected journey with GSM should have taught me to never be surprised by this organization’s ability to further the mission. However, I’ve found myself shocked each year in Gold Star Mission’s mounting accomplishments these past four years serving on the board.

If one watches any one of our volunteers during an event, it becomes quite clear why Gold Star Mission has been successful. These individuals are constantly mobilizing in to teams, exhibiting their selfless endurance in service to the mission. Though this particular mission will likely never end, our volunteers are not deterred.

Gold Star Families inspire us to be bigger than ourselves and answer the call of this noble mission. This brings me confidence in Gold Star Mission’s future, and I look forward to continuing the mission.

Matt Jones
President, Gold Star Mission

What We're About



The Gold Star Mission was established in 2017 in Springfield, Illinois after several veterans and friends, moved by stories of the Gold Star Families that lost a loved one in Afghanistan or Iraq, took action to help others in need. What started as a desire to provide scholarships for surviving children has evolved into widespread effort to assist Gold Star Families and others in need in order to preserve the memory of our fallen Military Heroes.

Gold Star Mission Strategy

Mission: Inspire people and mobilize resources in service to others; as a lasting remembrance of our Fallen Military Heroes.

Vision: A nation of communities inspired to Always Remember and Never Forget the names of fallen Military Heroes, value their sacrifices and honor their families.

Objectives:

- Provide Support to Gold Star Families
- Ensure Lasting Remembrance of our Fallen Heroes
- Mobilize Resources
- Inspire People

Values:

Honorable: Be worthy of the trust and esteem of Gold Star Families, the public and our fallen Military Heroes.

Relevant: Be pertinent to the matter at hand; in our case, devotion to pursuing our objectives to achieve the mission of remembering our fallen Military Heroes.

Family Profile: The Weikerts



resonate through that banquet hall gave me goosebumps. The thought of this group working so hard so my son and others like him would not be forgotten, brought me to tears. My husband felt the same way!

We have been to subsequent banquets, each as powerful. We are welcomed each time with hugs and warmth, and honored. A special memory I have is of a young high school student named Jake who had become part of GSM and went up onto the stage to attest to what it meant to him. He excitedly planned to become part of the National Guard because of their influence.

Being newly retired, I wanted to give back to GSM and help in some way.

When the ride started up post-Covid, I signed up as a volunteer. When Eric Murray discovered my 22 plus years of experience as an ER nurse, he was in need of a medic and dropped me in that slot. He also asked me to help out as a Gold Star parent.

For the past two years I have volunteered in that capacity on the GSM 500 and loved every minute of it. The riders are wonderful and seeing them work so hard in my son and others' names is thrilling! Working with the other volunteers that provide organization and support to the ride is awe inspiring. The amount of work, dedication and heart that goes into something like this from them is enough inspiration to last me to the next year! And that young man Jake,



My son Matthew was killed in Afghanistan in 2010 after five tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan as a Marine then a soldier. I cannot remember the exact year we became involved with GSM but I believe it was in the third year of their existence. I like to tease that I was "stalked" by Chuck Kitson, but it is definitely teasing because he went about it in the most professional way. Some of his family live in Jacksonville and while visiting here, he noticed my vehicle with the sticker of my son on it. He went to our Survivor Outreach Services coordinator, Chris Milchuck. We have a great relationship with Chris and when she explained what GSM was and asked if we would consider contacting Chuck, we did. That is how we attended our first banquet, learned the scholarship basics and met the recipient of the scholarship given in our sons' name that year.

Hearing "Always Remember-Never Forget"



Both years have been wonderful. This year had an extra special component to it because of the Polish contingent that joined us. There were eight military riders, six high school students with two educator chaperons and eleven gold star family members (wives, children and parents). The majority spoke some English but some spoke only Polish. It was a communication barrier that we overcame because we had a common goal. We made friendships with smiles, hugs, gestures and often kids as interpreters.

land where we were met by our friend Lidia Kordasz-Garniewicz, her son Michal and husband Marek, then were joined by our friends Jola and Gerard. While Michal is still in high school, he is a brilliant historian and provided us with a wonderful, fun tour of the beauty of Krakow. It remained relatively untouched by the horrible destruction of WWII. The



did join the National Guard, works with them and rides with us when he can.

On the rides, different communities are visited each year. Gold Star families are sought out from those communities and invited to join us for meals at local veteran agencies like AmVETs, American Legions, VFW's. These organizations have all provided shelter for stops or meals and volunteer hours to help with the ride and we meet the most amazing people! We do ride-by's at schools to involve the local schoolchildren. But for all of us, the connection with the Gold Star families is what it is all about. I can see that in every thing GSM does. I can help because those of us who have experienced this loss have a special connection that we cannot explain.

As a result of these connections, Vonda Rogers, another Gold Star mother that volunteers on the ride, and I were invited to Poland's Day of Remembrance on December 21, 2022. The Polish survivors call their group "Remembrance and Future" and they offered to sponsor three Gold Star Parents. Unfortunately, bad flying weather prevented the third participant from coming.

churches, the castle, the Christmas market draped in snow absolutely enchanted me. We were treated to a full traditional Polish Christmas eve dinner, then the next day a charming restaurant for pierogis.

Through Lidia's military connections we learned the fascinating history of the Polish military and toured a museum at the 6th Airborne Brigade Hall of Tradition. We learned of Poland's long peace keeping involvement in WWII then on through NATO where some of them were linked with our own Camp Lincoln. Their forces have helped out in an astonishing number of countries from Africa to the Golan Heights and they have lost Polish soldiers in Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan.

On December 15 we left Chicago O'Hare and flew to Krakow Po-





On our way to Warsaw we stopped in Brzeziny, a small town where our friend and gold star mother, Krystyna Ambrozinska lives and is very active in the community center. We were welcomed by the governor of the town and a group of women who provided a wonderful Polish noon dinner.

Krystyna's grandson Sebastian was home from the UK for the holidays and graciously served as translator. We were treated as if we were ambassadors from the UN. What gracious, warm, welcoming people!!

Auschwitz, where more than one million people were killed in hideous ways, and the Warsaw Uprising museum made an impact on me that was life changing. There are not words and I have struggled since to explain. Being there, seeing, experiencing it, gave me something I have never received from my other experiences with powerful books (The Diary of Anne Frank, The Boy in

the Striped Pajamas) or movies (Schindler's List, The Pianist, Sophie's Choice) or even the very moving Holocaust Museum in Washington DC.

In Warsaw, we witnessed remnants of rubble that remain from the 85% of the city that was leveled by the Nazi's in WWII. In just 75 years, the country has rallied to its capital, restoring the old city center and royal castle to it's original then around that building, a big, beautiful, bustling modern metropolis.

We attended an evening ceremony at the memorial to Polish fallen soldiers at their Centrum Weterana, where our sons, Matthew and Joshua were acknowledged alongside theirs! What an honor! The next morning was a special mass for fallen soldiers then back to the memorial for the official Remembrance Day ceremonies followed by dinner.

Due to unfortunate weather



back home, we had to move our flight up and leave a day early which had us leaving within a half hour of the dinner's start.

Throughout our entire week Lidia had been by our side daily! Every other day we were joined as they were able by our Polish friends from the ride; Malgorzata, Krystyna, Jola, Gerard, Mela, Maria and Jon. In addition, new friends Mela's mom, as well as



Ola from Scotland and Sophia who spent three days with us and is Gerard's grandmother. Most importantly, all share our loss!

I hated to leave this group that cared for us so well. I loved them all; their families, their

communities, their country. What a wonderful addition to our GSM family, we are blessed!

