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## Keeping memories alive

### Organizations remember fallen soldier

By **Gwen Sadler**

**CONTRIBUTING WRITER**



How do you honor the memory of a fallen soldier? By remembering, of course, and two organizations, the Travis Manion Foundation and The Mission Continues, have joined forces to help families and other loved ones do just that. Chesterfield native and Army Sgt. Jeffrey A. Reed is next on their list of honorees.

Growing up in Chester, Reed at- tended Gates

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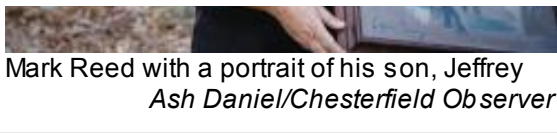
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Mark Reed with a portrait of his son, Jeffrey  
Ash Daniel/Chesterfield Observer

Elementary and Salem Church Middle schools and graduated from L.C. Bird High in 2004. He had a passion for sports, particularly soccer and ice hockey. He played soccer for his high school, as well as for the Chesterfield Flames travel team, helping them win a championship Jefferson Cup.

A Philadelphia Fliers fan, he couldn't play ice hockey here, so he played goalie for seven years in a recreation league at the Skateland Roller Skating Rink in Chester.

After graduation, Reed surprised his parents, Mark and Mary, by announcing he was joining the Army.

"Our other two [children] had always talked about going to college, and they did," Mark said. "[Jeff] could have easily gone to college, but he had no notion to do that. He was adamant about joining the Army right out of high school. I often wondered if it was related to 9-11."

Whatever his reasons, Jeff finished his four-year stint, then signed up for another. He served on military police duty, helping to train and support Iraqi police, and found time during his second tour of duty in Iraq to organize a soccer ball donation program for Iraqi children.

In 2005 he married. He and his new wife, Ashley, settled in Killeen, Texas, while Jeff was stationed at Fort Hood.

On March 2, 2009, Jeff was killed by a grenade launched at his vehicle in Taji, Iraq. Today is the two-year anniversary of Jeff's death.

Mark remembers learning about Jeff's death from the grief officers as "the worst moment of my life." Mary was in Hampton caring for her elderly mother at the time. Mark and their daughter, Cynthia, made the trip by car to give her the news.

"All I could think was 'My poor wife,'" Mark said.

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The Travis Manion Foundation is honoring Jeff's memory with a posting on its website, [www.travismanion.com](http://www.travismanion.com), offering a tribute to him. A portion of the recognition reads, "Jeff believed in service to country more than anything, and today, Sgt. Justin Zabel, USA, is serving a Missions Continues Fellowship in Jeff's honor with the goal of continuing his service to our country and 'making a difference in someone's life.'"

Zabel, who was honorably discharged from the Army after his truck was hit by a roadside IED in Iraq, is part of an effort to offer community-service opportunities to wounded and disabled veterans of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The two organizations work together to give veterans a chance to continue to serve their communities by connecting them with the families of those who served and didn't make it home. During his fellowship, he and the Reed family will communicate with each other, sharing their experiences in the hope that everyone involved will move toward healing while keeping Jeff in their thoughts.


"The Travis Manion Foundation and The Mission Continues have been intrinsically linked since Travis Manion and Eric Greitens served together in Iraq," said Janet Manion, mother of U.S. Marine Travis Manion and founder of the group bearing her son's name. Travis lost his life in Iraq, but not before inspiring Navy SEAL Greitens to start The Mission Continues once he returned home from his deployment in Iraq.

The two groups have "worked closely to empower returning veterans in community service," Janet said. "A fellowship is not only about the fellow, but the families of the fallen as well...ensuring that we honor the fallen by challenging the living," she added.


The Reeds learned about the organizations and the fellowship program through the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, a national nonprofit group that offers programs and services to anyone who has lost a loved one in the military.

Time moves on, and things change. Ashley has remarried and lives in Arizona. Mary is living temporarily in Hampton as her 85-year-old mother's health continues to decline. And the Reed family has found another way to honor Jeff's memory and keep it alive.

Each year since Jeff's death they have offered several scholarships through the Jeffrey Reed Memorial Fund to deserving seniors at L.C. Bird. Through the Jeffrey Reed Memorial Foundation, they also work to benefit other groups, including the Chesterfield-Colonial



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