

University of Toledo's Gold Star Marker Dedication
November 11, 2016 (Veterans Day Speech)

Good afternoon,

Today, Veterans Day, I stand humbly before you and ask that you all remember the sacrifices that were made by those valiant few to serve this country. Every day, not just one calendar day, we as a nation should pay tribute to our American heroes, living and deceased. For all gave some and some gave all.

I am the proud Gold Star Wife of Army Sgt. Arthur Mora Jr., who was killed in action by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) October 19, 2005, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The next evening, October 20, my family was notified of his death via an Army notification officer and chaplain. For those who have a loved one in the military, a knock on the door is your worst nightmare come to life. " We regret to inform you..." That was all they could get out before I collapsed on the front porch, sobbing in disbelief that my hero, my husband was gone. Our only son, Christopher, had just arrived the week before on October 11. My family had gone from the highest of the highs with the new addition of our bouncing baby boy to the lowest of the lows, the loss of our family' s patriarch, our beloved hero- Art was gone.

Widowed at 22 with three small children, our life had taken a drastic turn. No more cutting paper strips for our " See You Later chain", each paper link representing another day survived through the deployment. The start of our new life began with burial plots, headstone design, and a flag-draped casket. He died just 94 days into his deployment. He was 23.

After the notification officers had left, I gazed at the front door and saw our Blue Star Service Flag. It was in the days that followed the knock on the door that the term Gold Star was introduced to my family. Our notification officer noted the service flag and said that we are no longer a Blue Star Family but a Gold Star family now. He said it with such honor and respect that tears instantly rolled down my cheeks even though I had never heard that phrase before. What is a Gold Star family?

The term Gold Star family is a modern reference that comes from the Service Flag. The Service Flag is an official banner authorized by the Department of Defense for display by families who have members serving in the Armed Forces during any period of war or hostilities the United States may be engaged in for the duration of such hostilities.

The service flag was designed and patented by World War I Army Captain Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry who had two sons serving on the front line. The flag quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in service. President Wilson became part of its history when in 1918 he approved a suggestion made by the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defenses that mothers who had lost a child serving in the war to wear a gold star on the traditional black mourning arm band.

This led to the tradition to cover the blue star with a gold star on the Service flag to indicate that the service member has died. The color of the stars is also symbolic in that the blue star represents hope and pride and the gold star represents a sacrifice to the cause of liberty and freedom. Gold Star families are immediate relatives of U.S. Armed Forces members who died in

battle or support of certain military activities. These relatives can be parents, spouses, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters or other loved ones.

When I was told that the University of Toledo was going to be the first to have both the Blue and Gold Star markers on campus I was overcome with emotion. Being a current student at the University of Toledo, I share in the comfort of walking across campus between my classes and seeing the markers that are put in place to honor our servicemen and women as well as their family members. The message is loud and clear, this much more than a school for higher learning, this is an institution that recognizes the sacrifices of our military. From one Gold Star wife and mother to 3 Gold Star children, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and couldn't be more proud to call myself a member of the UT Rocket family