

Volume

5

BEING THERE-REACHING OUT

For the Families of our Fallen Military

REMEMBRANCE

May the Peace of the Reason find its way into your Heart



Our Mission Statement

The mission of Being There-Reaching Out is to focus on the families of our Wisconsin men and women lost in the global wars on terrorism, as in Iraq and Afghanistan today. To be there for them emotionally, physically, and economically; And to reach out to them by organizing, primarily private, gatherings which allow them to continue to heal through one-on-one communication and sharing with one another.

Our Goals:

We are a non-profit organization that focuses solely on the emotional, physical, and financial needs of the families of our fallen soldiers.

Our goals are multifaceted:

- 1 to arrange for our families to meet one another and form support groups throughout the state of Wisconsin
- 2 to focus our newly formed, knowledgeable and caring support groups on being there and reaching out to future families of our Wisconsin soldiers killed in war
- 3 to gather our families together at various locations throughout the State several times a year to further strengthen their bonds, but to be available to our families 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- 4 that at our supportive and non-public gatherings, questions regarding military benefits be answered, stories and experiences shared, and that any concerns be addressed confidentially, financial or otherwise
- 5 to continuously raise funds with which we can offer our families scholarships and financial assistance when needed
- 6 that our gatherings be used as templates throughout the United States to help in the healing of our families throughout the United States, and therefore our Nation
- 7 that "Being There-Reaching Out (BT-RO)" continue to always be there for our families.

being there



reaching out

For the Families of our Fallen Military

Our Prayer Wheel

Brendan, nephew of Isaiah Hunt (11/15/04) our littlest Angel, is home, but will need our continued prayers. He still has many surgeries to endure.

Kave Olson, Mother of Andy Stevens (12-1-05-Iraq) has finished her last Chemo treatment, but the side effects are still there, though she is doing better thanks to all of your prayers.

Deb Kiser's (Wife of Charles, 6/24/45-Iraq) grandfather, suffered a stroke in September.

Cpl. Daniel Castaneda, and David Kretz, friends of our own Johnny Mattek (Iraq- 6/13/05) and who are both serving in Iraq.

Nancy Nussberger, mother of SSG Patrick Lybert (6/21/06-Afghanistan) and her younger son who has Autism Spectrum Disorder and multiple mood swings.

Kathy Martin (Wife of Steve (7-2-04 Iraq) Her mother passed away at the young age of 69.

Mark Kalscheuer cousin of Matthew Kading (10/31/05-Iraq) is serving in Afghanistan. And **Jason Madaus**, also Matt's cousin, who is still dealing with a lot of pain since his injury in Iraq 3 years ago.

Andy Hemauer, father of Kyle (5-23-05 Afghanistan) has 2 brothers, Ray and Gary, who are gravely ill with cancer.

SFC Leslie Santos (CAO for the Karlson's when their son Warren Hanson was killed in Iraq) is leaving for Iraq. Leslie's son was killed in Iraq 10-15-04.



Births:

To Randy and Sue Thiry, parents of CPL Jesse Thiry (4/5/04-Iraq) a granddaughter, Lexis Mae on July 25th, and a 6th grandchild, Blakelee Joseph, born Sept. 6th! Yikes!



Weddings:

The oldest daughter of **Randy and Sue Thiry**, parents of Jesse (4-5-04 Iraq) was married in March.

This past September, **Kave Olson**, mother of Andy Stevens (12/1/05-Iraq) attended her step-daughter's wedding. Her father is our friend, **John Olson**.



Anniversaries:

Mary and Pat Donahue (Richie Warner: 12/13/04-Iraq), celebrated 5 years on Sept. 22!!!

SPC Nichole Frye Memorial Bridge Dedicated

8/23/06 Peshigo Times

Hundreds of friends, family members, officers, veterans and representatives gathered in the Lena High School gymnasium on Sunday, Aug. 20 to honor the memory of Army Specialist Nichole Frye, who died at the age of 19 in the sands of Baqubah, Iraq. Her funeral had been held in the same gymnasium, which was also filled to capacity in February of 2004. Although the atmosphere was considerably lighter last Sunday, the grief that has encompassed the Frye family and the Lena community was still evident.

The Memorial Service began in respectful silence as a large Honor Guard of veterans placed the flags. All stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance. An Opening Prayer and a recital of the Lord's Prayer were given. Each speaker commented on an aspect of Nichole's life or death which has touched them. Rolling Thunder Motorcyclists also honored Nichole's memory with a fund raising Memorial Ride and attendance at the Dedication. Funds raised were given to the Nichole Frye Scholarship under management of the Brian LaViolette Foundation.

A bridge, approximately one mile north of the Town of Lena on the newly constructed Highway 141, was named in honor of Nichole Frye. Nichole's parents, Jayme and Lisa Frye, unveiled the large sign which will be permanently mounted at the bridge over Kelly Brook. The sign reads: The Highway 141 bridges spanning Kelly Brook in the Town of Lena in Oconto County have been designated as a Memorial in honor and in recognition of SPC. Nichole M. Frye who sacrificed her life in Operation Iraqi Freedom: Dedicated by authority of Wisconsin Statute 84.1034.

Carol Frye, grandmother of Nichole, said, "I want to thank everyone for being here. It means so much to see so many people who are interested in Nichole. Today is the day which the Lord has made – let us rejoice and be glad. It is so fitting to dedicate a bridge in honor of Nichole. A bridge symbolizes the joining of opposing sides or a crossing from unrest to freedom. Nichole was dedicated to the purpose she was given. She loved her country, her flag and all that it stands for. She sacrificed her loves, her home and her future children. We sacrificed the joy of watching her achievements. Nichole gave her life for our nation's cause in an effort to help humanity. She bled and died into the sands of Iraq. Our Nichole of Lena has given her life for freedom and a bridge shall bear her name for miles of smiles. Her strength was gentleness and her power was found in obedience. Her name is written in the Rolls of the Obedient."

Command Sergeant Major of the 308 Civil Affairs Brigade, Bob Haglund, said, "Nichole's deployed unit, the 415 and her home unit, the 432nd are two battalions that fall under me. When she joined the Army, I was her Command Sergeant Major. She would come to my office and talk with me about police work. Many times when I came to Oconto, I would stop at Wayne's Family Restaurant where she worked. Nichole would bring me around and introduce me to everyone. Now, every time I pass the bridge over Kelly Brook or pass by Wayne's – I remember Nichole. She will always have a special place in my heart." Command Sergeant Major of the 353 Civil Affairs Command, Neil Heupel, added, "I thank all of you for being here on this momentous occasion. Specialist Frye was a strong representative of the 1,500 men and women who serve in the Civil Affairs Command of the United States. She was a great soldier and we love and miss her. It means a great deal to us that one of our own is being memorialized in this way."

Will Dorsey, Green Bay Regional Operations Manager for the Department of Transportation, commented on Nichole's sacrifice and the rebuilding of Highway 141 on which the two bridges spanning Kelly Brook are located. "Our staff is dedicated to maintaining safety and transportation on our state roads, airports and harbors. That is what Specialist Nichole Frye chose to do on behalf of all of us, but she volunteered to do it in an environment that was anything but safe. Nichole served in the chaos of Iraq where our service men and women face rockets and bombs on a daily basis. Like Nichole, American women have served in every conflict this country has faced; including the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq. They have served in peace and in world war to keep us safe. Like Nichole, they have sacrificed their lives on our behalf. But Nichole was ours. She lived right here in Lena and we will honor her sacrifice in her home town of Lena."

