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Sole Surviving U.S. Marine WWII Medal of Honor Recipient to Serve as Honored Starter

Hershel "Woody" Williams Will Fire the Howitzer Kicking Off the 43rd Marine Corps Marathon

QUANTICO, VA (October 27, 2018) – The Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) proudly announces this year's starter for the 43rd Marine Corps Marathon is the sole surviving WWII Marine Medal of Honor recipient, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Hershel "Woody" Williams.

Williams earned the Nation's highest military honor for his heroism as a Corporal serving with the 21st Marines, 3rd Marine Division in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He will fire the starting pistol to start the hand cycle and wheel chair division at 7:45 a.m. and the 43rd MCM at 7:55 a.m.

83 years ago, 1,000 yards from where flags were being raised on Mount Suribachi on the Island of Iwo Jima, 21-year-old Corporal Williams quickly volunteered to assist in opening a lane for American tanks maneuvering in vain through the network of reinforced concrete pillboxes, buried mines, and black, volcanic sands.

Williams daringly went forward alone in an effort to disrupt machine-gun fire from the unyielding positions. Covered only by four riflemen, he fought desperately for four hours under terrific enemy small-arms fire and repeatedly returned to his own lines to prepare demolition charges and obtain another flamethrower. Struggling back, he fought to get to the rear of hostile emplacements, to wipe out one position after another.

His unyielding determination and extraordinary heroism in the face of ruthless enemy resistance were instrumental in neutralizing one of the most fanatically defended Japanese strong points encountered by his regiment and aided in enabling his company to reach its objective.

President Harry Truman recognized Williams' actions, commitment to his fellow service members and heroism on October 5, 1945 in a ceremony at the White House during which Truman presented Williams the Medal of Honor.

Today, Williams runs the Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation. To date, the foundation has established 44 Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments across the U.S. with 47 more monuments underway.

He retired after serving 20 years in the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserves and his actions have often been recognized by our military and its highest officers. Recently the Secretary of the Navy named T-ESB 4 (Expeditionary Sea Base Ship 4), the USNS *Hershel "Woody" Williams* mobile base sea vessel. She entered Navy service earlier this year. In his hometown of Fairmont, West Virginia, the \$32 million Hershel "Woody" Williams Armed Forces Reserve Center is the only National Guard facility in the country named after a Marine.

For media information please contact Ashley Topolosky, Marine Corps Marathon Public Relations Coordinator at 703-987-3191 or ashley.topolosky@usmc-mccs.org.

The Marine Corps Marathon (MCM), known as "The People's Marathon," promotes physical fitness and generates community goodwill while showcasing the high standards and discipline of the United States Marine Corps. Annually ranked as one of the largest marathons in the US and the world, the MCM welcomes runners from all 50 states and more than 60 countries. The 43rd MCM, coordinated by the Marine Corps Marathon Organization (MCMO), will be held Oct. 28, 2018 in Arlington, VA. The MCM is presented by Arlington County, Brooks, Cigna, and Leidos. No federal or Marine Corps endorsement is implied. Connect with the Marine Corps Marathon on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#). #RunWithTheMarines