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Local

Manion Hall, named after Doylestown resident Travis Manion (pictured here) who died in Iraq, is the first of eight student officer quarters being built at The Basic School in Quantico, Va.

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By Gary Weckselblatt

Staff Writer | 0 comments

The Travis Manion Foundation received some significant horsepower Thursday in its drive to help families of military members and emergency responders, with a contribution of \$250,000 from the General Motors Foundation and Chevrolet.

The foundation, named for the Doylestown Marine killed in Iraq, will use the funding to support its 9/11 Heroes Run, which will take place in 33 locations, including 15 states and five countries.

On this year's 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Heroes Run will honor military, police, firefighters and first responders who have given their lives to protect and save others. Proceeds from the 5K races will go to the families of fallen heroes.

Last year, the organization staged races in six cities across the country.

"I am honored to be involved with such a great cause and such a great family," said Dan Akerson, General Motors chairman and chief executive officer.

Tom Manion, a former Marine colonel and father of Travis, said the GM grant buoyed the "realization of a dream we had to take this nationally. It's a heck of a day for us."

The support, he said, is indicative of how people "community by community step up and remember our fallen heroes."

One thousand volunteers contribute 5,000 hours to make it happen, said James Brobyn, the foundation's director of operations.

One of the 9/11 Heroes Runs will take place in Doylestown at Burpee Park. More information can be found at [911heroesrun.com](http://911heroesrun.com)

Tom Manion said that before his son's second and final tour in Iraq, Travis visited Rescue Team One in New York City. He came back with a cap and said "Dad, wear this when I'm gone." It was that trip that inspired the 9/11 Heroes Run and part of the foundation's work.

Akerson, a Naval Academy graduate like Travis, is a member of the Naval Academy Foundation Board with Tom Manion.

Asked how he learned of the foundation, created by Manion, his wife, Janet, and daughter Ryan, Akerson said it was last fall when he learned of Travis' reburial in Arlington National Cemetery so he could be laid to rest next to his Naval Academy roommate Brendan Looney.

It was a story that made national news last October, and again when President Barack Obama made it the focus of his Memorial Day speech.

The Looneys, along with Brendan's widow, Amy, wanted the two men who called themselves "brothers from another mother" to be buried side by side. A Navy SEAL lieutenant, Looney was killed last Sept. 21 in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan at the age of 29.

Manion, 26 and a first lieutenant, was killed April 29, 2007. He was embedded with an Iraqi army unit he was leading and training. While on patrol, that unit came under sniper fire.

After giving first aid to a medic and pulling another wounded Marine to safety, Manion was killed when he tried to get another out of the line of fire. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with Valor and the Silver Star for his heroic actions. As a testament to the admiration his unit had for him, the Iraqis named their new headquarters Combat Outpost Manion in his honor.

The Manion-Looney friendship was so potent that he threatened to quit the SEALs after Manion's death. Instead, he rededicated himself and finished at the top of his class.

Thursday, at a press conference in Manhattan, Akerson described the friendship as a "great story" and the burials as "a fitting tribute to their comradeship."

He called both young men "true patriots."