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ALERT TOP STORY

Watch Now: Lynchburg Area Veterans Council celebrates Desmond T. Doss Day

Bryson Gordon
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Lynchburg City Councilman Sterling Wilder shakes hands with Thomas Current, president of the Lynchburg Area Veterans Council, on Friday at a weekly Support the Troops Rally at Monument Terrace where Desmond T. Doss Day also was recognized. Wilder represents the ward Desmond T. Doss' childhood home is in.

Bryson Gordon, The News & Advance

Desmond T. Doss Ceremony

Attendees at Friday's weekly Support the Troops Rally at Monument Terrace in Lynchburg had an extra occasion to commemorate as the Lynchburg Area Veterans Council also celebrated Desmond T. Doss Day.

In 2019, then-Mayor Treney Tweedy declared every Oct. 12 going forward would be celebrated in Lynchburg as Desmond T. Doss Day, recognizing the heroic efforts of Doss, a Lynchburg native who served as a combat medic during World War II, saving at least 75 lives in the Battle of Okinawa.

Doss, because of his faith as a Seventh-day Adventist, was a conscientious objector who refused to kill an enemy soldier or carry a weapon into combat. His story was famously portrayed in the movie "Hacksaw Ridge," which was directed by Mel Gibson and which won two Academy awards in 2017.

The date of Oct. 12 was chosen because it was the day in 1945 when President Harry S. Truman bestowed the Medal of Honor upon Doss.

At Friday's ceremony, Ward II City Councilman Sterling Wilder, who represents the ward where Doss' childhood home is located, read the proclamation Tweedy made in 2019. The former Doss house now serves as a home for formerly homeless veterans.

"It's such an honor to be here today," Wilder said. "I appreciate all the work you do, coming here every Friday, regardless of the weather, regardless of the conditions, you are supporting our troops and we really appreciate that."

Desmond Doss Jr., who has attended the ceremony in the past, wasn't able to make it Friday but prepared a statement to be read at the ceremony honoring his father.

"In Lynchburg, we celebrate Desmond Doss Day, not only because of the high honor bestowed on him by President Truman on Oct. 12, 1945, but because we remember his relentless courage to stand by his convictions in the face of great odds," part of the statement read.

"It was his willingness to exercise his liberties and freedoms afforded by our Constitution that set him apart. Let us not take lightly the preservation of these freedoms."

Even though Desmond T. Doss Day isn't celebrated until Oct. 12, the veterans council wanted to honor his memory Friday at the weekly rally. The rally is held every Friday at noon and honors the memory of fallen veterans as well as those still serving today; Friday's marked the 1,036th week in a row.

"We want to honor his service, his sacrifice, his character, what an incredible story," said Thomas Current, president of the veterans council. "And we want to make that a part of the tradition of Monument Terrace because this is a crowd that appreciates what he did and what he stood for."

More than 50 veterans showed up to the ceremony to pay their respects to Doss. They reminisced of their own days in the military as well but always came back to the same theme, which was the courage that Doss displayed by risking his own life to save his own men's lives.

"He did not have to go," Current said. "But he said, 'Oh no, I'm going, I'm going to go as a medic, I'm not going to touch a weapon, but I'm going to serve my country,' and what an example of incredible courage."

Go online

GO ONLINE: For video from Friday's ceremony, visit [newsadvance.com](https://www.newsadvance.com).

Bryson Gordon
