FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greene County rededicates restored Lady Liberty 76 years to the day, recreating 1950 ceremony

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Seventy-six years to the day after local Boy Scouts first dedicated it, Greene County rededicated its newly restored Lady Liberty statue on Wednesday, Nov. 18, on the south steps of the Greene County Historic Courthouse.

Former Missouri Gov. Mike Parson, the state's 57th governor, delivered the keynote address, speaking about patriotism and how it is still alive today. The ceremony closed Greene County's celebration of America's 250th anniversary, a fitting finale for a statue whose tablet reads "JULY IV MDCCLXXVI," or July 4, 1776.

A platform was staged on the courthouse steps to match a photograph from the 1950 dedication. After the program, the crowd gathered around the statue for a community photo that recreated the original, and the county opened "The mOther Road," a public exhibit on the African American experience along historic Route 66, in the courthouse rotunda.

Lady Liberty is one of roughly 200 replicas placed in communities across the country during the Boy Scouts of America's "Strengthen the Arm of Liberty" campaign, which marked the organization's 40th anniversary in 1950. The idea came from Kansas City businessman and Scout commissioner Jack P. Whitaker, and Scout troops dedicated the stamped copper statues from 1949 to 1952.

Springfield's statue was dedicated at the courthouse on Nov. 18, 1950, and its original plaque still carries the Scouts' pledge of "everlasting fidelity and loyalty."

One guest had been there the first time. David Eslick was a 10-year-old Cub Scout with Pack 18 from Bowerman School when the statue was dedicated in 1950. On Wednesday, at 86, he led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance. Eslick later served as Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 5 from 1973 to 1983 and today serves on the Greene County Historic Sites Board and the Greene County 250th Anniversary Commission.

Earlier this year, local sculptor Michael Stelzer restored the statue to its original color. After decades of facing the sun and weather on the south side of the courthouse, Lady Liberty had become tarnished and discolored.

“A couple of years ago, the assessor noticed it was looking a little rough and we began to wonder how to address that,” said Presiding Commissioner Bob Dixon, who called the statue “such an icon.”

The restoration was privately funded by money raised and contributed by the Rachel Donelson Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and by community and employee contributions to the Harold K. Bengsch Fund for Greene County.

Members of the chapter also took part in the program. Chaplain Amy Farmer Westermann gave the invocation, and Regent Lisa George led the crowd in the American’s Creed. The chapter has partnered with the county on its America 250 events throughout the year.

The Hillcrest High School Army Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) color guard presented the colors. The Courthouse Chorale, directed by Tim Smith, performed the national anthem, “My Country, ’Tis of Thee” and “God Bless America.” Outside, classic cars from the era lined Central Street in front of the courthouse.

Travis Rubelee, Scout executive and executive director of Scouting America’s Ozark Trails Council, spoke about the “Strengthen the Arm of Liberty” campaign. Greene County Clerk Shane Schoeller made special recognitions and presented the county’s America 250 Time Capsule, which was displayed in the rotunda after the ceremony and will be dedicated on Dec. 24.

“The mOther Road,” a Missouri State University project led by Dr. Lyle Q. Foster, an associate professor of sociology who spoke during the ceremony, shares the stories of African Americans who traveled and lived along Route 66 in Springfield, from oral histories to Green Book-listed stops such as Alberta’s Hotel. The exhibit debuted this summer at the Benton Avenue AME Church on the Drury University campus and came to the courthouse during the centennial year of Route 66, which got its name in Springfield in 1926.

Seventy-six years after local Scouts made their pledge, Lady Liberty still stands at the south steps of the Greene County Historic Courthouse, 940 N. Boonville Ave., where county offices continue to serve the citizens of Greene County just as they did in 1950.

Greene County thanks the speakers and performers, the elected officials and guests who attended, everyone who contributed to the restoration, and its partners. The county also thanks its employees, whose hard work made the event possible.

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Greene County is the State of Missouri's fourth most populous county, serving approximately 308,000 people. Its mission is to provide all citizens of Greene County, including those in its cities, a safe and thriving community through excellent customer service, unparalleled dedication, and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The Greene County Commission is the executive body of Greene County operating under guidelines established in the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri. Within that authority the Commission enacts ordinances, resolutions and policies, supervises the activities of county departments, fixes salaries, adopts the annual budget, provides for construction and other services, and conducts hearings on planning and zoning matters.

For additional information contact the Greene County Commission's Public Information Office at 417-844-4311 or pio@greenecountymo.gov.

PHOTOS



Nov. 18, 2026: Scouts, community members and guests recreated the 1950 dedication photo.



Nov. 18, 1950: Lady Liberty's original dedication at the Greene County Courthouse. Photo used with permission from the Springfield News-Leader archives.



Speakers addressed the crowd from a platform staged to match the 1950 ceremony.



Guests stood with hands over their hearts during the ceremony.



The Hillcrest High School Army JROTC color guard presented the colors.



Classic cars from the era lined Central Street in front of the courthouse.



David Eslick points to the original 1950 plaque on Lady Liberty's pedestal.



The plaque from the Boy Scouts of America's 1950 "Strengthen the Arm of Liberty" campaign.



Before: tarnished and discolored after decades outdoors



During: stripped to bare copper



After: restored to its original color



The tablet in Lady Liberty's arm bears the date of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.