



Glenbard Township High School District 87

Administration Center ▲ 596 Crescent Boulevard ▲ Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137-4297 ▲ Phone: (630) 469-9100 ▲ Fax: (630) 469-9107

Community invited to hear Medal of Honor recipients' stories

There is nothing quite as inspirational, as motivational, or as powerful, as being in the presence of our nation's Medal of Honor recipients – men whose heroic actions were so selfless, so valiant, that the nation has bestowed upon them its highest military honor.

The community has an incredible opportunity to meet two of these heroic men and hear the astounding stories that resulted in them receiving the Medal of Honor. World War II veteran Hershel Woody Williams and Vietnam veteran Robert Modrzejewski will share their stories from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, June 22, in the auditorium at Glenbard West High School, 670 Crescent Blvd. in Glen Ellyn.

These men took great personal risk to protect endangered comrades and carry out extremely dangerous missions. Each performed an act of unimaginable courage and leadership that will never be forgotten.

Those who wear the medal are considered recipients, not winners. For the reason they received it was not a contest – it was a time of unthinkable challenges when their valor was tested to the fullest. They wear the medal proudly in memory of their fellow service members who never returned.

With only 110 recipients living today, the community has a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet true national treasures and hear their stories.

Glenbard Township High School District 87 presents this program in partnership with the Medal of Honor Foundation.

The following are descriptions of the veterans' harrowing experiences, according to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society Web site, www.cmohs.org:

WILLIAMS, HERSHEL WOODROW

Rank and organization: Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, 21st Marines, 3d Marine Division. Place and date: Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, 23 February 1945. Entered service at: West Virginia. Born: 2 October 1923, Quiet Dell, W. Va. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as demolition sergeant serving with the 21st Marines, 3d Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, 23 February 1945. Quick to volunteer his services when our tanks were maneuvering vainly to open a lane for the

infantry through the network of reinforced concrete pillboxes, buried mines, and black volcanic sands, Cpl. Williams daringly went forward alone to attempt the reduction of devastating machinegun fire from the unyielding positions. Covered only by 4 riflemen, he fought desperately for 4 hours under terrific enemy small-arms fire and repeatedly returned to his own lines to prepare demolition charges and obtain serviced flamethrowers, struggling back, frequently to the rear of hostile emplacements, to wipe out 1 position after another. On 1 occasion, he daringly mounted a pillbox to insert the nozzle of his flamethrower through the air vent, killing the occupants and silencing the gun; on another he grimly charged enemy riflemen who attempted to stop him with bayonets and destroyed them with a burst of flame from his weapon. His unyielding determination and extraordinary heroism in the face of ruthless enemy resistance were directly instrumental in neutralizing one of the most fanatically defended Japanese strong points encountered by his regiment and aided vitally in enabling his company to reach its objective. Cpl. Williams' aggressive fighting spirit and valiant devotion to duty throughout this fiercely contested action sustain and enhance the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.

MODRZEJEWSKI, ROBERT J.

Rank and organization: Major (then Capt.), U.S. Marine Corps, Company K, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, 3d Marine Division, FMF. place and date: Republic of Vietnam, 15 to 18 July 1966. Entered service at: Milwaukee, Wis. Born: 3 July 1934, Milwaukee, Wis. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. On 15 July, during Operation HASTINGS, Company K was landed in an enemy-infested jungle area to establish a blocking position at a major enemy trail network. Shortly after landing, the company encountered a reinforced enemy platoon in a well-organized, defensive position. Maj. Modrzejewski led his men in the successful seizure of the enemy redoubt, which contained large quantities of ammunition and supplies. That evening, a numerically superior enemy force counterattacked in an effort to retake the vital supply area, thus setting the pattern of activity for the next 2 1/2 days. In the first series of attacks, the enemy assaulted repeatedly in overwhelming numbers but each time was repulsed by the gallant marines. The second night, the enemy struck in battalion strength, and Maj. Modrzejewski was wounded in this intensive action which was fought at close quarters. Although exposed to enemy fire, and despite his painful wounds, he crawled 200 meters to provide critically needed ammunition to an exposed element of his command and was constantly present wherever the fighting was heaviest, despite numerous casualties, a dwindling supply of ammunition and the knowledge that they were surrounded, he skillfully directed artillery fire to within a few meter* of his position and courageously inspired the efforts of his company in repelling the aggressive enemy attack. On 18 July, Company K was attacked by a regimental-size enemy force. Although his unit was vastly outnumbered and weakened by the previous fighting, Maj. Modrzejewski reorganized his men and calmly moved among them to encourage and direct their efforts to heroic limits as they fought to overcome the vicious enemy onslaught. Again he called in air and artillery strikes at close range with devastating effect on the enemy, which together with the bold and determined fighting of the men of

Company K, repulsed the fanatical attack of the larger North Vietnamese force. His unparalleled personal heroism and indomitable leadership inspired his men to a significant victory over the enemy force and reflected great credit upon himself, the Marine Corps, and the U.S. Naval Service.

Posted: June 12, 2007