Dorsey continued, "Highway 141 is a major connecting link between Green Bay and other Northeastern Wisconsin communities and northern Michigan. The \$65 million project will transform 18 miles of Highway 141 from a rural two-lane highway into a divided four-lane highway. The project will reroute the highway around the communities of Lena, Coleman and Pound. Seven bridges are being built in this project, including two spanning Kelly Brook. We began this project in March, 2004, and will complete it in November. Reconstructing of Highway 141 will provide additional capacity and improved safety, will address future mobility needs and enhance economic development. It is an

important project for the people of Lena as well as for the State of Wisconsin.

"The Department of Transportation learned of the Frye family wishes through in an effort lead by her grandmother, Carol Frye, and assisted by local legislators who asked to have several new bridges named in honor of Nichole. One of the finest structures in the area will be named after her. The Frye family chose the two bridges spanning Kelly Brook. Visitors and residents in our state will be reminded and inspired by Specialist Frye's death on their behalf. These bridges will be used quite a bit in the coming years. It is projected that by the year 2025, approximately 12,000 vehicles will cross these bridges each day. Personally, I think that number is low. Each of us at the Department of Transportation is truly humbled in being able to participate in seeing that Nichole Frye's service to her country is given public recognition."

The Frye family has endured much grief since Nichole's death on February 16, 2004. Carol Frye described the family's sorrow and triumph in a poetic sense. "We have walked through the fire in the desert. We have felt burning tears run down our cheeks and felt a strangling pain in our chests. Our muscles have strained and our bones have been broken because the pain of grief has enveloped our bodies and souls. Today we are breaking away from the braces and cast of this past. We have drunk the bitter dregs of the barrel and tasted the wretched gall – and we have survived!"

Father of fallen Marine honors vow to veterans

Memorial dedication is Saturday

By [Patti Zarling](#)

pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com October 3, 2006

HOBART — Ken Jerabek soon will make good on a promise he made to families who also lost sons on a fateful day in Iraq.

Jerabek's son, Ryan, was killed April 6, 2004, in Ramadi, Iraq, when his patrol was ambushed by insurgents. Ten Marines and a U.S. Navy medic were killed in the firefight.

When meeting with other families, Jerabek said he promised "their sons would never be forgotten." A memorial to honor them, as well as other veterans, will be formally dedicated Saturday at Four Seasons Park in Hobart.

The memorial includes commemorative bricks honoring veterans from around the country and from all branches of military service, Jerabek said. Bricks represent vets from California to Florida, he said. So far, more than 100 bricks have been purchased, and Jerabek expects many more.

"This dedication is for (veterans)," he said. "We're honoring the men and women who fought to give us the rights and freedom we have."

The memorial, he noted, is in a very scenic area and should lend itself to quiet contemplation and reflection.

Local builders donated time and materials to the site, he said. "This wouldn't be possible without them. Many of their fathers served, and they wanted to help out."

The memorial is complete, and village staff will work on landscaping, said Hobart administrator Joe Helfenberger.

The featured speaker will be former New York City police commissioner Bernard Kerik, who was serving as police commissioner during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Village President Richard Heidel and Kerik were members of the same military police company.

"I can imagine no other individual who could bring more dignity to our event, more admiration from our village's residents or more pride in being an American and a veteran on this occasion than Bernie Kerik," Heidel said in a written statement. Although the memorial will keep Ryan Jerabek and others in the public consciousness, it doesn't end the pain for the Jerabek family, Ken said.

"I don't think as a family we're ever going to heal," he said. "It's pretty hard. It happened two and a half years ago, and there still isn't a day that goes by that we don't cry."

"I hope no one forgets him, or any of the others that have died. ... His memory won't be forgotten."



Turnout at run to honor Marine surprises parents

Published Sunday, August 13, 2006 11:06:31 PM Central Time-Green Bay Press Gazette....See photo.

HOBART, Wis. (AP) -- Ken and Rita Jerabek figured they'd get between 100 and 200 people to attend the first memorial run in honor of their son, a Marine who died in Iraq.

But more than 1,200 people turned up Saturday to take part in the run, which honors first Marine Pfc. Ryan Jerabek. He died in April 2004 at the age of 18 while trying to protect his fellow Marines.

"The turnout is way beyond our expectations," Rita Jerabek said.

Before the run began, Hobart village officials and Ken Jerabek addressed the crowd and then a handful of veterans parachuted from a plane into a nearby field. A group of Marines started the 4-mile run in formation and then a shot fired from an M1 Garand rifle signaled the start of the race.

Ken Jerabek said the route, at Four Seasons Park, was chosen because his son used to train there for his military service. He teared up thinking of his son, when Matt Mroczynski, 17, of Pulaski, crossed the finish line first at 20:38.

"I can still see him running here, and when that first runner came in it was really emotional for me," he said. "This should make everyone realize we're at war here."

Proceeds from the run were going to the Marine Semper Fi Fund for injured sailors and Marines and Pulaski school's Education Foundation. Rita Jerabek said her son planned to return to Pulaski to teach history.

The Jerabeks hope next year's race will be even bigger. "I've talked to some directors of other races, and they've said you can expect the numbers to double each year," Rita Jerabek said.

Note: See photo in the album.

Wisconsin Memorial for our Fallen

Dear Judith and Joe,

I found your website about a month ago and was glad to see the compassion you have for the families of Wisconsin war lost: Being there at their recovery from their great losses.

About a year ago, I started working on a memorial in my front yard dedicated to the service men and women who have lost their lives in these present conflicts.

The intent is to honor their service and consider their deaths as members of our own extended family. It is not meant to be pro-or anti-war, but to acknowledge how we, as Wisconsinites, are all affected. The words in the dedication sign were carefully chosen to be neutral in the description of the war. Those who died are family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers or their children. Thus I want them remembered as Steve, Adam, Ryan, or John. Not as a marine, soldier, officer, or sergeant. Not the medals, but the memories. Those who died are remembered by a flag and a placard with first name, hometown (with location on a Wisconsin map), and date of death. Out front is a 2-foot by 2-foot sign that reads,

"Dedicated to the Sons & Daughters of Wisconsin who died while serving Our Country in Iraq & Afghanistan."

The structure is a series of triangles, each one holding twelve flags. Each triangle is slightly rotated from the one below, creating a spiral effect. This

allows adding new levels indefinitely. Lights are installed, turning on at dusk and off at dawn, for proper respect. Originally, there were 44 flags; 43 for Wisconsin losses in Iraq, one in Afghanistan (Now at 67). A neighbor contributed an American eagle and the column it stands on. It is very fitting. Another helped me install the permanent lighting. The basic elements were put into place in early September 2005. My wife's idea was to add Forget-Me-Not's around the base in springtime.

It soon became evident that additional flags on the monument were not readily apparent to passers-by. Most did not notice a 45th or 46th flag; so I began adding new names (& number) to a larger, more prominent sign and displaying those for 30 days. Also, when another layer was needed, I changed the color so its addition would be noticeable. Early this summer, I found a garden statue of a weeping angel. I placed it in the display. The signs had all been printed from my computer, and then laminated. Depending on the weather, they often had to be replaced. Recently, I had them all replaced with new ones that are more permanent. I added the new signs at the same time I needed to add yet another layer. This memorial will be here indefinitely, as a reminder to all. **(See the photo in our album)**
 Jim Kozak jollygrygiant@yahoo.com

Directions: From US Hwy 45 (Menomonee Falls)
 Take Pilgrim Road North, Exit 51A.
 North on Pilgrim 1.5 miles to Donges Bay Rd
 (Stop lights)
 Left on Donges Bay 0.8 Miles (west)
 Left on Larkspur Lane (south), Fourth house on left side.
 W170 N10308 Larkspur Lane
 Memorial in front yard. Viewable 24 - 7 - 365

Thank you for your kindness and act of love for our Fallen, Jim, and for your donation to Being There-Reaching Out.