The friendships and emotional connections we have been able to make over the past four years through Gold Star Mission are priceless and we are so grateful to all of those who have made this possible. My husband and I want to make this possible for as many gold star families as possible by continuing to support this wonderful group.

Susan and Dick Weikert
Proud parents of Staff Sgt. Matthew W. Weikert KIA July 17, 2010

Family Profile: Vonda Rodgers



As we sat in the O'Hare airport waiting to board the plane, I had no idea what to expect. We had been invited to participate in Poland's Day of Remembrance, honoring their fallen soldiers. My son, Sgt Joshua P Rodgers, would be included in the ceremonies.

Josh was killed in action on April 27, 2017. As a U.S. Army Ranger he was highly trained, well equipped, and fully prepared for the expectations of his job. Josh had discovered his purpose in life. That night, however, things simply went wrong - it happens in war. He and his Ranger brothers had set out to take down the leaders of the most evil organization - ISIS-K. While the mission was successful, the outcome was tragic. Two soldiers were killed; Sgt Cameron Thomas and Sgt Josh Rodgers.

Holding Josh as a tiny baby I didn't know I was raising a hero. Watching Josh as he ran around in camo and hid in the grass, I didn't know I was seeing a future soldier. Sitting through so many baseball and football games, I didn't know I was cheering on a future Ranger who would battle the world's most evil people. Hugging him at the airport, I didn't know I was saying a final goodbye. But I was, and in



Wagener, 24, Fairview Heights IL ~ Army Private First Class Jeffrey Wallace, 20, Hoopeston IL ~ Marine Corps Sergeant Nicholas Walsh, 26, Millstadt IL ~ Army Sergeant Albert Ware, an instant, we were parents of a fallen soldier. His Ranger family became our Ranger family. The military community wrapped their arms around us. We were welcomed into the Gold Star Family.

I'm embarrassed to admit that I didn't know what a Gold Star Family was before April 27, 2017. A Gold Star Family is the immediate family member(s) of a fallen service member who died while serving in a time of conflict. This recognition is important to honor the families

become international.

For almost 30 years Illinois Guardsmen have partnered with their Polish counterparts as a part of the National Guard Partnership for Peace Program, now called the State Partnership Program. For the first time, this year that partnership extended to honoring fallen heroes.

Soldiers, students, and Gold Star Family members traveled to Illinois to participate in the Gold Star 500. A bond was formed.

It is hard to describe how a group of people that had just met,



of the Fallen. Five years later my Gold Star Family stretches all the way to Poland.

The Gold Star Mission, a critical link in our military family chain, had reached out to us after Josh was killed. This incredible group of people have made it their mission to "Always Remember - Never Forget" Illinois' fallen military through events designed to raise awareness of our heroes and raise funds for scholarships awarded in their honor. While I had participated in several events and served on the scholarship committee, 2022 was my first year to volunteer with the Gold Star 500. This is also the year the race would

who do not speak the same language, can long for each other so deeply. We received an invitation to visit Poland soon after the Gold Star 500. With great effort across organizations in both countries, we found ourselves sitting in O'Hare ready to fly to Krakow. Two moms, who had held baby boys, who had watched them grow up, who had supported their decisions to serve, who had received folded flags at their funeral ... Two moms who didn't plan to go to Poland ... Two moms who couldn't wait to hug their Polish Gold Star Families.

The hugs started



soon after landing in Krakow and did not stop until we left Warsaw five days later. Our hosts introduced us to their beautiful cities. In Krakow we strolled through markets, took pictures in front of every Christmas tree we could find, prayed in beautiful churches, toured the Royal Castle, and snacked on fresh bagels. We met the kindest people. We visited the Airborne Museum and shared



stories of our sons, husbands, brothers, and dads who had died

2022 ACTIVITIES REPORT



2022 Event Highlights



MAY 21, 2022

GSM RUN FOR THE FALLEN

343 RUNNERS & 35 VOLUNTEERS

PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTED 15

STATES BESIDES IL (TX, OR, IN, WI,

**MI, NJ, NY, VA, AR, UT, TN, MO,
NC, GA, KS)**

2446 MILES RAN CUMULATIVELY

**IN 2022, PARTICIPANTS IN
GOLD STAR MISSION EVENTS
RAN NEARLY 2,500 MILES &
RODE OVER 14,300 MILES!**



JULY 8-9, 2022

GENERAL LOGAN 200

9 RIDERS & 8 VOLUNTEERS

1890 MILES COMPLETED

CUMULATIVELY

ESCORTED BY ISP & COMBAT

VETERANS MOTORCYCLE

ASSOCIATION HEART OF ILLINOIS

CHAPTER 24-1

**RUNNERS HAVE LOGGED 6,826
MILES SINCE 2019 & RIDERS
HAVE LOGGED 116,185 MILES
SINCE 2017!**



SEPTEMBER 20-24, 2022

GOLD STAR 500

537 MILES IN 5 DAYS

36 RIDERS & 5 VOLUNTEERS

INCLUDING 28 POLISH (16 RIDERS & 12 VOLUNTEERS)!

36 COMMUNITIES ENGAGED, OVER 270 COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

SUPPORTED BY 14 LOCAL SCHOOLS, INTERACTION WITH MANY MORE

25 GOLD STAR FAMILIES (14 FIRST TIME WITH GSM) REPRESENTED

12,450 CUMULATIVE MILES RIDDEN

**IN ADDITION TO OUR EVENTS, GOLD STAR MISSION HAD 24 VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT 8 CONFERENCES
STATEWIDE WITH AN INFORMATION BOOTH TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR WHAT WE DO:**

**THE ELKS ASSOCIATION MID-WINTER CONVENTION, THE MIDWEST PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL CONFERENCE, THE NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, THE
ILLINOIS AMVETS ANNUAL CONVENTION, THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS ANNUAL
CONVENTION, THE VFW DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE,
AND THE ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE.**

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2022 General Logan 200

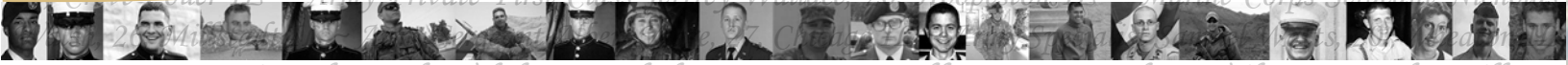


Highlighting our recent activities and support throughout the Rockford area, we chose the Illinois Army National Guard armory at Machesney Park as our starting point for the sixth annual 2022 General Logan 200. Nine riders (including a first-time rider) and eight volunteers along with two Illinois State Police Officers as escort traversed 210 miles from Machesney Park to Vietnam Memorial at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, IL over a 15-hour period on 8-9 July. This endurance bicycling event begins late Friday evening, riding through the night, and ending late Saturday afternoon. Except for a few

short, scheduled halts, the riders keep pedaling towards the finish line. The ride through the night was uneventful and it was in the small town of Ohio, IL where the team watched the sun rise on the local Veteran's Memorial. Our stop in Chillicothe, IL served as our lunch stop and good preparation as we crossed the Illinois River and ventured through East Peoria traffic. Many thanks to the IL State Police, local law enforcement agencies, and their keen capability for traffic management. The afternoon heat and Illinois corn fields filled the rest of our travels until our arrival in Athens, IL. There we met up with some

fellow veterans from the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA), Illinois Chapter 24-1 Heart of Illinois. Their almost 20 members and 12 motorcycles escorted the Gen Logan 200 peloton and support vehicles into the Vietnam Memorial at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. Upon completion of the ride the CVMA Chapter presented a check to GSM for \$4,000.00 to use for future scholarships and Fallen Heroes History Projects. We are forever grateful for the Chapter's contribution to supporting our mission to Always Remember and Never Forget.

