

‘The Success has been Overwhelming’

A VFW Post in West Virginia created a project to facilitate parking for Purple Heart recipients

Jul 30, 2025

The idea hit VFW Post 4442 Commander Gerald McMasters on a summer’s day in 2022.

McMasters was out on a routine grocery run to the local Walmart in Triadelphia, West Virginia, when an interaction with a Purple Heart Vietnam War veteran led to a realization.

“I noticed the elderly gentleman walking across the parking lot had a Purple Heart license plate on his truck,” McMasters said. “I asked him why he did not have a handicap permit, and he told me he was not handicapped, that his old war wounds were just catching up to him.”

Like most of the other wounded veterans McMasters had met that day, many of them offered a similar response, some admitting that “They are much too proud to use a handicap permit,” according to the Post 4442 commander.

“I felt sorry for the man and got to thinking,” McMasters said. “We have special parking for other special needs. Why not our wounded veterans, our Purple Heart recipients?”

McMasters brought the concern to his Post 4442 membership in Elm Grove, West Virginia, and by mid-July, the first Purple Heart parking designations appeared at the Triadelphia Walmart, a couple of miles east of the Post.

By December 2023, Post 4442’s Purple Heart Parking Project has accounted for more than 50 Purple Heart parking signs across the Mountain State, at prominent locations such as hospitals, restaurants, grocery stores, sports complexes, social clubs, funeral homes and DMVs.

The implementation, according to McMasters, was a joint effort that included support from local businesses in and around Wheeling, West Virginia, about five miles northwest of Elm Grove.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Post members would supply the Purple Heart parking signs, and businesses would agree to install them on their premises.

AN IDEA FOR OTHER POSTS

“The success has been overwhelming,” McMasters said. “Every business we have approached has welcomed the idea, and we have never been denied.”

With Post 4442 located in the northern part of West Virginia, near Ohio to the west and Pennsylvania to the east, McMasters added that their Purple Heart Parking Project has since spread to these neighboring states.

For their efforts in continuing to grow the project, Post 4442 has received numerous awards and news coverage.

McMasters said the Post’s efforts received an award from the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

“As the project continues to grow,” McMasters said, “we are hoping that other folks will pick up the idea and continue the Purple Heart Parking Project in their area.”

This article is featured in the 2025 July/August issue of [VFW magazine](#) and was written by [Ismael Rodriguez Jr.](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.