From Bobbie Samme, mother of LCPL Eric Palmisano (4/2/06-Iraq)

Judith, Herb and I have been sending packages to the troops in Iraq since a month after Eric's death. These are all items donated by our church as well as our community and of course Herb and I. We have named this the LCPL Eric A. Palmisano Care Package Project. All items are shipped with a small card that reads "These items are being sent to you in Eric's Memory, May God Bless You and Keep You Safe", and then the Scripture: "I will not leave you comfortless. John 14:18". We also include Eric's photo button in every package. I have found this project to be very therapeutic for me as well as most appreciated by the troops. They have all told me so in person. We will continue to carry on this project in Eric's Memory until all our troops come

home safe.

Note from Judith: Included here is a thank you letter to Bobbie and Herb for one of their Care Packages to our Troops, but there is a twist to it: Ironically, the writer is the niece of a dear friend of Bobbie's from Florida, and does not know who Eric is nor of her Aunt's relationship with Bobbie, so this is another one of Eric's "Ripples".



Support our Troops-Send Care Packages



Sept 11th

My fellow supporters
 I just recieved a box from you that was dedicated to your Marine CPL. Palmisano. I want to tell you all that your love for that boy has spread farther and has influenced many people through all your support and kind words. I send my thanks from the bottom of my heart.

My unit is here in Baghdad, we got moved over here from Mosul 3 days before our planned redeployment back to the States back in August. We got extended 4 months, so I pray we make it home for Christmas. We already lost 2 soldiers since we got extended. I feel terrible for the families because they had finished their year tour and would have made it home, if we didn't get extended. But they need our strykers here in Baghdad. I just pray Americans dont loose their support of our cause and our president. Being over here is helping get the killers before they come get us back home again. I don't want another Sept 11th. So stay strong good people, may

God Bless you all.

A soldier

IF God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.

Military spouses seek more grief counseling

America's Gold Star Wives want widows and widowers to get help - free of charge.

BY STEPHANIE HEINATZ

October 11, 2006

For more than two years now, Suzanne Stack has been living with the reality that her husband won't be coming home; That he was killed in Iraq; That their three young children - until very recently - have been unable to talk about their father without breaking down. And still, "I don't really fully understand the whole grief process," she said. The 47-year-old woman does understand depression, though.

Tricare, which oversees health care coverage for military families, doesn't cover extended grief counseling for military families unless they are diagnosed with a mental disorder, like depression. After Sgt. Maj. Michael Stack was killed in April 2004 during an ambush on his convoy, Suzanne said, "the children were fairly well devastated. Getting help for them was difficult. I did know to say, 'I think they might be depressed.' "

But some women with Gold Star Wives of America are asking why a grieving parent should have to claim that his or her child has a mental disorder to get them a professional to talk to when they're understandably, even naturally, bereaved. "Depression and grief, to me, are very different things," Suzanne Stack said.

The Gold Star Wives, a nonprofit organization for military widows, is beginning a campaign to get some sort of grief counseling added to the benefits covered under Tricare. While the 10,000-member group hasn't formally started lobbying legislators in Washington, it has begun to gather supporters for the cause. Late last month, Rose Lee, the Gold Star Wives' chairwoman for government relations, testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, saying, "Mental health is an issue affecting widows and children. I'm hearing from new widows more and more. Vet centers provide counseling, but it's not always nearby. And Tricare doesn't provide grief counseling." Tricare does offer eight counseling sessions, a Tricare spokesman said. Following those sessions, the spokesman said, the family member is evaluated. At that point, a mental illness or behavioral problem has to be diagnosed to continue coverage, he said.

Suzanne Stack has recently been appointed to the Tricare beneficiary advisory panel, where she represents the Gold Star Wives. At last month's meeting, Stack said, she brought up this issue, telling the panel, "It's a real problem when you can't get counseling for your children or yourself." Part of the problem, though, is that in medical terms grief

isn't considered an illness. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which both military and civilian clinicians use to identify an illness, includes everything from Alzheimer's and alcohol-induced sleep disorder to anxiety and social phobia. Grief is not listed.

Until something changes, Tricare officials suggest that military families contact their regional office, where representatives should help families find something that would be a covered benefit, like family counseling. "It's not exactly adding insult to injury, but that's just something else you have to deal with," Stack said. "You're dealing with your own set of grief issues and you're thrust into so many decisions right away. To work the system at a time when you really aren't able to isn't a good thing."

Widows could also use their casualty assistance officer - the military member assigned to guide families through the months after the death - for more direction. "My casualty assistance officer made it very plain he was going to do everything to help," Suzanne said. "If he didn't know the answer, he would find out."

One of the things I envision happening is having something already set in place where when you feel you need grief counseling, it should be available to you." Especially since the front lines of Iraq are so "odd," she said. "It's not a predictable war. People die from these roadside bombs and suicide bombers. It's very emotional. Very turbulent. Very difficult." And making a hard situation even harder, she said, some families aren't getting their loved ones' entire bodies back to bury. Stack was at least able to see her husband's body. That didn't make seeing a coffin any easier for the three of their six children still living at home. The younger kids were 3, 5 and 7 years old at the time.

"It was a very tough age. They don't really understand death. They don't really understand war. When you combine the two, it's a very difficult conversation to have." Because everything happened so quickly, Stack said, she suffered from what some spouses call "widow's fog." "There are times you can't remember your own name, your own phone number. You write things down because you know you won't remember it later." Stack said she pushed through that fog for her children. "I'm not going to let my husband down. He knew when he went to war this could happen. I did, too. He knew I could handle it. I did, too."

She just didn't realize it would be so hard. "It's been a very long road, and we have a long way to go." Today, the children seem to be adjusting to their changed life. They still see a counselor. Suzanne sees one off and on. "I get therapy from getting up

every day and getting my kids going and hearing their laughter. I'm trying ... to give them the best I can give them, to raise them the way we had talked about, and to give them the love that both of us would have."

War's Forgotten Casualties: Children of the Fallen

From our own Penny Splinter-wife of Major Chris Splinter 12/24/03-Iraq)

By Janie Blankenship

When 21-year-old Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. Jessica Cawvey went to Iraq, she left a six-year-old daughter, Sierra, who made her pinkie-swear she wouldn't die.

A roadside bomb in Fallujah broke that sacred promise between mother and daughter on Oct. 6, 2004. Orphaned that fateful day, Sierra is being raised by her grandparents, Kevin and Sandy Cawvey of Mahomet, Ill.

Jack Shanaberger lost his father, Army Staff Sgt. Wentz Shanaberger, in an ambush in Iraq on March 23, 2004. The four-year-old declared to his mother that when he grew up he didn't want to be a daddy because "daddies die."

And then there's Katie Pirtle. She was born 27 days after her father, Army Spc. James Pirtle, was killed north of Baghdad Oct. 3, 2003. Katie will never have the opportunity to hug her father.

These youngsters are among the nearly 4,000 children who have lost a parent in the military since Sept. 11, 2001. (This number also reflects those who have died stateside in accidents.) They are the forgotten casualties of war.

It's hard enough for adults to cope with the loss of a spouse or a child to war, but how does one explain to a little girl why her daddy won't be coming home, when he told her through a video message he would see her soon?

Counseling Needed

For some military parents, getting counseling for their children is an obstacle. Heidi Litherland took her daughter, Lea, to the base hospital at Ft. Hood in Texas after her father was killed in Iraq. Litherland was told they didn't offer counseling, but that she should go to the base clinic to assess her daughter's emotional state.

"I said, 'Her dad just died! What kind of fricking assessment do you need?'" Litherland told Newsweek.

Many think the military's bereavement program is lacking, especially when it comes to children. That's why Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey added \$7 million to this year's budget for casualty assistance. Commanders are now required to check in with the grieving families by phone one week after a soldier's death.