2022 Gold Star 500



Wow, 537 miles in five days! What an amazing effort! Short nights, long days, hot days, rainy days, cold days, windy days, early days & late nights! Rolling into and stopping in over 3 dozen Illinois communities, engaging many, many K-12 Schools, Veteran Service Organizations, Churches and many more community leaders! This has and continues to be one incredibly amazing journey!

The friendships and camaraderie that we've made and found are lifelong, even though we might only see each other a couple times a year! And this year a lot of folks not only built new friendships with patriotic Americans, but also patriotic Poles! The friendship and camaraderie

are easy when we are all rallied around the mission of the Gold Star Mission!



The Gold Star 500 is our premier event of the year! This is our opportunity to engage many

communities and Gold Star Families as Gold Star Mission Ambassadors! The 2022 Gold Star 500 Team didn't fail in this mission! They spread the mission and helped people understand the significance of the phrase Gold Star Family or Gold Star Mother! It's always been about awareness and education, and our ambassadors continue to be tremendous assets!

A really BIG THANK YOU to our Gold Star Mother Volunteers - Susan Weikert and Vonda Rodgers! What an amazing job they did! From being the primary contacts with the Polish Gold Star Families, visiting every Illinois Gold Star Families we encountered, plus being sought out by media throughout the ride, you were awesome! You



both are truly an inspiration, and we THANK YOU also for sharing your memories of Matthew and Josh! You not only filled an instrumental role in our team, but you helped validate our mission! What inspiration to all of us! THANK YOU, we are indebted to you!

To paraphrase from an old saying "it takes a village to raise

a child", it takes a village to pull off the Gold Star 500! Although Gold Star Mission started with a village, it is now supported by a very large metropolitan city! No one piece of the "city" is more important than the other. Our exceptional riders, volunteers, supporters and donors, and most importantly many Gold Star Families, make events like the Gold Star 500 so memorable. We need each and every one of these groups to achieve success!

To our Polish Participants: THANK YOU very much for your support and efforts! Although we initially started with some communication challenges, we came together and figured it out! You jumped in to the deep end of the pool, getting involved and being key components of the team! And your willingness to share and help us understand your culture and country was invaluable! We were truly grateful for this exchange and hope that we can continue building on this effort! THANK YOU!



Volunteer Profile: Connie Robinson



In June of 2004, two young soldiers came up to Camp Lincoln. These young men were Ben Hurst and Brian Romines. They were at Camp Lincoln for training prior to deployment to Iraq.



Of course, because they were on orders, they needed a Government credit card, which they had to obtain through my office. I had to be stern with them. They were young. I gave them a short class and must have proved my point because Ben later told me Brian was afraid of me.

As they got to know me better, they would sneak up to my "Pizza-Counter" desk by low crawling and I would be typing and suddenly two heads would pop up. They got such a kick out of scaring me.

Anyhow, in December of 2004, the time came for them to head out to Ft. Dix, for additional training before deploying to Iraq.

In that short period of time, those two "boys" tromped all over my heart with their Army Boots.

Fast forward six months. We had heard there was a casualty in Iraq on June 5th. I received an email telling me it was Brian and he had been killed in action. I went into my boss' office and told him I would be taking off

to go to the funeral whenever it was.

I had never been to a military funeral, that the Freedom Riders supported. There were probably 250 cycles. It was awesome to watch them dismount their bikes and head towards the Westboro people who were protesting the funeral.

Brian was taken to the cemetery in a HUMVEE. The line was so long. During the visitation, I was introduced to the Romines and Clary families. These families opened their hearts to me and adopted me as part of their family. I would go visit them throughout the years and oh, the stories we told. (I didn't tell all of your secrets, Brian.)

His mother, grandmother, and I started passing out poppies each Memorial Day at the Walmart in Anna. We would compete to see who would get the most. If Melinda (Clary) didn't get the most, Pa would throw in some money when I wasn't looking (or so he thought!!).

What a great joy and privilege to be a part of their families. Brian, we will ALWAYS REMEMBER and NEVER FORGET you.



I don't know where I thought I had worked all those years, but it wasn't a place where we would send away a young man and he wouldn't come back.

In 2017, I heard of the Gold

Star Mission. I missed out on the first year, but haven't missed one since! What a privilege to meet these Gold Star Families and learn their service members' stories. I have made lifelong friends through this group. The stories they tell, the laughter and the tears we share, make the Gold Star 500 week one of my most memorable times of the year.

We are always looking for volunteers, so give it some thought and join us to see what this is all about. We are truly one with so many of our Fallen Families.

I am so blessed that God took a terrible tragedy and turned it into a wonderful memory of my times with the Clarys. Granny just passed away on 11-22-22. I can't imagine what a reunion that was when she saw Brian again. I'm sure I'll have a lot of 'splaining to do when I see Brian!

This is why Gold Star Mission is so real for me.



Polish Rider Profile: Jarek



support veterans. We became convinced how important it was to give our school the name of Veterans of the Overseas Operations.

Speaking of atmosphere during the event - everyone was so nice, supportive and understanding. During the visit we saw Kościuszko Monument, City Hall, Trump Center, Skyscraper District, Willis Tower, Chicago River and historic bridges, Lake Michigan and Chicago Bears Stadium. Even if there was a language barrier, there weren't any problems during the event.

We are glad that we could meet all of these people and learn about their loved ones. It would be wonderful to meet all of you again. It would be an honor to be able to attend this event every year. Thank you!

As high schoolers from Poland that took part in a Gold Star Mission 500 in 2022, we want to share our experiences about this event. First of all, we want to say thank you for giving us the chance. It was an awesome adventure and meeting Gold Star families showed us how important it is to them to always remember and never forget.

We found out about the Gold Star Mission 500 from the US veterans who visited our school last year. Our students (participants) were selected based on their language and sports skills. There were six of us and two teachers. It was a

great pleasure to participate in such an amazing event. It helped us understand how important it is to remember veterans. We could personally experience how important the message of the Mission was.

We especially remember our stay with Colonel Adamczyk, where, for the first time, we

met the parents of the fallen soldiers. It was an honor for us to hear the story of the sacrifice of such

young people for the country. The meeting was very moving and exciting. As a young generation and teaching staff, we have learned to respect and



500 Miles to the Heart (of Poland)



I learned about the Gold Star Mission (GSM) Organization in September 2021 from Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Adamczyk, during his visit to Poland as part of the long-lasting relationship between Illinois National Guard and Poland called the State Partnership Program, which dates back to 1993. Soldiers of the Illinois National Guard co-deployed with Polish Soldiers, to include my late husband Lieutenant Colonel Grzegorz Kordasz, to Afghanistan as part of the Bilateral Embedded Support Team (BEST) A9. Lieutenant Colonel Adamczyk spoke about GSM, in particular about one of their annual events named the Gold Star 500 bicycle journey and suggested that our association "Memory and Future" takes part in the 2022 event. Preliminarily, we started discussing the possibilities via Zoom with

GSM Operation's Director Mr. Charles Kitson. Our goal was to identify potential supporters and sponsors that would assist our members to make the journey to Illinois participation in the GSM500 a reality.

We selected eleven Gold Star Family Members, including four parents, three widows and four children to visit Illinois. Małgorzata Wilczyńska, her son Jędrzej and my son Michał Kordasz completed the five days and five hundred miles bicycle journey.



