

Dept. of Agriculture: Wisconsin Garden Club Federation works with state, other partners to mark Gold Star Memorial Garden at Capitol

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MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary Ellen Nowak joined Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Daniel J. Zimmerman and Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, for the formal dedication this week of a new memorial marker to identify the state Capitol's Gold Star Memorial Garden.

"The Gold Star Memorial Garden on the Capitol grounds has served for decades as a reminder of military families who have lost relatives in combat, and this marker will build further awareness of the garden's significance," Secretary Nowak said. "On behalf of Governor Walker and the State of Wisconsin, we appreciate the efforts of everyone who helped make this marker a reality, and we honor all Gold Star families and the men and women who have protected our nation by serving in the United States Armed Services." The gold star of flowers in the North Hamilton section of the Capitol grounds near Wisconsin Avenue dates to World War I. The Wisconsin Garden Club Federation's Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers Committee, which is co-chaired by Linda and Chuck McCafferty of Sun Prairie, garnered approval last year by the State Capitol and Executive Residence Board (SCERB) to install a memorial marker in front of the garden.

A dedication ceremony on Wednesday, August 22, drew dozens of Gold Star families, project supporters and others to the Capitol grounds, including Patti Smith, the President and Founder of America's Gold Star Families, who spoke during the ceremony. Secretary Nowak also presented a Commendation from the Governor to organizations that worked on the project.

"The families of our fallen comrades have made a great sacrifice for this country," Secretary Zimmerman said. "This tribute is one small token of our appreciation. With this new marker, we now have a reminder to all who pass by that freedom isn't free."

"It was truly humbling to be present at the dedication of the Gold Star memorial marker at our state capitol," Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, said. "It is our Gold Star families who bear the pain and must daily carry the scar of loss. We are united as a people and as a country, cognizant that we owe so much to the warrior and the Gold Star family. Those who died in the service of our nation and their families who carry on their memory were patriots and heroes worthy of our deepest respect and admiration."

The Wisconsin Garden Club Federation is an affiliate of National Garden Clubs, Inc., which takes part in several projects including placement of Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers throughout the country. Gold Star Families have lost loved ones in military service.

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