Ft. Hood serves as a model for the implementation. Casualty assistance officers there now receive a full week of training—including a day spent with hospice workers—rather than the standard three hours.

Furthermore, the base commanders are instructed to write a personal letter to their slain soldier's family and to send a videotape of the memorial service in Iraq.

These changes are intended to shed some light on the entire family, rather than just the spouses.

Not every child seeks counseling, though. For those who are old enough to understand, they cling to their lost parents' possessions and save messages left on family answering machines.

At 13, Kimberly Hunt has a stack of green T-shirts in her dresser. She sleeps in the shirts at night to remember her father, Marine Master Sgt. Kenneth Hunt, Jr., who died Oct. 12, 2005, on Kimberly's 13th birthday. Her father wore the green shirts under his uniform.

Kenneth was being treated at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio for severe burns he sustained in Iraq. Kimberly was there to see him on her birthday when he died.

When the teen longs to talk with her dad, her mom, Maria, drives her to a cemetery in Yuma, Ariz., to see her dad's grave marker.

"This is a place where I feel more relaxed and close to him," Kimberly told the Arizona Republic. "I talk about all the good times we had and that I know he'll always be here for me."

Maria said at this point there has been no need for counseling because the two talk about Kenneth all the time and cry when they need to.

Camps Offer Peer Support

Everyone grieves in his or her own way, however. Some need a great deal of counseling or to be with people in similar circumstances.

In April, a Gold Star Family Day Camp was held at the Soldier's Hospitality House in Killeen, Texas.

Erica Johnson, whose husband, Capt. Ricky Johnson, died April 21, 2003, in Iraq, took her two daughters, Asia and Hayva, to the camp.

"There is cohesiveness within military groups that I didn't experience as much with civilian support groups," Johnson told the Ft. Hood Sentinel. "Being able to relate to other kids who have lost a parent in the military is important for them."

During the day, children had the opportunity for peer discussions when they could share their personal stories and feelings.

Aaron Taylor, 13, said he appreciated the opportunity to talk about his father, SPC Clarence Adams III, who was killed Sept. 7, 2004. Talking freely about his father, Taylor said, is something he seldom does with other children because they don't understand.

One of the activities at the day camp was the creation of memory boxes for the children's' lost soldiers.

"I'm going to put fishing things in my box," Taylor told the Sentinel. "My dad and grandpa went fishing a lot, and they were really close. I'll probably put his I.D. tags and some of his medals in there, too."

The event was organized by Helping Unite Gold Star Survivors (HUGSS). According to Debbie Busch, HUGSS director, there is a need for interaction between surviving family members "There is an ongoing effort to look for ways to support these children and to provide activities for them on a regular basis," she told the Sentinel. "There's a definite need to provide support for their children, and I know it means a lot to the mothers."

On a much larger scale, the non-profit organization Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS) conducts an intensive five-day program over Memorial Day for the surviving children of military members. Held in the nation's capital, the Good Grief Camp for Young Survivors is in its 13th year.

TAPS was founded by Bonnie Carroll, who lost her husband, Brig. Gen. Tom Carroll, in an Army C-12 plane crash in 1992. The program began as a peer support program for adults and has now branched out to include children, from infants through those 21 years old.

Children are grouped by age, and each child is partnered with a trained volunteer, who is often a member of the Arlington National Cemetery Honor Guard.

Carroll said this year the children visited the Caisson at Fort Myer, where the horses that lead the funeral processions are stabled. The weekend concludes with the laying of the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

"These children are building a support network that will last for the rest of their lives," said Carroll, who is retired from the Air Force Reserve. "This is so critical because the average group of children who have lost a parent to war is infant through six years old."

The camp is open to any grieving military child. Participants must pay for transportation to Washington, D.C., but the entire program, complete with professional counselors, is free.

Taylor Downing, 10-year-old daughter of Army Spc. Stephen Paul Downing II, attended the camp with her 11-year-old cousin, Chelsea. According to their grandmother, Stella Maynard, the camp was helpful to them both.

"Both girls told me they realized that it was okay to laugh and to have a good time," Maynard said. "They know they can still be sad, but having other feelings is normal, too."

Downing was killed Oct. 28, 2004, and also left a son, Stephen Hunter.

Lt. Col. Judy Mathewson, the camp's coordinator, said one of the biggest obstacles for these families is that the general public does not understand the difficulty surrounding families with military losses.

"It is multi-layered," Mathewson said. "There is the loss of a loved one, the loss of a lifestyle and then the surviving parent's own grief process. Some school counselors don't know how to respond to the behavioral changes in children."

Carroll said reconnecting youth with the military is therapeutic. She added that it's good for them to see they are not alone. "People who lose a loved one in the military are different than others," she said. "This helps bring a sense of normalcy to their lives."

With VFW's military connection, Carroll encourages VFW Posts to visit TAPS' Web site (www.taps.org) to find out how to support the organization.

This year's camp drew in about 125 children. In fall 2007, a second camp is scheduled for the West Coast area.

Some children find that writing about their loss also is therapeutic. Mitchell Splinter was 14 when he wrote a couple of essays about his father, Army Maj. Christopher Splinter, who was killed on Christmas Eve, 2003.

He writes of his happiness in learning that his father would be home soon, and of traveling to Wisconsin to be with family for Christmas. He also writes about the day he learned his father wouldn't be coming home.

"When I heard that, my heart was torn into a million pieces," he wrote. "It's in that 20 minutes after hearing it that you burst.

Then it's like your world ended and all of a sudden you're drowning in tears and you want to cry forever. If I ever could talk to my dad again, it would be to tell him that I love him, and I am proud of what he did and gave up."

Free Tuition is 'Godsend'

Aside from the emotional aspects of losing a mom or dad in Iraq or Afghanistan, there is the worry of attending college one day. For some, that's several years away, but for others, the time to choose a college is now.

There is hopeful news for these families.

Some 39 states offer free or reduced tuition at public colleges or special scholarships for children of GIs killed in war.

In Minnesota, for example, children of fallen troops receive free tuition at public universities.

"To me, that's a godsend, just knowing that even part of my daughter's education is paid for," Jamie Dorf, who lost her husband in Iraq, told Army Times. "It's already stressful enough having to worry about my 5-year-old now."

Under Minnesota law, undergraduate tuition is waived at public colleges and \$750 a year is provided for books, supplies and living expenses. The state veterans agency reports that about 40 students currently take advantage of the benefit.

Iowa recently revised its war-orphan policy and now grants post-Sept. 11 war orphans up to \$5,500 a year for tuition, fees and books at public institutions. Missouri is currently reviewing its laws, and New Hampshire, South Dakota and Wyoming have already updated theirs.

Whether it be educational or emotional support, there is a need clearly to be met here. Let's all do our part.

Children Left Behind

- More than 40% of recent U.S. war casualties were married.
- 60 who died never saw their children.
- 40 wives were pregnant when their husbands died.
- There are 1.2 million children of active-duty members; 71% are under age 12.
- There are about 737,000 reservists' children under age 15.

Source: Army Times

Your Gold Star License Plates



SSGT Warren Hansen



PFC Sean Schneider



LCPL Rich Warner



SFC Lance Cornett



SSGT Charles Kiser



SPC Charles Kaufman



SSGT Patrick Lybert





CPL Robert Warns



PFC Brent Vroman



SGT Andy Stevens



LCPL Travis Wichlacz



SFC Matthew Kading



PFC Isaiah Hunt



SGT Andrew Wallace





CASTNR

Gold Star Family

SPC Stephen Castner



WISCONSIN

SWC724

Gold Star Family

LCPL John Mattek



WISCONSIN

JJM12

Gold Star Family

LCPL John Mattek



WISCONSIN

060313

Gold Star Family

LCPL Nick Anderson



WISCONSIN

031306

Gold Star Family

From Belle Wichlacz(Travis-2/5/05-Iraq)

Missing items are source of heartache

By KATHERINE M. SKIBA
kskiba@journalsentinel.com Posted: Sept. 30, 2006

Washington - After two Wisconsin families each lost a Marine in Iraq, they were bound not just by grief, but by hurt: Their sons' bodies came home, but some of their belongings went missing.