The other eight Gold Star Family Members actively participated in supporting the GSM500 events by assisting in logistical support at each day's rest stops. The daily support consisted of setting up portraits of fallen Polish and American Soldiers, setting up tables to serve refreshments and meals at every stop.

During all five days of the GSM500, we had an opportunity to honor fallen Soldiers from Poland and Illinois and pay tribute to their families. The five day, five hundred miles journey was equally exhausting for the riders and supporters. The Gold Star Mission event organizers and participants welcomed us with open arms and genuinely made us feel at home and part of the Gold Star Mission family. Occasionally, there was a language barrier and we didn't fully understand each other, yet we were included and made

welcomed and loved. We were always united under one motto, "Always Remember! Never Forget!" - we were one Gold Star Family, a family where everyone lost someone close, sharing the same pain and struggle. Together, we reaffirmed how to continue to honor the memory of our fallen. I remember the words of Major General Richard Neely, the Commander of Illinois National Guard, who said to always keep the memory alive, "Let's focus on how they lived, not only on how they died" and the words of Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Adamczyk, who said to me, "All this pain that we feel during the rally, is so that we can at least partially understand how families who have lost their loved ones feel."

As it turned out, our participation in the GSM500 was much needed for some of our members who struggled for many years to open up and learn how to cope with the realities of losing a loved one. GSM showed us that one can smile through tears.

We created lifelong friendships with Gold Star Families and supporters in Illinois, friendships that transcend international borders. We are extremely



grateful for the opportunity to participate in the GSM500 and we hope to meet again with this honorable group in the near future.

Our Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers "Memory and Future" was founded in 2012 by the families of fallen Polish Soldiers whom we lost during their military service abroad. To date, we have seventy members, of which fifty-eight are widows/parents and twenty-two are children. All of us were left behind when our loved ones made

the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and yours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lidia Kordasz-Garniewicz
Association's President
Memory and Future



Honoring Their Legacies: FHHP Videos



- Produce a 22-30 minute "documentary" on each of our Fallen Illinois Heroes (voluntary program, approved by Gold Star Family).

- One day video shooting, keeping costs down.
- In person video interview of 5-6 family members, friends, coaches, scout leaders, neighbors, teachers, preachers, etc. No more than 2 people in an interview scene.

- Shoot video interviews at Fallen Heroes home (backyard, living room, garage, etc) and/or in the community (school, park, employer, etc), no more than a total of 4 shoot locations.

- Identify other items to include in the documentary (such as: military medals & awards civilian awards or accolades; baby pictures; high school yearbook pictures; basic/boot camp and other military pictures; letters from Fallen Hero to family; memorials; grave site; Post Office or Street/Road/Highway named after Fallen Hero, etc).

- Interviewees not available for in-person interviews will be allowed to submit videos.

- Develop and provide sample interview questions to help guide the interviews.

- The Gold Star Family is intricately involved in the video production process, from identifying: interviewees, shooting locations, questions for interviewees, etc. Concluding with their involvement in the editing process and have final approval of the video.

- Upon completion of the video, the Gold Star Family has full rights and access to their video, to share as they desire.

There are a couple of similar projects, that capture and document the stories of our Fallen Service Men and Women. The two most widely known are the Library of Congress: Veterans History Project and the Illinois State Library: Illinois Veterans History Project. Both these projects are focused on Veterans (not Fallen) and have many limitations, including: time, interviewees, number of pictures, video, etc.).

The Gold Star Mission will expand its efforts in both fundraising and producing several more videos in 2023. The lessons learned on the first few, combined with the extremely positive feedback, made the 2022 efforts with the Fallen Heroes History Project a success!



On Sunday August 14th at the 2022 Illinois State Fair in Springfield, the Gold Star Mission introduced the Fallen Heroes History Project. The audience, including Gold Star Families, Veterans, Military Members and Members of the Illinois Governor's Team, attending Veterans Day activities at the Lincoln Stage, viewed the first two videos produced through the Fallen Heroes History Project. That was the culmination of several months of work, but also the official beginning of a new effort to Honor and Preserve the memories of our Fallen Heroes!

In the Spring of 2022, The Gold Star Mission established a Working Group to initiate a process to capture and record the stories of Illinois Fallen Heroes. The Working Group was comprised of Gold Star Families, Veterans and Gold Star Mission Volunteers. Out of that Working Group the Gold Star Mission Fallen Heroes History Project was created. After several meetings, the Working Group established these guidelines for the videos:

Data Driven Success



In 2019, Gold Star Mission (GSM) established a partnership with researchers in the Department of Psychology and School of Social Work at Illinois State University to conduct a program evaluation assessing how well GSM was meeting their program goals and identify areas for growth. This partnership has continued during 2022 focusing on evaluating through survey and focus group designs GSM program effectiveness based on feedback during focus groups from members of Gold Star Families (GSF) and surveying participants in the 2022 annual GSM bike ride. GSM leadership had input into design of the survey and focus groups and data analyses.

Program evaluation results from the 2021 on-line survey and focus groups were also presented at the 2022 annual conference of the Midwestern Psychological Association (MPA) in Chicago. In addition to presentations on previous survey and focus group results, the MPA session began with Eric Murray describing the GSM including an overview of goals, types of events sponsored for GSF and members of the community including the scholarship program and annual Gold Star Mission 500 bike ride. He also shared GSM projects planned. Eric shared several photos from recent events and presented the audience with sample GSM printed cards with the names and background

information about several of the fallen. Audience reaction to the session was very positive and a proposal was submitted to present at the 2023 MPA conference the most recent results from the 2022 survey of Gold Star 500 participants, focus groups with GSF and will include other researchers beyond the GSM/ISU research team studying other issues related to veterans and their families.

The results of the 2021 survey of bike ride participants were reported in the last annual report. As only a small number of GSF members responded to the 2021 survey, it was decided to schedule focus groups exclusively with

GSF members as participants. Two focus groups with 19 GSF members were held prior to the 2022 annual spring scholarship banquet in Springfield.

Questions posed to participants included:

- What do you think are the goals for the GSM and to what extent is GSM meeting the needs of GSF?
- How is the GSM supporting you including what GSM events or actions are most impactful?
- How can GSM better reach out to other GSF who are not currently involved to encourage their attendance at GSM events?
- What other ways can GSF participation make GSM events more effectively raise awareness of the fallen and their families?

GSF focus group results from spring 2022 included: 1) GSF member perceptions of GSM goals are consistent with those identified by the organization including awareness and honoring and remembering the fallen and mobilizing resources for GSF.

Most participants indicated that GSM was "on the right track" in terms of meeting these goals.

2) Participants noted that GSM takes an active role in providing support for GSF and provided several examples such as FACEBOOK posts on the birthdays of their fallen but noted that efforts should be made to also reach out on the anniversaries of the deaths of their loved ones. 3) A number of suggestions were offered to better reach out to GSF who are not currently involved with GSM and increasing atten-

dance at events such as collaborating with other organizations serving GSF by sharing contact lists and publicizing events; including in the GSM sponsored events individuals other than immediate family members with close relationships to the fallen; sponsoring activities that appeal to all GSF members such as grandparents and children; clarifying expectations for events (e.g., GSF don't have to participate in the annual bike ride but are welcome to attend the GSM sponsored event in their community); organizing events in smaller towns; and sponsoring smaller events to facilitate connections with other GSF. 4) Increasing awareness and visibility of GSF through a public education campaign to promote greater understanding of the difference between a Blue and Gold Star family; the grief process experienced by GSF members and how to communicate with them more effectively.



