

First Purple Heart County sign unveiled in Douglas

AALIYAH MONTOYA | DOUGLAS DISPATCH, Updated Jan 28, 2016



A crowd applauds the unveiling of the first Purple Heart County sign on Jan. 28, at Veteran's Memorial in Douglas.



James E. Wethers, Commander of Chapter 572 of the Military Order of the Purple Heart speaks during the Purple Heart County sign unveiling ceremony, alongside County Supervisor, Ann English on Jan.28.



County Supervisor, Ann English, stands with recipients of the Purple Heart for a moment of recognition.



Mickey and Whitey Reese, a Purple Heart recipient, applaud the unveiling of the new Purple Heart County sign in Douglas on Jan. 28.

Community leaders, officials, and veterans joined together on Jan. 28 to celebrate and unveil Cochise County's first Purple Heart sign, at the Veteran's Memorial as you enter Douglas.

The Purple Heart is designated to recognize and honor the service and sacrifice of the nation's men and women who were wounded or killed in the line of military duty.

"We think this is an important occasion for Cochise County, and really it speaks to the families and to the veterans who came home and received a Purple Heart," said Ann English, County Supervisor. "We're doing it here at a Veteran's Memorial, which memorializes those who didn't make it home. Today we want to make another statement that we are really so grateful to those who served and received a Purple Heart."

A resolution was first passed, designating the area as a Purple Heart County, in April of 2015.

Douglas is the first city within the county to receive a Purple Heart County sign.

The City of Sierra Vista was the second city in the state-- and first in the county--to be recognized as a Purple Heart City, followed by Huachuca City.

Work is being done to honor the Cities of Benson and Douglas with the same designation, says James E. Wethers, Commander of Chapter 572 of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

"When [the Purple Heart] was created for all intensive purposes in 1932, it was meant to symbolize one thing, sacrifice," Wethers said. "I can think of no better place to unveil the first Purple Heart County sign, than in front of this memorial. This area of southeast Arizona has had a long and colorful history with United States Military."

The commander continued, "For three years now I have had the honor of representing all Purple Heart recipients in Cochise County. It's been very humbling and rewarding, and we just can't express enough of our gratitude to the county for passing the resolution and making Cochise County a purple heart county."

The next county sign will be unveiled in Bisbee at the Lavender Pit Veteran's Memorial, with a date that is to be announced.

During Thursday's ceremony, Cynthia Giesecke, Representative of the Office of U.S. Rep. Martha McSally, extended her gratitude on behalf of the congresswoman.

"The congresswoman herself is a veteran, so veteran issues are very dear to her heart," said Giesecke. "We've been told as her staff members to hold some of the values that she has brought along through her service with the military; duty, integrity, honesty and doing the right thing for our constituents...On behalf of the congresswoman, we'd like to thank you for bringing this designation to the county, really signifying your sacrifice that you have given to our country."

Mayor Danny Ortega Jr. noted, "I would just like to thank the county for recognizing our Purple Heart recipients. Again, Douglas is such a veteran-supporting community. I'm glad they chose Douglas as the first community who gets the sign. It's been very rewarding and humbling to speak with these veterans today. It's a real honor, and I thank them all for their efforts."