

what they did or what they sacrificed. To us, they were our greatest generation. They left the comforts of their family and their communities to confront evil from Iwo Jima to Bastogne. Together, they won the war in the Pacific by defeating an empire and liberated a continent by destroying Hitler and the Nazis.

To them they were simply doing their jobs. They enlisted in unprecedented numbers to defend our freedoms and our values. They represented the very best of us and made us proud.

From a young age I remember playing the bugle at the memorial services of veterans of the first two World Wars. It instilled in me a profound sense of respect that I will never forget.

Honoring the service of every generation of American veterans is a Montana value. I deeply appreciate the work of the Big Sky Honor Flight, the nonprofit organization that made this trip possible.

I say to the World War II veterans making the trip, I salute you. We will always be grateful, and we will never forget your service or your sacrifice.

RECOGNIZING STEPPING STONES CENTER

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 50th anniversary of Stepping Stones Center, which serves the needs of people with disabilities in Greater Cincinnati and inspires independence and pathways to helping people achieve their potential. I have visited Stepping Stones on several occasions and have always been impressed by their work.

Stepping Stones Center was founded in 1963 when a handful of parents and friends of children with disabilities established Cincinnati's first day camp for children with disabilities. These passionate and loving parents wanted their children to have opportunities like those of their siblings, friends and neighbors.

Over the years, Stepping Stones has continued to expand, broadening the scope of services and the ability to reach more families. In the early years, Stepping Stones' services focused on traditional day camp opportunities, which were enhanced to provide therapeutic benefits including outdoor activities, arts and crafts, swimming and games.

In 1971, the region's first on-site infant stimulation program was developed and Stepping Stones helped launch Cincinnati Mothers of Special Children in 1974.

Partnering with the Rotary Club of Cincinnati, programming for a second campus was developed for Camp Allyn in Batavia, augmenting summer programs with year-round educational programs, overnight camps and initiating services for adults.

In response to the growing needs of children with autism, Stepping Stones launched its innovative Step-Up program as Greater Cincinnati's first al-

ternative education program for students with severe autism and extreme behaviors in 2004. Today, Step-Up serves students from 14 school districts in the region. In 2013, Stepping Stones launched the region's first sensory needs respite and support program for children with autism and other sensory needs and extreme behaviors, filling a critical need for ongoing overnight recreational respites.

Since its founding, thousands of high school students in Greater Cincinnati have been trained and have served as volunteer camp counselors, learning the benefits of giving back to their communities and gaining an understanding of occupations that serve those with special needs. Many special education teachers, therapists and disabilities professionals in Greater Cincinnati can trace their vocations to summers volunteering at Stepping Stones.

On this occasion I would like to recognize Stepping Stones Center and honor the founders, Margaret—Peggy—Geier, Minor LeBlond and Mary T. Schloss, the trailblazers who identified a need, envisioned a solution, and then worked tirelessly to make Stepping Stones happen. I salute the volunteers, staff members, donors and parents who carry on their spirit every day, continuing to build pathways to independence for people with disabilities. It is a privilege to recognize this 50 year anniversary, and I wish Stepping Stones all the best for the future.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT TRISTAN MYKAL WADE

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize and honor the extraordinary service and ultimate sacrifice of SGT Tristan Mykal Wade, of Indianapolis, IN. Sergeant Wade was serving in the U.S. Army, assigned to the 573rd Clearance Company at White Sands Missile Range in Afghanistan. He was serving a 9-month deployment and his unit was scheduled to return to White Sands in April.

On Friday, March 22, while serving in Qarah Bagh District, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, enemy forces attacked Sergeant Wade's unit with an improvised explosive device and he was killed. Command Sgt. Major Joe Medlin of Rock Hill, the ranking enlisted man for the task force, stated Sergeant Wade was:

An outstanding soldier and a true hero. He will certainly be missed by his unit and all of us in Task Force Prowler.

White Sands Missile Range Commander BG Gen. Gwen Bingham said:

We thank him for his outstanding service and sacrifice. We will never forget him. Our brave men and women perform a multitude of missions in a magnanimous way in Afghanistan and all places around the globe. They do so selflessly without any expectation of anything in return.