The purpose of the most recent survey of participants in the September 2022 Gold Star 500 cycling event was to provide the GSM leadership with a quantitative approach to evaluating GSM programming. In addition to a variety of demographic questions, this survey

included questions concerning participants' perceptions of how closely GSM activities align with GSM goals and the degree to which participation in GSM activities engenders a sense of belonging and influences their meaning in life. Additionally, participants who were veterans answered questions assessing how participation in GSM activities influences their perception of military-based social support.

For survey respondents who are members of GSF a number of questions assessing the degree to which GSM was meeting their needs were included. Videos with GSF members, friends, and teachers/coaches sharing their memories of their fallen were shown during the bike ride and the survey included questions assessing participant reactions of those who viewed the videos. In addition, the September 2022 bike ride had several Polish observers including students and military members. Surveys, translated into Polish, to assess their reactions to the bike ride were also administered. Results are currently being analyzed and will be available to the GSM Board early in 2023. Additional focus groups with GSF are also planned for spring 2023.

In summary, results from the 2022 needs assessment and evaluation of program effectiveness support that the GSM is meeting its goals and many suggestions for future growth were provided. Findings from future focus groups with members of GSF to identify and assess how GSM can better meet their needs are planned for spring 2023 and the results of September survey of 2022 bike ride participants will be available early in 2023.

Warrenville IL ~ Marine Corps Sergeant

IL ~ Army Specialist

Cornorall James Young, 22, Rochester IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal

2023 Events Calendar



Captain David Schultz, 25, Blue Island IL ~ Army Sergeant Dean Snajder, 25, Pekin IL ~ Army Sergeant First Class

Christopher Shaw, 37, Markham IL ~ Army Private Randolph Shefton, 22, Schiller Park IL ~ Army Specialist Ashley Sietsema,

20, Melrose Park, 25 March 2023 Scholarship Application window closes (Online) Lake Forest IL ~

Army Private First 5 April 2023 Annual Scholarship and Appreciation Banquet (Springfield) nas, 30, Champaign

IL ~ Marine Corp 20-23 April 2023 Gold Star Spouses Day rias, 24, Troy IL ~

Marine Corps First 29 April 2023 MPA Annual Conference (Chicago) n IL ~ Army Staff

Sergeant Paul Smi 19-20 May Rockford Run for Fallen (1/2 Marathon, 5K & 3K) (Rockford) Marine Corps Lance

Corporal John Spa 8-11 June 2023 NGAI Conference (Collinsville) rps Lance Corporal

James Stack, 20, 23-25 June 2023 Illinois VFW State Convention (Springfield) ry Specialist Lucas

Starceovich, 25, Ca 7-8 July 2023 Illinois AMVETS State Convention (Springfield) a Steele, 26, North

Henderson IL ~ A 12-15 July 2023 General Logan 200 m, 39, Mattoon IL

~ Army Specialist 1 August 2023 Illinois American Legion State Convention (Springfield) y Park IL ~ Army

Major Paul Syvers 13 August 2023 Gold Star Children's Day rgeant Christopher

Abeyta, 23, Midl 27 August 2023 Illinois State Fair Veterans Day (Springfield) Class Christopher

Alcozer, 21, Elm 19-23 September 2023 Duquoin State Fair Veterans Day (Duquoin) rps Staff Sergeant

Christopher Anton 24 September 2023 Gold Star 500 (Central-South Route) ialist David Badie,

23, Rockford IL ~ Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Baldwin, 39, Muscatine IL ~ Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Terry

Ball Jr, 36, East Peoria IL ~ Army First Lieutenant Debra Banaszak, 35, Bloomington IL ~ Army Specialist Collier

Barcus, 21, McHenry IL ~ Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Justus Bartelt, 27, Polo IL ~ Army Specialist Christopher

Bartkiewicz, 25, Dunfermline IL ~ Army Sergeant Michael Bartley, 23, Barnhill IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Jordan

Basteau, 19, Pekin IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Jonathan Beatty, 22, Streator IL ~ Marine Corps Captain

30, Bloomington IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal

2022 FINANCIAL REPORT



2022 Financial Report

Gold Star Mission is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. One hundred percent of the donations we receive support the Gold Star Mission. Ninety-seven percent pays for the programs, the balance goes to supporting our established programs. To date, more than \$445,000 has gone directly to programs designed to Always Remember, Never Forget our Fallen Military Heroes and to value their sacrifices and honor their families.

In 2020, the Gold Star Mission achieved the Silver Seal of Transparency following a rigorous audit. We strive to be transparent in our operations by making the following information publicly available:

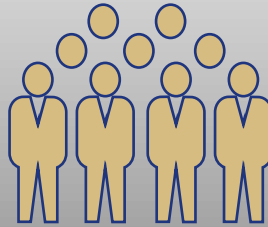
EXPENSES	2022	CUMULATIVE
Program Services (Scholarships, Videos, etc.)	\$128,228.87	\$445,057.20
General and Administrative	\$3,495.00	\$17,578.33
Office Expenses, Salaries, Facilities	\$0	\$0
Total Expenses	\$131,723.87	\$462,635.53
REVENUES	2022	CUMULATIVE
Individual Donations	\$100,025.14	\$464,783.05
Corporatate Grants	\$36,160.45	\$146,641.78
Total Revenues	\$136,185.59	\$611,424.83



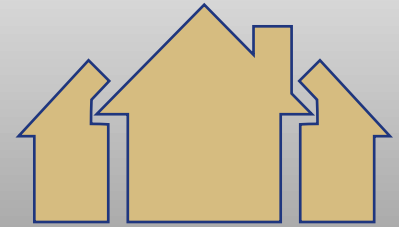
Shining Bright



38 Organized
Activities in 6
years



Over **150k**
people reached
on Social Media



Hundreds of
communities
engaged



Over **116,300** miles
ridden during GSM
events



More than **6,800**
miles walked/run
during GSM events



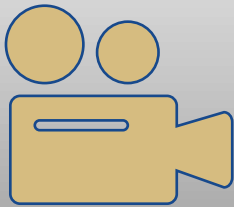
\$0.97 on each dollar
raised is spent on
program cost



ZERO cost
associated with
salaries or facilities



\$214,000 in
scholarships awarded



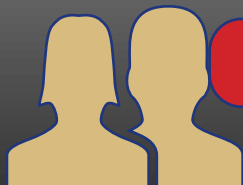
3 Fallen Heroes
History Project
videos



1 International
Event



Countless shared
memories



+2.7k

2,700 Facebook
Friends



+18k

Over **18,000**
engagements
on Social Media
Posts



\$15,500 Donated
from Veterans Service
Organizations in 2022



13,400 Volunteer
hours documented in
2022

SPONSORS AND DONORS



Our Sponsors

As a non-profit organization, Gold Star Mission relies on contributions from our donors, sponsors and partners. Your contributions are the reason we can continue our mission to make sure to ALWAYS REMEMBER and NEVER FORGET our fallen Military Heroes, their families, and their sacrifices. What may seem like a small donation from you, whether it be your time, money, or support during an programmed event, Gold Star Mission can't operate without your support!

