

bomber killed him and three other soldiers. Private First Class Gonzalez was only 21 years old.

Born in Bridgeport, CT, Orlando is being remembered today for his dedication to the U.S. Army, and for his warm and giving nature. "He always had a smile on his face," said his high school principal, Brian Cashman. "He was kind of a handful, but you couldn't help but like him."

Private First Class Gonzalez rose above what his principal described as a "rough" background to find purpose and discipline: first at a faith-based camp for students, and then as an American soldier.

"We just loved him around here," said Patrick LeBlanc, director of Summit Grove Camp. The first thing that came to LeBlanc's mind on hearing of Orlando's death was his infectious playfulness. LeBlanc recalled seeing a wild rabbit on the camp grounds, and telling Orlando he was fast enough to catch it. Orlando only nodded—and a few hours later, knocked on LeBlanc's door, petting the rabbit and beaming.

But it was in the Army that Private First Class Gonzalez found, as so many have found before him, meaning and a second home. "I think the Army is what he needed," said Principal Cashman. Patrick LeBlanc agreed: "It was the second happiest place I'd seen him, other than camp here. . . . He was doing what he wanted to do."

As a scout javelin gunner for the 82nd Airborne Division, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, Private First Class Gonzalez immediately distinguished himself. "On a daily basis, Private First Class Gonzalez displayed courage, honor, and selfless service in the struggle to keep America safe and improve the nation of Iraq," said Captain John Carson of the 73rd Cavalry. Private First Class Gonzalez was already highly decorated at the time of his death, and we can only wonder what an outstanding career might have been waiting for him.

Instead, Private First Class Gonzalez leaves behind two grieving parents, Orlando G. Gonzalez of Bridgeport, and Carmen Diaz of New Freedom, PA. But he leaves behind, as well, an example of dedication that won't soon be dimmed.

"This hero will be sorely missed and will forever live in our memories," said Captain Carson.

Orlando, though, might have used other words. "Call him a hero and he would get mad," Orlando's friend and pastor, the Reverend Paul Juchniewich, said in a funeral sermon. "He would just say he was doing his duty to rescue those who are in peril. He did not die in a conventional battle, but rather a battle for the hearts and minds of the future generation."

The struggle's outcome is still uncertain. But we will keep fresh the memory of one man who advanced it with all his strength, Private First Class Orlando E. Gonzalez, whose last act on this Earth was to give.●

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On April 7, 2007, in New York City, NY, Akino George pleaded guilty for his part in the beating of a gay man. George and three other men attacked Kevin Aviance, a popular entertainer, after he left a gay bar. The four men threw bags of garbage and a can of paint at Aviance before knocking him to the ground, punching and kicking him. Aviance suffered several injuries including a broken jaw. George testified in his plea that Aviance was targeted for being gay.

I believe that the government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

TRIBUTE TO THE PEACE CORPS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate the Peace Corps on its 46th anniversary and to pay tribute to the many volunteers both at home and abroad for their dedicated service to our country.

Since its inception in 1961, the Peace Corps has helped change the lives of millions of people all over the world. There is no organization that better demonstrates America's commitment to developing nations than the Peace Corps.

I recently had the opportunity to travel to South America and was able to meet with Peace Corps volunteers in the Andean region. The numerous projects they have been working on to help the local communities are truly impressive. I have known several individuals—members of my staff, former interns and my own family members—who have volunteered their service to the Peace Corps. The stories of their experiences are remarkable.

The gift of service is driven by a passion for something greater than one's self. The men and women of the Peace Corps possess this passion and have shown what a difference one person can make. By helping individuals in developing countries who seek a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities, the Peace Corps shows the world that Americans do truly care. It is vital that the organization and its volunteers continue this important work. Their service is great-

ly appreciated, and I commend the Peace Corps and its volunteers on 46 years of successful service.

SECOND CHANCE ACT

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of the Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act, a bill to strengthen community safety and reduce poverty by improving the reintegration of people returning from prison. I am pleased to work with Senators BIDEN, SPECTER, BROWN-BACK, and LEAHY as a cosponsor of this very important bill.

It is estimated that approximately 650,000 prisoners are released into communities across America every year. They have paid their debt to society and now return to their homes and neighborhoods, to their families, and back to their lives.

The problem is that for most of these returning prisoners, their families, neighborhoods, and prior lives often lack what it takes to ensure successful reintegration.

In the best of cases, incarcerated individuals maintain contact with their families and receive rehabilitation services while in prison; they are released to a network of law-abiding peers and quickly find a rewarding job that provides the skills and career development for long-term opportunity. Released prisoners can help support their families, become active in their churches and other community organizations, stay off drugs, away from trouble, on track, and out of jail.

Unfortunately, that rarely happens. Up to two-thirds of all released prisoners nationwide end up back in prison within just 3 years. They don't manage to find and keep effective jobs and to care for themselves and their families. Many become a drain on their families and a drain on the system. They are more likely to resort to criminal activity and to perpetuate poverty and family dysfunction.

Their failure is our failure since we all share the high cost, lost opportunities, and other burdens of unemployment, crime, community failure, and cycles of recidivism.

Fortunately, people have been hard at work in hundreds of communities and community organizations all across the country to improve the process of reintegrating prisoners. As one example, the Safer Foundation in Illinois has managed to cut the State's recidivism rate by almost 50 percent for the people who receive Safer's supportive employment services. And Safer has further demonstrated that ex-prisoners who are still employed after 12 months of supportive services have a recidivism rate of lower than 10 percent. One of Safer's program models, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, provides participants with job placement and support services, and matches them with mentors from the neighborhoods where the participants reside. Only 2 percent of the participants in this community and faith-

based program recidivated over a 2-year period.

