



# Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release number: 2023-09-04

## Gold Star Families Honored at Punchbowl Cemetery

**HONOLULU, HAWAII (September 28, 2023)** - The tranquil surroundings of the Punch Bowl Cemetery in Hawaii were the backdrop for a moving ceremony last Sunday, September 23, 2023, honoring the sacrifices of Gold Star families.

Col. Steve McGunegle, commander, U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii, greeted attendees with a warm "Aloha" and "Mahalo" and expressed his profound gratitude to the Gold Star families there. "Your significance to us is immeasurable," he said.

McGunegle also expressed his thanks to the Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific for their hospitality and for being an exemplary venue that allows the community to fittingly honor service members. He also praised the Mauka Brass from the 25th Infantry Division Band, Kapolei High School JROTC cadets, military representatives from various other service branches and veterans of the Patriot Guard Riders Motorcycle Club, for their contributions recognizing Gold Star family members.

The annual event was also a unique opportunity for families to come together in unity, and McGunegle told them he valued the chance to listen to their stories and recognized their steadfast support for one another.

Keynote speaker Brigadier Gen. Jeffrey VanAntwerp, deputy chief of staff, G-3/5/7, U.S. Army Pacific, was a welcomed addition to the event as VanAntwerp is responsible for overseeing all Army activities throughout the Pacific region. He acknowledged to the families the immense sacrifices their loved ones had made and cited scripture with his words, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." VanAntwerp also recognized the incomparable love a mother has for her offspring and the deep sacrifices each family had made. "Freedom comes at a price," he told attendees.

The origins of Gold Star Families trace back to 1936 when it was initially called "Gold Star Mother's Day." In 2009, then President Barack Obama, broadened the scope of those who have lost loved ones in service to their country, by renaming it "Gold Star Families."

More photos at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaghawaii/albums/72177720311456995>