Premier Sponsors:

Archer Daniels Midland (ADM)

Platinum Sponsors:

American Legion Post #568
American Legion Post #568 Riders
Legion of Young Polish Women
Republic Services
Veterans United Foundation

Gold Sponsors:

Bob Ridings Ford
Chicago Police AMVETS Post #18
Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association IL-24-1
Memorial Bracelets
Mission BBQ - Downers Grove
Mission BBQ - Peoria
Mission BBQ - Davenport
Mission BBQ - Springfield
National Guard Association of Illinois
Scheels

Silver Sponsors:

American Legion Post #905 - Kincaid
VFW Post #10302 - Springfield

Bronze Sponsors:

Alliance of Polish Clubs in the USA
American Legion Post #208 - Arlington Heights
Chicago Society Polish National Alliance 1450
Rosecrance - Rockford
VFW Post #5005 - Geneseo

Mission Members Sponsors:

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Midland Community Bank
United Community Bank



Our Partners



James Stack, 20, Arlington Heights IL ~ Army Specialist Jared Stanker, 22, Evergreen Park IL ~ Army Specialist Lucas Starce	Archer Daniels Midland (ADM)	American Legion Post #568	Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association - IL 24-1
Henderson ~ Army Major	ADM-VETS (Corporate, Havana, Quincy, & Camanche IA)	American Legion Post #577 Auxiliary - Lena	Crowdson Creative - Video Production
Abeyaratne	Alwood Elementary School - Alpha	American Legion Post #6 & Auxiliary - Macomb	Culver's Restaurant- Galesburg
Alcozak	American Legion Auxiliary Department of Illinois	American Legion Post #673 & Auxiliary - Huntley	Don Carter Lanes - Rockford
Christina	American Legion Department of Illinois	American Legion Post #902 & Auxiliary - Rock Falls	Farm & Home Supply - Quincy
Ball Jr	Sons of American Legion Detachment of Illinois	American Legion Post #905 - Kincaid	Fire Department - Galesburg
Barcu	Oxford American Legion Post #1197 & Auxiliary - Alpha	AMVETS Department of Illinois	Fire Department - Macomb
Bartke	Sons of American Legion Oxford Post #1197 - Alpha	AMVETS Post #18 - Chicago	Fire Department - North Chicago
Bastien	American Legion Post #1233 & Auxiliary - Colona	Ashland Schools	Fire Department - Rock Falls
30, Bl	American Legion Post #208 & Auxiliary - Arlington Heights	Auburn High School JROTC - Machesney Park	Fire Department - Sterling
26, W	American Legion Post #255 - Orion	Beardstown Schools	Fire Department - West Dundee
Heigh	American Legion Post #271 - Geneseo	Bike Surgeon	Fire Protection District - Alpha
Corps	American Legion Post #285 & Auxiliary - Galesburg	Blackhawk Fire Protection District - Rockford	Fire Protection District - Colchester
Bryan	American Legion Post #32 Riders - Springfield	Bob Ridings Ford	Fire Protection District - Forreton
~ Arm	American Legion Post #37 & Auxiliary - Quincy	Brown County Schools - Mt Sterling	Fire Protection District - Lorraine
Privat	American Legion Post #374 - Mt Sterling	Camp Point United Methodist Church	Fire Protection District - Pleasant Plains
Migue	American Legion Post #386 & Auxiliary - Virden	Candlelight Inn - Rock Falls	Fire Protection District - Polo
Corpor	American Legion Post #4 - Schuyler County	Casey's General Store	Fire Protection District - Roseville, Swan Creek & Smithshire
Willia	American Legion Post #522 - Prophetstown	Cherry Valley Fire Department - Rockford	First United Methodist Church - Galesburg
Clarke	American Legion Post #568 - Gibson City	Cisco	Forrestville Valley Schools
19, Cr		City of Colchester	Galesburg Veterans Hall
23, Be		City of Galesburg	Great Lakes Community Center
Marin		City of Geneseo	Greco Graphics
~ Nat		City of Orion	Green Family Stores / Auto Plaza
Antio		City of Virginia	Illini West Schools - Carthage
29, Au		Colona Schools	
IL ~ J			
28, Ej			
Granti			
IL ~ J			
Pinck			
Rockf			
Corps			
Specia			
Ronal			
Giann			
Thomc			

Lance Corporal Torrey Gray, 19, Patoka IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Daniel Gresham, 23, Lincoln IL ~ Army Sergeant First Class Ronald Grider, 30, Bethalto IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Kevin Grieco, 35, Bartlett IL ~ Army Specialist James

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Scholarship & Appreciation Banquet

Our Scholarship and Appreciation Banquet bridges generations while amplifying the voices of our Gold Star Families. It's also an opportunity for us to thank all who make each of our events possible, the participants, the volunteers, and our donors and partners.

Could you could imagine sitting at a table with a Gold Star Family, a Veteran, a kind person and a teenager and their family and each person is there to remember those who died in service of our nation.

To date at our annual awards banquet we've awarded **\$214,000** in scholarships to those seeking higher education that are dedicated to honoring the legacy of our fallen heroes.



Scholarship Recipients



I am very grateful for the Gold Star Mission scholarship. It was a tremendous honor to be chosen to receive this scholarship. I am thankful for an organization that honors our fallen veterans and their bravery.

I received my scholarship in honor of SPC Miguel Carrasquillo. Throughout my experience with Gold Star Mission I am humbled to hear of the stories of these heroes, their families, and the lives that they continue to impact.

This scholarship allowed me to continue my education and aided me in receiving my elementary education degree. I am now in my second year of teaching first grade at Pawnee Grade School.

Throughout the school year, I am given opportunities to share SPC Miguel Carrasquillo's story with my students. I am honored to share his story and the story of our other Illinois fallen war heroes with the next generation.

Always Remember... Never Forget!

Andrea Condon
February 2020 Recipient of the
GSM Scholarship

Selah Allen
Army Spc. Omar Mohammed Albrak Jr, 05/09/2009, Chicago

Kylee Garrett
Army Maj. David Lawrence Audo, 10/27/2009, Saint Joseph

Olivia Schroeder
Marine Gunny Sgt. Terry Wayne Ball Jr., 08/05/2005, East Peoria

Anthony Decker
Marine Capt. Ryan Anthony Beaupre, 03/21/2003, Bloomington

Brooke Bates
Army Cpl. Albert Bitton, 02/20/2008, Chicago

Isaiah Thompson
Army Cpl. Phillip John Brodnick, 08/22/2007, New Lenox

Haleigh Black
Army Cpl. Ryan James Buckley, 06/23/2006, Nokomis

Sarah Olson
Army Cpl. Karen Nicole Clifton, 06/21/2007, Mt. Zion

Jaden Trussel
Army Sgt. Sirlou Ciacho Cuaresma, 06/21/2006, Chicago

Shelby Clark
Marine Cpl. Ryan J. Cummings, 06/03/2006, Streamwood

Braylon Nugent
Army Pvt. James Henry Ebbers, 10/14/2002, Tinley Park

Zada Reynolds
Marine Cpl. Peter John Giannopoulos, 11/11/2004, Inverness

Luke June
Marine Pvt. Jonathan Lee Gifford, 03/23/2003, Decatur

Horacio Chavez
Army Staff Sgt. Gary Ray Harper Jr., 10/09/2005, Virden

Spencer Meenen
Army Pfc. Torrey Devon Harris, 07/13/2004, Chicago

Melanie Neely
Army Staff Sgt. Lincoln Daniel Hollinsaid, 04/07/2003, Malden

Anna Borders
Marine Sgt. Nickolas Lee Hopper, 09/08/2007, Montrose

Brady Behrent
Army Pfc. Tyler Iubelt, 11/12/2016, Tamaroa

Tess Allen
Army Cpl. Forest Joseph Jostes, 04/04/2004, Albion
Cale Gundlach
Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas Brian Kleiboeker, 05/13/2003, Irvington