One of the most effective reentry strategies that Safer, the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, and other nonprofit organizations have devised is transitional jobs, a strategy that worked for welfare to work, and is now working for prison returnees. In a transitional jobs program, former prisoners with employment challenges are hired and paid a wage for legitimate employment in a time-limited, subsidized job. The program not only offers real work, income, skill development, and a letter of reference and experience to add to their resume, it also offers coaching and support services to help participants overcome substantial barriers to employment, such as substance abuse or mental health issues. The program focuses heavily on placement into unsubsidized work at the earliest possible time and job retention services after placement.

The participants in transitional jobs programs gain an immediate source of legitimate income upon release. They also gain paid work experience, access to professional counseling and training services, and a clear path to unsubsidized employment in the community. Employers gain access to a pipeline of supported workers who have demonstrated an ability to do the job and remain employable. Most of all, our communities gain by helping ex-prisoners to contribute positively to family, neighborhood, and the larger environment.

Too many people are caught up in the criminal justice system. Especially within the African-American community where nearly a third of Black males will enter State or Federal prison sometime during their lifetime. Communities are protected and strengthened when people who break the law are punished appropriately. But communities—all communities, including yours and mine—are weakened if we neglect the challenges of rehabilitation and reentry.

To improve the integration of former prisoners and to reduce recidivism is in all of our best interests. A well-designed reentry system can enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, reduce costs, and help prisoners achieve long-term integration. The Second Chance Act is an important effort to strengthen America's communities. The bill is supported by a wide range of organizations, and I urge my colleagues to join us in passing this important legislation.

CONGRATULATING ZACH JOHNSON

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased today to have the fortunate opportunity to recognize and congratulate a fellow Iowan on a magnificent achievement. On Sunday, 31-year-old Zach Johnson won the prestigious Masters golf tournament at the famed Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, GA. I am joined by my colleague, Sen-

ator HARKIN, in submitting a Senate resolution congratulating Zach for his victory.

Zach not only won one of the most difficult golf tournaments in the world, he also won quite possibly one of the most difficult of all the Masters' tournaments in history. Gusting winds and bitterly cold weather combined with the traditional challenges of the golf course to create one of the toughest tournaments. His winning score of one-over-par 289 tied the highest winning score in Masters history. In the process, he beat fellow golf champions Tiger Woods and Retief Goosen by two-strokes.

Zach was born in Iowa City and grew up in Cedar Rapids, playing golf at Elmcrest Country Club in Cedar Rapids. He went on to play golf at Drake University in Des Moines, graduating in 1998. To continue his pursuits as a professional golfer, Zach counted on the support of family and friends in Cedar Rapids who believed in him. His success didn't happen overnight; his dedication to the game and his hard work ethic helped him earn the prized green jacket.

Even in the aftermath of winning one of golf's highest achievements, he remained humble in his acceptance. He attributed much of his success to his perseverance and patience. He recognized his family and friends who believed in him even when he wasn't so sure himself, and as a man of faith he knew there was another power guiding him.

Through it all, he continued to insist that he's just a normal guy from Cedar Rapids, IA. I am proud of Zach Johnson for his brilliant win, and I am proud of him as an Iowan. I know Iowans are honored and blessed to have a person like Zach Johnson representing us in the world of professional golf. So I congratulate him on his outstanding victory, and I wish him and his family all the best.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING STELLA WILDRICK

• Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, today I want to recognize the devoted service of Stella Wildrick, who will retire on April 27, 2007, after 15 years as Postmistress for Lake Minchumina, AK.

Lake Minchumina is situated near the geographical center of Alaska, 65 miles north-northwest of our great Denali National Park. A remote and rural community accessible only by air, Lake Minchumina depends upon mail service for the delivery of food, clothing, and supplies, as well as correspondence.

As Postmistress, Stella has been a very important person in this community where everything that cannot be harvested or made from the land must be flown in.

Throughout the past 15 years, Stella has also been an asset to the U.S. Post-

al Service as a professional, friendly, dependable and always helpful representative. With advances in technology, Postmistress Wildrick has overseen many changes to the mail service in Lake Minchumina.

The people of Lake Minchumina and Alaska are deeply grateful for her sacrifice and willingness to go above and beyond the usual to ensure quality mail service.

I commend Postmistress Wildrick for her dedication to the Lake Minchumina community and wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement. •

COMMENDING THE WORK OF STUDENT EMPLOYEES

• Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, today I recognize and celebrate students who work while attending college as part of the University of Minnesota Duluth's, UMD, National Student Employment Week.

During the week of April 9–13, 2007, UMD will honor the approximately 1,500 student employees during their National Student Employment Week. I applaud these students for going above and beyond their studies to give back to UMD, and I encourage employers to thank them for their contributions.

I would like to give special congratulations to UMD's 2007 National Student Employment Week Awardees: Derric Johnson, Student Employee of the Year; Carly Moritz, First Runner Up; and Meghan Keil and Phong Yang, Second Runners Up.

I also commend the work of Marinda Batzlaaff, Josh Baumann, Ann Beacom, Samuel Bradley, Ruta Embaye, Courtney Grandahl, Kelly Gunelson, Christine Hirsch, Brittany Jurek, Krista Kniffin, Bryan LaCore, Cal Larson, Christina Lashyro, Abigail Linder, Emily Lubbert, Jessica Lutgen, Aaron Miller, Calley O'Neil, Ashton Portner, Hilary Ramsey, Thomas Rieck, Jessica Robey, Bud Rodecker, Anthony Rostvold, Taryn Runck, Michael Schumacher, Clay Sharkey, and Sheena Stueber.

Again, I thank all of these students for their hard work and wish them the best of luck at UMD and in their future careers. •

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and two withdrawals which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)