At least four Marine Reservist families from the state have had similar experiences, said Pam DeGroot of Oshkosh, whose son, Lance Cpl. Brent Vroman, 21, was killed in action in 2004.

The four families met in Milwaukee on Aug. 8, 2005, called together by a Marine general who had listened to the mother's complaint, which she and her husband said sparked a probe by the Marine Corps inspector general. The corps' findings were given to parents at the meeting at the Marine Reserve Center, they said.

Vroman was killed by an improvised explosive device on Dec. 13, 2004. Ten days later, he was

mourned and buried in Oshkosh. Around February, a cardboard box showed up, and his mother and his fiancée, Katie Heidl, took on the heart-wrenching task of unpacking it.

They found his Marine combat uniforms, as well as photos, letters and a busted DVD player. Missing were his digital camera, a global positioning satellite receiver and several CDs and DVDs - all of which a friend of Vroman's had packed in the field.

"The pattern I saw was, if it could be perceived as having value to someone else, it was absconded with," said Bill DeGroot, Vroman's stepfather.

What the DeGroots care about most is the camera's memory card, which would open a window to the gritty months their son spent south of Baghdad, once so busy on missions that he went without a shower for a month. "I would have cherished any photos that my son would have taken over there. His buddies, the people, whatever," Pam DeGroot said. She had another reason for wanting the camera: Brent's twin, Brian, a Marine corporal, was being deployed to the Middle East and could have used it.

A frustrating search

Pam DeGroot's earlier attempts to get answers from midlevel officers about the missing belongings brought nothing but frustration; one told her "this type of thing" had been happening since the Civil War.

So she picked up the phone and called Maj. Gen. Douglas V. O'Dell Jr., who commands the 4th Marine Division, based in New Orleans. O'Dell had stopped at the DeGroots' home the day before their son's funeral. He left his card with Pam, telling her to call if she ever needed something.

O'Dell looked into the matter and gathered the families in Milwaukee. Bill DeGroot said the two-star general was "mad as a hornet" about the missing items and said that an investigation was ongoing.

"On behalf of the Marine Corps specifically and armed forces in general, he was apologetic," Bill said.

Bill DeGroot said he and his wife were given the impression that the camera probably had been stolen at the Joint Personal Effects Depot in Maryland's Aberdeen Proving Ground and that an investigation had spilled into local pawn shops in an unsuccessful bid to track it down.

Bill DeGroot said he and his wife left the meeting thinking: "Someday, somewhere, by divine providence, that memory card will show up. The camera (itself) means nothing."

In the end, he wonders, "Is there a more despicable, heinous act than a human being robbing from the dead?"

On Thursday, the Journal Sentinel e-mailed questions for O'Dell to his chief of staff, Col. Louis Herrera, and asked for a response before the weekend. Herrera said later: "The general, he's going to send his regrets with respect to an

interview. His schedule does not allow it.”
Herrera added that the events were more than a year old and that the Joint Personal Effects Depot does not fall within O’Dell’s jurisdiction.

Similar losses

Then there’s the experience of Virginia Wichlacz of West Bend, whose stepson, Lance Cpl. Travis Wichlacz, 22, was killed in action on Feb. 5, 2005. Both Travis Wichlacz and Brent Vroman were Marine Reservists with the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, which suffered a dozen losses in Iraq during its 2004-’05 deployment.

Virginia Wichlacz said she and her husband, Dennis, got a host of Travis’ things back: uniforms, boots, three yo-yos, five Bibles, cards, letters, a small U.S. flag, Iraqi money and a license plate from Dubai, among other things. Missing: his wedding ring, a Game Boy and a custom-made gold crucifix that she had a West Bend jeweler craft. It cost her \$200. Talking about the lost items, she said: “When you’re going through an emotional upheaval, this exacerbates the whole thing.”

The belongings first went through Travis’ widow, who is in the Army and is estranged from his father and stepmother. Still, Virginia Wichlacz, 49, a computer programmer, said the widow denied receiving them, leaving the stepmother to believe that the backpack that held the belongings either was lost or stolen in transit, or at the personal effects depot. Her stepson’s Marine buddies told her that they packed the valuables in the backpack, put the other things in a duffel bag, “threw both in the back of a truck, and that’s the last they saw it.”

While reluctant to point fingers, she said that she, too, was told that there had been thefts at Aberdeen. Just the thought of the crucifix ending up in a pawn shop spurred her to spend long, fruitless hours on eBay, hoping it would turn up.

A reporter visiting the depot last month was told by military officers that a staffer had been fired seven or eight months earlier for “stealing pornography.”

On Thursday, a list of questions arising from the Wisconsin cases was sent to Army officials. Col. Patrick Gawkins, director of the Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center, responded to some.

Gawkins said one soldier at the depot was caught stealing in the summer of 2005 and was relieved of his duties, returned to his parent organization, disciplined and reduced in rank. Without divulging other details, including what was stolen, he said the soldier “undertook a criminal act, was caught and appropriately punished.”

He also said the military knew it needed to “tighten procedures and address past mistakes.” And he said the depot staff accomplished a “very challenging, emotionally difficult mission, to incredibly high standard.”

But several questions put in writing by the Journal

Sentinel were not immediately answered. They were posed Thursday to Army Lt. Col. Kevin Arata, public affairs officer for the Human Resources Command, which oversees casualty and memorial affairs.

Arata said the “answers are in a multitude of jurisdictions which are not within our purview to release without being vetted through the proper agencies as they involve disciplinary actions.”

As for the Marine report, it makes no mention of theft, saying that families had informed casualty assistance officers that specific items known to be in the possession of the deceased Marine were missing from shipments forwarded by the depot in Aberdeen.

As a result of the inspector general’s meetings with commanders and staff, “significant procedural changes and revisions of orders and directives have occurred,” it says.

From the Oct. 1, 2006 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Information on the Veterans Highground Memorial is included in this newsletter.

Remember we will be having our 2nd annual Laying of the Legacy Stones and pot-luck picnic on August 25th at the Highground. If you are interested in laying a Legacy Stone on that date, as five or six of you did last year, please call or email the Highground to let them know such and have them help you with what you want written on the Legacy Stone of your loved one. A brochure is in this newsletter.

Last year Mike Hunt (Father of Isaiah Hunt, 11-15-04-Iraq) and his son fried fish for us...this year Mike????

From Diane Maida, mother of Mark (5-26-05-Iraq)

Dear Friends,

This past Memorial Day weekend, we celebrated and remembered the first anniversary of our son, Sgt. Mark Maida's death (5-26-05) in Iraq. Five of his friends from the Army came to Madison. One of the soldiers, Terry Rodgers, who was in the Humvee with Mark sent flowers and we had visited him in Washington, D.C. However, we had never heard from the other soldier, Yegor Bondarenko, who was in the Humvee, though we had tried to contact him. Two weeks later, our niece "googled" Mark's name and read in the "Army Times" that Yegor was riding a bicycle across the country in Mark's memory with an organization called Soldier Ride. We contacted the organizers and asked if it would be okay for us to travel to Little Rock, Arkansas to meet and talk with Yegor. It was a very emotional weekend. The degree of survivor guilt which some of the men carry is overwhelming. It helped him, his wife, Lena, and us to finally be able to talk about that night. We assured him that we placed no blame on him and that we were doing okay. Soldier Ride helps

severely wounded soldiers (especially amputees) realize that they can still do physical activities and helps their self-confidence immensely. It raises money and awareness for these wounded friends of our sons and daughters who live with physical and emotional pain daily. Yegor lost his right arm. He was the driver that night. Normally Mark would have been driving. Mark wanted to be in Iraq for his friends and now we want to help them. Please go to www.SoldierRide.org and read about these brave men and women and consider donating to this cause and/or its parent organization, Wounded Warrior project.