Nate Borders
Staff Sgt. Paul Miguel Latourney, 03/02/2007, Roselle

Alexis Kent
Marine 2nd Lt. Ryan David Leduc, 09/24/2004, Pana

Chase Travis
Army Pfc. Matthew M. Martinek, 09/11/2009, Dekalb

Samantha Sigler
Marine Lance Cpl. Philip John Martini, 04/08/2006, Lansing

Cerra Thompson
Marine Cpl. Nathaniel Kenton Moore, 01/26/2005, Champaign

Macey Westrick
 Army Spc. Charles Larrew Neeley, 08/25/2004, Mattoon
 Addyson Chandler
 Army Pfc. William Robert Newgard, 12/29/2006, Arlington Heights
 Kylee Brody
 Army Spc. George Robert Obourn Jr., 10/04/2006, Creve Coeur
 Alexa Hamilton
 Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Logan Palmer, 08/21/2017, Harristown
 Cassidy Constant
 Army Spc. Phillip Joseph Pannier, 01/08/2008, Washburn
 Kyra Coyle-Desilets
 Army Sgt. 1st Class Eric Paul Pearrow, 11/24/2005, Peoria
 Jordan Oliver
 Army Pfc. Shane Daniel Penley, 04/06/2008, Sauk Village
 Ava Stanescu
 Army Spc. Trevor Adam Pinnick, 06/12/2012, Lawrenceville
 Chloe Leonard
 Marine Lance Cpl. Jonathan Kyle Price, 01/13/2006, Woodlawn
 Haley Dotson
 Army Sgt. Anibal Jr. Santiago, 07/18/2010, Belvidere
 Jordon Hill
 Army Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Donnell Shaw, 09/29/2009, Markham
 Michael Morris
 Army Pvt. Randol Scott Shelton, 09/04/2007, Schiller Park
 Hailey Winslow
 Army Sgt. Jeremy Cain Sherman, 11/12/2020, Watseka
 Javier Samaniego
 Marine Lance Cpl. John Travis Sparks, 10/10/2008, Chicago
 William June
 Army Pfc. Cole Edward Spencer, 04/28/2007, Gays
 Paige Marks
 Army Spc. Jared Donald Stanker, 10/27/2009, Evergreen Park
 Faith Deering
 Navy Vice Adm. Scott Andrew Stearney, 12/01/2018, Chicago
 Jordan Watts
 Army Sgt. Joshua Adam Terando, 11/10/2005, Morris
 Wiat Miller
 Army Cpl. Francis Marion Trussel Jr., 05/26/2007, Lincoln
 Ivan Holt
 Army Pfc. Devon Tucker, 06/16/2017, Mount Vernon
 Nicholas Zellers
 Army 1st Sgt. Ernest Eugene Utt Jr., 06/27/2004, Hammond
 Brady Rittenhouse
 Army Staff Sgt. Oscar Dario Vargas-Medina, 01/05/2004, Chicago
 Ambria Maddox
 Marine Lance Cpl. Frederik Erik Vazquez, 07/24/2010, Melrose Park
 Damon Fowler
 Army Spc. Kyle James Wright, 01/13/2010, Romeoville
 Aubrey Headon
 Marine Cpl. Christopher Edward Zimny, 01/31/2005, Glenview

Scholarship Recipient Wiatt Miller:

Over the course of the year, I have been able to develop a strong friendship with the son of Francis Trussel, whom I received my scholarship from last year.

Jaden and I met for the first time at the banquet last year. Since then, we have contacted each other and have gotten together many times. We attended each other's graduation from high school last year. We have gone paintballing to several different fields in the area.

He has come over to my house many times, as well as me going over to his house. One of the times he came over, I taught him how to trap shoot. We often get together online and play video games when we can't get together in-person. Our families have continued to stay in-touch with each other as well. It has been an honor to wear his dad's name on my wrist. This scholarship gave me a life-long friendship that is very important to me.

Financially, the scholarship enabled me to help cover the expenses of my first semester of classes at Heartland Community College. This was a huge help because it made it easier for me to start saving my money again for future schooling expenses. I think the Gold Star Mission Scholarship Program is an extremely important program because it helps keep the memory of those who have fallen alive. I am grateful to be a part of that mission.



GSM LEADERSHIP



2022 GSM Leadership



BOARD MEMBERS & KEY LEADERS

Gold Star Mission Corporation
(All officers serve one-year term;
that may be extended until
successor has been elected)

Current Board

President

Matt Jones

Vice President

Brian Monohan

Secretary

Chris Milchuck

Treasurer

Tim Barnhart

Other Key Leaders

Director of Operations

Eric Murray

Assistant to the Director of Operations

Chuck Kitson

Communications Director

Kathy Kelnhofer

Technology Director

Robert Lewis

Volunteer Director

Julie Spradlin

Scholarship Director

Tyler Glynn

GSM Run for The Fallen Director

Candace White

General Logan 200 Director

Steve Fermon

Gold Star 500 Director

Eric Murray



Former Board Members

President

Trent Thompson
(17 Mar 2021 - 16 Mar 2022)

Vice President

Andrew Adamczyk
(17 Mar 2021 - 1 Nov 2021)

Secretary

Matt Jones
(17 Mar 2021 - 1 Nov 2021)

Treasurer

Larry Stone
(17 Mar 2021 - 31 Dec 2021)

GOLD STAR MISSION ADVISORY COUNCIL

The advisory council involves thoughtful leaders who regularly provide advice to the Gold Star Mission Leadership, and serve as a resource to help guide the direction of the organization and navigate its future.