Certainly, Sergeant Wade is a shining example of this selflessness and patriotism.

An Indianapolis native, Sergeant Wade attended three different high schools while a freshman. He enrolled at Southport High School at the beginning of his sophomore year and joined the football program, which had endured a 10-year plus stretch of losing seasons. Head football coach Bill Peebles remembered Tristan as a cocky young kid who wanted to catch touchdown passes and become a Friday-night star. Although Coach Peebles didn't expect much from Wade, Tristan represented the epitome of the program's goal—excelling in the classroom, in training and on the field. Over the following 3 years, Coach Peebles watched Tristan grow into a leader who helped turn the football program into a winning program. "He went from wanting to be a Friday-night hero as a skinny sophomore, to being a Friday-night hero," Peebles said. Sergeant Wade graduated from Southport High School in 2009.

He carried into the Army his enthusiasm for sports where he was a member of the Army volleyball team. Friends and family remember how he enjoyed practical jokes and dancing. But most important to Sergeant Wade was his precious daughter Skylynn of whom he wrote, "She is my world and I'll truly miss her while in Afghanistan."

While still in high school, Tristan volunteered for the U.S. Army, following in the footsteps of his father SGT Daniel L. Wade who had been to Afghanistan in 2004, and his uncles. He knew he would likely be deployed to active combat zones, but as he was known to do all his life, he demonstrated courage and conviction. "No matter how scared he was, he never showed it," his mother Tisa Wade said.

Sergeant Wade was respected and appreciated by his fellow soldiers for his professionalism as well as his personal qualities. As LTC Andre Balyoz pointed out in his eulogy, Sergeant Wade was:

A natural leader, the type who took charge and made things happen. He always took care of and protected his Soldiers.

And although the gravity of his mission was always with him, Lieutenant Colonel Balyoz said that:

Tristan was someone who was always happy, always in a good mood and he could very quickly cheer up those around him. His positive attitude was certainly contagious.

Prior to his service in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Sergeant Wade served in Iraq. During those deployments he earned the Army Commendation Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraqi Army Good Conduct Medal and the Combat Action Badge. On April 6, 2013, Sergeant Wade's family was presented the Bronze Star and Purple Heart in honor of the supreme sacrifice he made for his fellow Americans and the United States.

Sergeant Wade is survived and mourned by his wife, Alisha Morales of Las Cruces, NM, his mother Tisa Wade and father Daniel Wade, Jr., both of Indianapolis, and his daughter Skylynn

Marie Wade. In addition, he is survived by his brothers Cory Alan Lee, Zachary Daniel Wade and his fiancée Victoria Lloyd; his niece Molly Diane Wade; maternal grandmother Denise Webb; maternal grandfather, Gerald Lee, Sr.; paternal grandmother Betsy Brown and her husband Tommy Brown; paternal grandfather, Daniel Lee Wade, Sr., and his wife Linda as well as several aunts, uncles, cousins and close friends. He was preceded in death by his brother Adrian David Wade.

Sergeant Tristan Mykal Wade is a quintessential Hoosier, and true American hero. Let us always remember and treasure the memory of this stalwart, brave man and honor him for protecting our treasured country. May God welcome him home and give comfort to his family and friends. Thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL CHARLES MCGEE

• Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, today I wish to join the Columbia College Alumni Association in recognizing one of the college's most prestigious alumni. Colonel Charles McGee is among the most decorated and accomplished Air Force aviators, holding an Air Force record of 409 fighter combat missions flown in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. I am proud to applaud him for his invaluable service and contributions to the Air Force, Kansas City, and to our country.

Charles E. McGee was one of the renowned Tuskegee Airmen of World War II and continued his service as a career officer in the U.S. Air Force for 30 years. He was born in Cleveland, OH on December 7, 1919, and as a young man, McGee was a member of the Boy Scouts of America, BSA, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout on August 9, 1940. He later served in district and regional positions in the BSA. At the 2010 National Scout Jamboree, he was recognized with the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award.

During the Vietnam War, as a Lieutenant Colonel, McGee flew 172 combat missions in a McDonnell RF-4 photo-reconnaissance aircraft. After a series of other appointments in the United States, Italy and Germany and promotion to Colonel, McGee retired on January 31, 1973. He ended his military career with an impressive 6,308 flying hours. Following his military service, McGee has held many prestigious functional and honorary positions within the field of aviation.