Mark Maida and Yegor in Iraq



Yegor, preparing for his Memorial ride for Mark.

It's ready.....

American Gold Star Mother Statue



A table top replica of the first Gold Star Mother Memorial which was dedicated last summer in New York.
 Item Name: American Gold Star Mothers National Monument. Item Number: R-1 Price: \$95.00
<http://www.coventrypewter.com/special.htm>
1-866-328-1557

Ladysmith Remembers its Fallen: sent to us by Cheryl Nussberger, Patrick's mother. Veteran's Days is this Saturday, but already, members of the Ladysmith community are honoring the two soldiers they lost during this past year. Army Sgt. Nathan Vacho died in Iraq in May (5th), while Army Staff Sgt. Patrick Lybert died in Afghanistan in June(21st). This year, the Ladysmith High School Veteran's Day ceremony had special meaning for many of the district's high school students. "They were definitely in-tune because of having, some of them attended the funerals of both these local residents during the summer months," District Administrator Jim Schuchardt said. But Staff Sgt. Lybert's mother, Cheryl Nussberger, says she hopes Thursday's ceremony will have an even bigger impact on them. "I'm not sure that our youth today are truly aware of what our soldiers are doing, the good that they're accomplishing and that this is going to fall upon their shoulders shortly, and they need to be prepared for this," Nussberger said. "We need youth that are ready to step into the shoes of Nathan and Patrick and carry on, and it will always be that way, as it was before them." Nussberger says this monument is not just a statement to the sacrifice of both Staff Sgt. Lybert and Sgt. Vacho, but to the patriotism of the Ladysmith community. Speaker at the Veteran's Day program, Arnold Hoecherl of the NW Veterans Memorial Cemetery, agrees. "It's important for us to remember also, the men and women that have died, the men and women that have gone through many, many hardships for the freedoms that we do have." Hoecherl said. On this, the first Veteran's Day since she lost her son, Nussberger says there's so much hurt that she can't feel the pride she has in him, but she knows it's there. Now, she says she's just focusing on getting through

every minute of every day, and building on her faith

"It's hard to see your son's name carved in this granite and what Nathan's mother said and what I echo is we don't want to see anymore on here."

And Manitowoc County Remembers: From Deb Kiser (Charles-6/24/04-Iraq)

This past Veterans Day, the Manitowoc County United Veterans Council did a wonderful job in honoring the family, service and sacrifice of SPC Shaun Novak during a morning ceremony at the Manitowoc County Veterans Memorial and later in the evening at SPC. Shaun Novak, 21, of Two Rivers, Wis. assigned to the 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas was killed Aug 27 when an improvised explosive device detonated near their M2A3 Bradley Vehicle during combat operations in Taji, Iraq. Shaun's mom and Dad, Brenda and Randy Novak, his brother Danny and his fiancé Jennissa, as well as many other family members and friends, attended the annual morning ceremony even though the grounds of the memorial park were covered with a thick layer of slushy snow. It was actually quite beautiful. The attendees were blessed to hear a member of Shaun's family speak on behalf of the family about his life prior to his deployment in Iraq and his unwavering dedication to the Army. Pride and pain seemed to emanate from the cold, huddled crowd of participants.

Shaun's name is the second one on the memorial stone dedicated to those who have lost their lives in the Global War on Terrorism. SSG Charles Kiser of Cleveland was the first. The director of the ceremony voiced everyone's hope that Shaun's name will be the last to be put on that stone.

Brenda and Jennissa as well as Deb Kiser attended the evening dinner dance with other known Gold Star families from Manitowoc County as well as many, many, veterans and their guests. The United Veterans Council consists of the 24 veterans organizations throughout the county and all members were invited. Only five of the seventy two counties in the state of Wisconsin have such an organization, we are fortunate to live in one. Prior to this year, the Gold Star Families participated in a separate annual event in September sponsored by the united veteran's council. I believe, combining the two was a great idea. Andy Schuster, the Public Relations officer for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, the main speaker, was impressed with all aspects of the evening events. There was a family style dinner, live music, color guard ceremonies, guest speakers and special seating and recognition of the Gold Star Families. Brenda was recognized with a bouquet of flowers and a standing ovation and not surprisingly, Gordon Strauss, the organizer for all the past Manitowoc County Gold

Star Family events was named Manitowoc County Veteran of the year.

A Follow-up on this story from Belle (Virginia)

I just had to write you and let you know what happened last night. You will remember the article that was just printed in the Milwaukee Journal about the cross that I had made for each of the kids by a West Bend jeweler that was stolen from Travis. Last night as I was preparing dinner, grand kids running around, there was a knock at our door. Standing there was Jim Gugg the jeweler from HTG Design Jewelers that made the crosses for us. Neither of us made the connection why he was there until he handed us a cross he had made to replace the one that was missing. He said he just had to do it for us and was deeply sorry for our loss. We were so surprised and almost speechless at his generosity and kindness we stood there like idiots and didn't invite him in. We did manage to thank him. He seemed nervous and quickly left before we could get our thoughts together. I'll have to stop by his shop and apologize for our manners. But I wanted to share this with you all. This man did this out of the kindness of his heart. No mention was made which jeweler made the crosses. He knew from the picture it was one of his. My first thought was that his actions reinforced my faith in people but that's not true. I've always had faith in people. This reinforced by belief that good prevails. I believe there are more good people than bad in the world. The bad just get more publicity. We were deeply moved by his gesture. Belle Wichlacz

From our Friend Deb Prening mother of Brian (11/12/04-Iraq)

Marine's death in Iraq leads to new legislation and a boy's dream fulfilled

By Troy Laack
Sheboygan Press staff

It was a moment in the woods of northern Wisconsin that made a group of grown men cry.

The men, clad in camouflage and hunting boots, helped Tyson Helton, a 14-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, shoot a bear in the memory of a Plymouth Marine corporal killed in Iraq.

"We wanted to get that kid a bear so bad," said Bill Prening Sr., 49, of Plymouth, the father of Cpl. Brian Prening. "It helped us heal a little bit. It made something good out of something bad."

The Prening family pushed for legislation, signed into law by Gov. Jim Doyle in January, allowing Wisconsin hunters who meet an untimely death to transfer accumulated preference points toward a

hunting license to a child chosen by the dead hunter's family.

The law was named for Brian Prening, 24, an ardent hunter who was killed by enemy fire Nov. 12, 2004, in Yusufiyah, Iraq, trying to help a fellow Marine with a jammed weapon during a firefight. Brian Prening served with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 24th Regiment of the Marine Corps Reserve in Milwaukee.

Brian's preference points were transferred to Tyson, who lives in Junction City. Bill Prening Sr., and Bill Prening Jr., of Sheboygan Falls, Brian's twin brother, helped Tyson get his wish to go on a two-day bear hunt last month near Gleason, in Lincoln County. During the hunt, Tyson used a .243-caliber rifle to bring down a 250-pound black bear with a single shot.

"To see the smile on his face after he got him, it was worth it," said Bill Prening Jr., 26. "Hopefully, the smile will keep coming on other people's faces who use the bill."

The group tracked a bear that weighed more than 400 pounds for 12 hours Sept. 16, but were unable to get Tyson in a position to shoot the animal. The next day, they were able to corner the smaller bear up a tree, Tyson said.