Maj. Gen. (ret.) William Enyart

Former Adjutant General
Illinois National Guard

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Mark Rabin

Former General,
Illinois Air National Guard

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Steve Huber

Former Deputy Commanding
General,
1st Army Division East

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Chris Lawson

Vice Director J5
National Guard Bureau

Col. (ret.) Troy Philips

Former Commander of 404th
Maneuver Enhancement
Brigade

Col. David Helfrich

Founder and former President
Gold Star Mission

Lt. Col. Andrew Adamczyk

Co-Founder and former Vice
President Gold Star Mission

30, Champaign IL ~ Marine Corps Sergeant Benjamin Smith, 24, Carterville IL ~ Air Force Senior Airman Bradley Smith, 24, Troy IL ~ Marine Corps First Sergeant Edward Smith, 38, Chicago IL ~ Army Sergeant Gerrick Smith, 19, Sullivan IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Paul Smith, 43, East Peoria IL ~ Army First Lieutenant Paul Southworth, 26, Oakland IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal John Sparks, 23, Chicago IL ~ Army Private First Class Cole Spencer, 21, Gays IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal James Stack, 20, Arlington Heights IL ~ Army Specialist Jared Stanker, 22, Evergreen Park IL ~ Army Specialist Lucas Starcevich, 25, Canton IL ~ Navy Vice Admiral Scott Stearney, 58, Chicago IL ~ Army Captain Joshua Steele, 26, North Henderson IL ~ Air Force Lieutenant Colonel John Stein, 39, Bardolph IL ~ Army Sergeant Scott Stream, 39, Mattoon IL ~ Army Specialist John Sullivan, 26, Countryside IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Michael Sutter, 28, Tinley Park IL ~ Army Major Paul Syverson, 32, Lake Zurich IL ~ Navy Commander Adrian Szwec, 43, Chicago IL ~ Army Sergeant Christopher Abeyta, 23, Midlothian IL ~ Army Specialist Omar Albrak Jr, 20, Chicago IL ~ Army Private First Class Christopher Alcozer, 21, Elmhurst IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Roberto Andrade Jr, 26, Chicago IL ~ Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Christopher Antonik, 29, Crystal Lake IL ~ Army Major David Audo, 35, Saint Joseph IL ~ Army Specialist David Badie, 23, Rockford IL ~ Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Baldwin, 39, Muscatine IL ~ Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Terry Ball Jr, 36, East Peoria IL ~ Army First Lieutenant Debra Banaszak, 35, Bloomington IL ~ Army Specialist Collier Barcus, 21, McHenry IL ~ Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Justus Bartelt, 27, Polo IL ~ Army Specialist Christopher Bartkiewicz, 25, Dunfermline IL ~ Army Sergeant Michael Bartley, 23, Barnhill IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Jordan Bastean, 19, Pekin IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Jonathan Beatty, 22, Streator IL ~ Marine Corps Captain Ryan Beaupre, 30, Bloomington IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Christopher Belchik, 30, Brighton IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Jeremy Bessa, 26, Woodridge IL ~ Army Sergeant Bradley Beste, 22, Naperville IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Mario Bievre, 34, Glendale Heights IL ~ Army Corporal Albert Bitton, 20, Chicago IL ~ Army Sergeant Holli Bolinski, 37, Pinckneyville IL ~ Marine Corps Christopher Boyd, 22, Palatine IL ~ Army Corporal Phillip Brodnick, 25, New Lennon IL ~ Army Specialist Ja'mel Bryant, 22, Belleville IL ~ Army Corporal Ryan Buckley, 21, Nokomis IL ~ Navy Petty Officer 2 Ryan Burris, 23, Lisle IL ~ Army Private Matthew Bush, 20, East Alton IL ~ Army Specialist Norman Cain III, 22, Freeport IL ~ Marine Corps Private First Class Sean Cardelli, 20, Downers Grove IL ~ Army Specialist Ryan Carlock, 25, Macomb IL ~ Army Specialist Miguel Carrasquillo, 25, River Grove IL ~ Marine Corps Sergeant David Caruso, 25, Naperville IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Alec Catherwood, 19, Byron IL ~ Army Sergeant Jessica Cawvey, 21, Normal IL ~ Army Sergeant First Class William Chaney, 59, Schaumburg IL ~ Navy Petty Officer 1 Regina Clark, 43, Colona IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Kevin Clarke, 21, Tinley Park IL ~ Army Corporal Karen Clifton, 22, Mount Zion IL ~ Marine Lance Corporal Jonathan Collins, 19, Crystal Lake IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Pedro Colon, 25,



**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELP US
CONTINUE OUR MISSION AND SPREAD
THE WORD TO**

ALWAYS REMEMBER, NEVER FORGET

Cicero IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Kenneth Corzine, 23, Bethalto IL ~ Army Corporal Jeremiah Costello, 22, Carlinville IL ~ Army Sergeant Sirlou Cuaresma, 25, Chicago IL ~ Marine Corporal Ryan Cummings, 22, Streamwood IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Nickolas Daniels, 25, Elmwood IL ~ Navy Machinist Mate Fireman Recruit Bryant Davis, 20, Chicago IL ~ Marine Corps Sergeant Edward Davis, 31, Antioch IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Edwin Dazachacon, 38, Belleville IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Jesse De La Torre, 29, Aurora IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Benjamin Desilets, 21, Elmwood IL ~ Army Specialist Joseph Dimock, 21, Wildwood IL ~ Army Private First Class Adam Dobereiner, 21, Moline IL ~ Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher Donaldson, 28, Effingham IL ~ Army Sergeant James Dorsey, 23, Beardstown IL ~ Army Sergeant First Class Shawn Dostie, 32, Granite City IL ~ Army Specialist William Dusenberry, 30, Lake Zurich IL ~ Army Private James Ebberts, 19, Tinley Park IL ~ Army Private First Class Shawn Edwards, 20, Bensenville IL ~ Army Private First Class Wyatt Eisenhower, 26, Pinckneyville IL ~ Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Jordan Emrick, 26, Hoyleton IL ~ Army Sergeant Blake Evans, 24, Rockford IL ~ Army Staff Sergeant Donald Farmer, 33, Zion IL ~ Army Sergeant Kraig Foyteck, 26, Skokie IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Phillip Frank, 20, Elk Grove IL ~ Air Force Staff Sergeant Jacob Frazier, 24, St Charles IL ~ Army Specialist Ryan Garbs, 20, Edwardsville IL ~ Army Sergeant Landis Garrison, 23, Rapids City IL ~ Army Specialist Ronald Gebur, 23, Delavan IL ~ Army First Lieutenant David Gaiam

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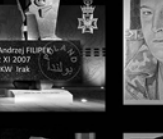
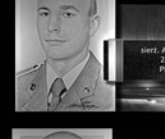
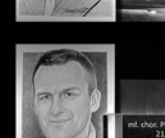
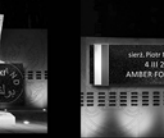
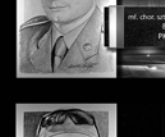
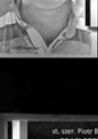
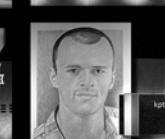
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IL ~ Army Private First Class Robert Liggett, 23, Urbana IL ~ Army Sergeant Eric Liu, 28, Chicago IL ~ Army Sergeant Terry Lisk, 26, Fox Lake IL ~ Army Private First Class Duane Longstreth, 19, Springfield IL ~ Marine Corps Private Eduardo Lopez, 21, Aurora IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Jamie Lowe, 21, Johnsonville IL ~ Army Specialist Jacob Lowell, 22, New Lenox IL ~ , Army Private First Class Caleb Lufkin, 24, Knoxville IL ~ Army Corporal Bryant Luxmore, 25, New Windsor IL ~ Army Captain Shane Mahaffee, 36, Gurnee IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Sean Maher, 19, Grayslake IL ~ Army Private First Class Matthew Martinek, 20, DeKalb IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Alex Martinez, 21, Elgin IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Philip Martini, 24, Lansing IL ~ Navy Seaman Carlos Mazon, 19, Chicago IL ~ Marine Corps Captain Nathan McHone, 29, Crystal Lake IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Adam McKiski, 21, Cherry Valley IL ~ Army Sergeant Jason McLeod, 22, Crystal Lake IL ~ Army Private First Class Andrew Meari, 21, Plainfield IL, Army Staff Sergeant Joshua Melton, 26, Carlyle IL ~ Army Sergeant Steven Mennemeyer, 26, Granite City IL ~ Army Private First Class Devin Michel, 19, Stockton IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Anthony Mihalo, 23, Naperville IL ~ Air Force Senior Airman Daniel Miller, 24, Galesburg IL ~ Marine Corps Corporal Nathaniel Moore, 22, Champaign IL ~ Army Specialist Jaime Moreno, 28, Round Lake Beach IL ~ Marine Corps Private First Class Geoffrey Morris, 19, Gurnee IL ~ Army Sergeant Shawna Morrison, 26, Champaign IL ~ Army Specialist Charles Neeley, 19, Mattoon IL ~ Army Private First Class William Newgard, 20, Arlington Heights IL ~ Marine Corps Lance Corporal Robert Newton, 21, Creve Couer IL ~ Army Sergeant Kenneth Nichols, 28, Chrisman IL ~ Army Corporal Keith Nurnberg, 26, McHenry IL ~ Army Specialist George Obourn, 20, Creve Couer IL ~ Army Sergeant First Class James Ochsner, 36, Waukegan IL ~ Army Private First

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