In 1978, at the age of 58, he completed his college degree at Columbia College in Kansas City, over 30 years after his initial enrollment at the University of Illinois. Though interrupted by World War II, attaining a college degree had been a lifelong goal. I am honored to have the opportunity to congratulate Colonel McGee for this great achieve-

ment and am proud that he chose to complete his studies and continue his impressive career in the great State of Missouri.

In his civilian life, McGee served as the director of the Kansas City downtown airport and as a member of the Aviation Advisory Commission. For 30 years, he has been an ambassador of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., serving three times as national president. He has shared his story in numerous public addresses and has received many accolades, including the National Aeronautical Association's Elder Statesman of Aviation.

In 2005, McGee was part of a group of former Tuskegee Airmen who flew to Balad, Iraq to speak to active duty airmen serving in the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, the current incarnation of the 332nd Fighter Group.

McGee has been recognized for his combat and military service with a number of awards including: Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star, Air Medal with 25 Oak Leaf Clusters, Army Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, Hellenic Republic World War II Commemorative Medal, along with related campaign and service ribbons.

In 2007, President George W. Bush awarded him and the surviving Tuskegee Airmen the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, the Nation's highest civilian award, and in 2011, he was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, OH.

I am honored to join Columbia College in celebrating Colonel Charles McGee's accomplishments and service, from which we have all greatly benefited. I want to thank Colonel McGee for his leadership in the field of aviation, in our military, and in his community.●

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL NORBERT CZECH

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate Nevada educator and veteran, Lieutenant Colonel Norbert Czech, for his retirement as the District Army Instructor, DAI. His selfless work for the District JROTC Program and with the veterans of Northern Nevada make him truly deserving of our appreciation.

LTC Czech received his commission through the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School in 1970. He served honorably with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment along the East/West German border as the Regimental Adjutant and Executive Officer. His final assignment was as the Professor of Military Science at the University of Nevada, Reno, UNR, where he was responsible for the recruitment, training, and commissioning of more than 100 Army Second Lieutenants.

Following his retirement from the U.S. Army, LTC Czech established the

Army JROTC Program at Galena High School. He went on to serve as the Director of the Washoe County JROTC Programs for 5 years. Last year he was honored as the Nation's best District Army Instructor.

Not only has LTC Czech had a lasting impact on the young students of Nevada through the JROTC program, but he has helped his fellow military veterans in Northern Nevada. He is an active member of the 82nd Association, the Westmoreland Chapter of Association of the United States Army—AUSA—and the Veterans Guest House, which was created as a place for military veterans and their families to stay when they are receiving treatments at area hospitals.

I am continually humbled by the sacrifices made by the brave men and women in the Armed Forces who fight to preserve freedom in the United States. They faced dangerous situations in order to protect Americans from harm and deserve our utmost respect. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I will continue fighting for veterans' benefits and supporting all of our men and women in uniform.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating LTC Norbert Czech for his accomplishments and expressing my sincere gratitude to him for his service and contributions to Nevada's students and military veterans. He is a true American hero.●

TRIBUTE TO KATY SIMON

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate Katy Simon as she retires from the position of Washoe County Manager, a title which she proudly held for 15 years. Ms. Simon's diligence and determination has made her an extraordinary leader to the people of Washoe County.

Ms. Simon was appointed Washoe County Manager in 1998 after serving 2 years as assistant county manager for Finance and 1 year as deputy county manager. Prior to her appointments, she was the owner and principal consultant for Simon and Associates Management Consulting, providing services both here in the United States and overseas. She also served executive positions with Washoe Health System.

Ms. Simon's dedication to the people of Northern Nevada has not gone without notice. During her implementation of the employee classification and compensation system, she was recognized twice by the State legislature for objectivity and fairness. Additionally, she was accountable for the successful startup of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District. These are just a few examples of Ms. Simon's efforts to promote the growth and development within her community and the State.

Resilience and persistence aided Ms. Simon as she helped Washoe County through 5 years of the toughest economic times this great county had ever seen. She took Washoe County from a