"It was a dream to be able to go on a bear hunt and see what it's all about," Tyson said. "It was really something to see those guys have a heart for a kid like me."

The state Department of Natural Resources gives hunters a preference point each year they apply for a license. Brian Prening had accumulated eight of nine points he needed to get a permit. The Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association assisted the Prening family in getting the law passed, Bill Prening Sr. said.

The Prenings were able to take Tyson on the hunt with the assistance of the Kippenberg Creek Kids lodge in Gleason, a nonprofit organization established to help terminally ill and handicapped children fulfill their wish to go on outdoor adventures, said founder Larry Breyer.

"It was probably one of the most emotional hunts I've ever been on," said Breyer, 49, of Gleason. Tyson rested the gun on Bill Prening Jr.'s shoulder to take the shot and Breyer made the moment more touching after the bear was on the ground, Bill Prening Sr. said.

"He (Breyer) comes up to me and goes, 'We named the bear Brian after your son,'" Bill Prening Sr. said. "He's got tears in his eyes and I've got tears in my eyes because it was emotional."

Tyson said the hunt was physically demanding on him because he was bounced around as the men carried him, sometimes running with him over their shoulders to catch up with the bears.

Joe Hopfensperger, Tyson's stepfather, also was on the hunt.

"When you find out how the bear tag came about, it was very, very emotional," Hopfensperger said. "I'm very happy for Tyson. I want as many people to know about this as I can and that they know about Kippenberg Creek and the great things that they do for so many kids throughout the United States."

Janet Hopfensperger, Tyson's mother, said the cerebral palsy affects both of her son's legs and his left arm.

"He likes to hunt and do things like that, but he's pretty much not mobile," Janet Hopfensperger said.

"So, being able to have an opportunity like this, to have all these great men come together and help him make this dream come true to go bear hunting was a really big thing for him." (See photos in our Album)

What a story!

Army Launches "Our Survivors" Webpage

Week of October 16, 2006 (Military.com). The Army recently launched its new [Our Survivors webpage](#), which is dedicated to the survivors of Soldiers who have died. The webpage offers resources for families to help them through the difficult time after their Soldier's death. There is also a helpful FAQ section that can answer many questions families may have in the aftermath of the death of a loved one. The Army Families First Casualty Call Center (FFCCC) is a one-stop resolution center established to assist surviving family members of deceased Soldiers with questions regarding benefits, outreach, advocacy, and support. The FFCCC team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (866) 272-5841.

Your New BT-RO Board of Directors

I am proud to inform you that BT-RO now has a Board of Directors. I am honored that these Families of our WI Fallen have chosen to be instrumental in the future of Being There-Reaching Out.

Beth Karlson-President
Jim Karlson-Vice President 1
Dorothy Moore-Vice President 2
Belle Wichlacz-Treasurer
Bobbie Samme-Secretary

At-Large Directors

Robert and Renee Cornell
Deb Kiser
Mary Bosveld

Executive Directors

Judith Singer-Founder
Joe Campbell-Co-founder

CALENDAR OF EVENTS-2007

April 13-14th-BT-RO Gold Star Family gathering in Madison

July-our 2nd annual WI Gold Star Family Pig Roast

August 25th Our second annual Highground Pot-luck picnic and laying of Legacy Stones in the memory of our loved ones.

October 13th-BT-RO fundraiser and Banquet in Milwaukee

Soon!!! New BT-RO Website

Thanks to the cooperative efforts of Amy Bossert, sister of Andrew (3-7-05-Iraq), her wonderful fiancé Theo, and his very talented son, Tim(AKA Acid), we will soon have a new website!

ASAP = ALWAYS SAY A PRAYER

Here's an article that is in the October issue of Leatherneck Magazine. It's about Bobbie Samme's son Eric Palmisano's dog. Eric was fallen in Iraq 4/2/06 and loved his dog.

We – the Marines

Edited by Isaac D. Pacheco

Fallen Warrior's "Best Friend" Provides Comfort to Loved Ones

Green Bay, Wis., resident Steve Beno didn't realize how many lives he was about to change when he stopped to help a stray dog that had been hit by a tractor trailer in September 2005. As the trucker sped off, Beno picked up the wounded animal and called the local humane society, which took it to the animal hospital for treatment. Unsure whether the dog would live, he left his card with the humane society and offered to take her home if nobody claimed her.

The dog, a German shepherd/rottweiler mix named Hannah, had previously been in a happy home for six years, until her owner, Eric Palmisano, joined the Marines. His parents told him that if they could find

her a good home, they would place her there. They didn't think it would be fair to Hannah that they would be gone from home a lot.

A family with two young boys adopted Hannah, but after two months, their landlord told them they could not keep a dog and Hannah was again put up for adoption. Hannah's new owner decided that Hannah should be an outside dog but let her run free without a leash or fences. Hannah ended up wandering the streets, was hit by the semi and was rescued by Beno.

After the accident, the veterinarian's office staff recognized the dog and traced her records back to Bobbie Samme, Palmisano's mother. She was very upset and was going to take Hannah back because the dog's last owner had called the humane society to say she didn't want the dog anymore. However, when Samme heard how a Good Samaritan had rescued Hannah and had offered her a home, she called and asked if Beno would like to take care of the dog.

Hannah was bruised, had an air pocket in her lungs and her right front leg was paralyzed due to nerve damage, but Beno agreed to take her and at least try to make her comfortable.

"She could only walk a few steps before she had to sit or lay down. She had no wind and she cried every time she moved. It was pathetic to watch, yet we knew we had to help her heal." Beno's wife, Jennifer, wrote in a story about the dog.

And heal she did. With the help of her new owners and donations from sympathetic friends, Hannah began to spring back to life. Within a month, the air pocket had disappeared and she slowly started to use her leg. She cried less each day, and there was a sparkle coming back into her eyes.

The Benos e-mailed Samme with weekly updates about Hannah's improvement, which she in turn forwarded to her son.

Palmisano, then a lance corporal, wrote the Benos and told them all he could about Hannah, and said it was so comforting to him to know his beloved dog was being well taken care of. For seven months LCpl Palmisano and the Benos corresponded, sending pictures and stories back and forth. The Marine's mother said that her son was always so happy to receive news on his pup.

On April 2, the Benos received a call from LCpl Palmisano's parents. Eric was missing in Iraq. He had been there since February, and his vehicle had been caught in a flash flood and overturned.

Every day that Eric was missing, his family and the Benos sent e-mails to friends and family asking for prayers, hoping that he was alive somewhere. Nine days later, Marines found Eric's body.

Although the Benos had never met the lance corporal or his parents, they had formed a connection with them through their shared friendship

with Hannah and decided that if they could do something to help this family, they would.

"We thought that if they wanted Hannah to attend the services, we would make the trip [to Hillside, wrote Jennifer

Beno. "Steve called Bobbie, and she cried and said, 'Thank you so much,' and that it would be wonderful if we would want to do this."

When the Benos arrived at the service, LCpl Palmisano's family and friends were waiting to greet them.

"Bobbie and Herb both hugged and kissed Hannah, and I could tell that she really recognized them," wrote Jennifer. "They were so touched to see her. The tears flowed. Then they went and got Claire, Eric's fiancée. As she came into the room, I thought she was going to collapse. She was crying and moving very slowly, staring at Hannah the whole time. She stooped down and threw her arms around Hannah and just cried and cried. Hannah licked her face and kept licking it, licking all the tears. Hannah definitely recognized Claire."

Other attendees stopped in their tracks at the sight of Hannah and stood silently while the family reconnected with their old friend.

"Claire got up and hugged Steve for a long time and then me and said, 'Thank you.' You want to talk about tough moments; that was so emotional," wrote Jennifer.

"When our turn came [to pay our respects at Eric's casket], we walked up there with Hannah and made a promise to Eric to always take good care of his girl," wrote Jennifer. "Hannah sniffed the casket, and we could hear people crying. We heard Bobbie say, 'Look at Hannah.' I am sure it was quite the sight to see: Eric's dog saying goodbye, in her own way."

After the funeral, the Benos celebrated LCpl Palmisano's memory with his family and friends at a banquet in his honor. Before heading home, they thanked everyone for the opportunity to share in some small way the amazing life of an American hero.

"As we were leaving, Claire got up and gave us both a hug," wrote Jennifer. "I took the flag scarf off that Hannah had been wearing all day in honor of Eric and gave it to her. She looked at me with such feeling in her eyes and said, 'Thank you., 11

Hannah is now a certified therapy dog, brightening the lives of others at nursing homes and hospitals. According to the Benos, she passed her Canine Good Citizen's test without any problems and then passed the therapy testing with flying colors.

"Some weird twist of fate brought Hannah into our lives and now, has caused our paths to cross with a whole lot of people we would never have," wrote Jennifer. "Hannah truly is a wonderful dog, so sweet and so gentle. She was a true angel all weekend at this whole ordeal, never whining or barking at

anyone. She laid quietly for the services, and she licked tears away and let many people hug her. She truly was serving a comforting purpose to many. Eric would be so proud. He did a wonderful job training her."

Leatherneck (Jennifer Beno contributed to this article)



**If you are a dog and your owner suggests that you wear a sweater...suggest that he /she wear a tail.
Fran Lebowitz**

Animals are such agreeable friends - they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms. ~George Eliot

A very proud father and son

Bill Prening and Bill Jr with a bear trophy of their own.



and

14 year old Tyson Helton with his trophy bear-Thanks Brian.



Belle's Very Special Sister to Sister Quilt Project

Our first quilt was given to Janice Dahlke, who lost her son Randy to the Vietnam War (3-68). L-R: Mary, me, Nancy, Diane, Belle, and Char. It's an honor to know these giving women.



Mary Steinman, mother of John Tollefson (7-27-05 Iraq) joined us for the first time and hit the machine running! Can't catch her now!



Here's Mary telling me not to be sad because my only skill when it came to quilting was ironing. LOL!! But thanks anyway Mary.



Belle is showing Nancy, Diane and Lauren (all volunteers on the project of making quilts for you) what to do next. Notice Mary and I are nowhere to be seen :->)))))) he he :->)) Did I mention that Mary makes her own wine?



The Hawaiian wedding of Phil Schneider brother of PFC Sean Schneider(3-29-04-Iraq). Wonderful family photo L-R: brother Myles, beautiful mother Kim, Phil and his Beautiful bride Amanda, and Dad Ed.



Lucy Henzig protesting the commercial use of land on the hallowed VA grounds in Milwaukee last August. Her son Michael McGlothin (4/17/04-Iraq) is buried there so it's very important to her that the land be there for our Veterans and Fallen loved ones....not research laboratories. Go Lucy! With her is Bill Stys, Veteran of the Year 2004 and organizer of the Memorial Day Parade in Milwaukee.



The plankowners of Navy Seabee Veterans of America, Island X-14 in Manitowoc WI, honor SSG Charles A. Kiser by the naming of their Charter after him. SSG Kiser was killed in action in Mosul, Iraq on June 24th 2004. The photo was taken at a special ceremony to present the official Charter to Deb Kiser, SSG Kiser's widow.



Our Little Angel Brendan(nephew of Isaiah Hunt 11-15-04-Iraq) and mom, Emily. Brendan is suffering from Hirsch rungs and will continue to need our prayers. He's facing more surgeries....but he's finally home!



Our beautiful Angie Wallace at the chili fund raiser in memory of her fallen husband SGT Andrew Wallace (9/26/05-Iraq).



Guess who this cutie is (You've been praying for him all summer) Doesn't that little face just bring a smile to yours:>)))

If we don't know you need our prayers, you'll have less people praying for you.....



Jim Kozak's Memorial to our WI Fallen in Germantown: See story for directions. Thanks, Jim.

Our Gold Star Family Fort McCoy Trip



The trip to Ft. McCoy Gold Star Family troop-I couldn't keep this group in line...look at them! They can't even **get** in a line!



We stopped to view the progress on the NCO Academy building at Ft. McCoy which will be dedicated in memory and honor of Todd Cornell (11-9-04-iraq) next September. Pictured L-R: Todd's brother, Tim, his parents and our friends Renee and Robert Cornell, and Todd's fiancée, Lisa Lent.



LCPL Eric Palmisano(4/2/06-Iraq)with mom Bobbie Samme and our "wonder dog Hannah." See story.



Oh! That's better.

Don't forget to pencil in our "Being There-Reaching Out "Calendar of Events" for 2007... we want you to join us.

Our Gold Star Families at the CPL Ryan Jerabek Memorial Challenge in August.



L-R) Angela McFall, mother of Andrew Halverson (10-9-04-Iraq), Sarah, standing next to her sister, Rose Scannell, mother of Ben Edinger (11-23-04-Iraq), Beth Karlson, mother of Warren Hansen (11-15-03-Iraq), dear sweet Randy Scannel, Mike Hunt father of Isaiah(11-15-04-Iraq) and his daughter, Elsie, and Marsha and John Mattek, parents of Johnny Mattek (6/13/05-Iraq). Jim Karlson was around somewhere...he's hard to keep track of at any event and in any event:>))) And Angela's 2 children are hiding in the photo:>))) Those wearing the red t-shirts pretended to run in the race. LOL!



Ray and Diane Maida, with Yegor-Please read the story inside this newsletter.



Pine Mountain Veterans Memorial sent in by Bobbie Samme



Pam Bodart with the portrait of her son Isiah Hunt (11-15-04-Iraq) created by Michael Reagan with love.



The trick or treat picture is Cindy Anderson, Dayne Huelsemann, Kierstin Huelsemann (mom to Dayne), Ella and Ethan Yanke. (Brother and sister). The kids would be nephews or niece of LCPL Nick Anderson.

Many of our Gold Star Families are communicating with each other via email...I also pass information and announcements along to them via email. If I do not have your email address please send it to me so that you will be kept in "the know" on a more frequent basis than our newsletter allows. There is a lot that goes on between newsletters. My email is:

Gentlyjs@yahoo.com

**Remembering
Our Fallen Loved ones**

December

- 1st Andy Stevens
- 13th Richie Warner
- 13th Brent Vroman
- 24th Chris Splinter
- 27th Todd Olson

January

- 29th Robert Cook

February

- 3rd Lance Cornett
- 5th Travis Wichlacz
- 16th Nichole Frye
- 26 Adam Van Alstine



Arlington National Cemetery at Christmas



And Let us not forget our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action from the wars in the Middle East

Lieutenant Commander
Michael "Scott" Speicher...Missing 1/17/1991

SGT Matt Maupin...Missing 4/9/2004

SPC Ahmed K. Altaie...Missing 10/23/2006

Major Troy Gilbert...Missing 11/27/2006

And all Prisoners of War - Missing in Action

Your next issue of [Remembrance](#) should be out in April, so keep your photos, articles and updates coming in.

Judith Singer: 414-476-0558, Cell: 414-241-1809
Gentlyjs@yahoo.com

And

Joe Campbell 414-607-0527, Cell: 414-333-2012
jfcampbell@machweld.com

JOE, I, AND THE BEING THERE-REACHING OUT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS WISH YOU PEACE AND
DAYS FULL OF WONDERFUL MEMORIES DURING
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON. WE WISH YOU
STRENGTH IN THE NEW YEAR AND OFFER YOU
OUR FRIENDSHIP FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

