

Americans want and need, and it is what we should be doing.

TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a very troubling issue, but also to tell the story of one of my high school classmates who is trying to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, every day, 22 veterans in the United States take their own lives. At this pace, veterans are committing suicide at a rate of 19 percent higher than the general adult population. We, in Congress, will not turn a blind eye to these servicemembers in need of our support. This issue is a top clinical priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as for this Congress.

In a unanimous vote, the House passed legislation that works for the VA to examine the effectiveness of the Veterans Crisis Line. I am also a proud cosponsor of the Oath of Exit Act written by my close friend and colleague, Congressman BRIAN MAST from Florida. This legislation will require all individuals retiring or separating from the Armed Forces to take a pledge not to harm themselves. But these actions alone are not enough, and more must be done to protect our servicemembers.

To help our veterans with this mental health battle, we are now turning to our four-legged friends. Therapy dogs have a proven success record for helping our veterans tackle the physical and mental challenges that they face in their transitions back to civilian life.

As I stand before the House today, I want to bring awareness to one organization that I am especially proud of, K94Heroes. This nonprofit group provides therapy dogs to our servicemen and -women who are in desperate need of compassion and support. I am overjoyed to see members of the community empowering our veterans and I am honored to say that this organization was founded in my home State, in my hometown, by one of my high school classmates, John "Big Daddy" Lipscomb.

John founded the K94Heroes program after connecting with one of our other classmates, an elementary classmate, who specializes in service dog training for veterans. In 2015, John and his daughter established K94Heroes and raised private funds to mitigate training costs. Together, they work tirelessly to ensure every veteran who deserves a service dog receives one.

We owe it to those who protected us abroad the assurance of protection here at home. With upstanding citizens like John "Big Daddy" Lipscomb and with continued action on the Federal level, we will be able to better protect our veterans who sacrifice so much for this

country. Still, this Congress must make continued efforts toward veteran suicide prevention, and I commend the efforts of organizations such as K94Heroes.

HONORING JOHN YOUNG, CENTRAL FLORIDA'S LOCAL HERO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOTO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the life of an Orlando favorite son, a hero that we lost this past weekend, Astronaut John Young, who was inspirational and legendary to our community and who grew up in College Park in Orlando, Florida. Streets named after him span our district, as well as Congresswomen MURPHY's and DEMINGS' districts in central Florida.

He was described by our local paper as a "country boy who grew up in Orlando, Florida, back when it was mostly farmland." He even got in trouble for smuggling a corned beef sandwich into space on Gemini 3.

He was mostly known for his coolheadedness and calm demeanor as he took numerous trips into space with NASA. Some of the flags and mission patches he flew into space are on display in our Orlando Science Center. In central Florida, we are proud to have the John Young Parkway bear his name. He died on January 5, this past Friday, at his home in Houston.

Mr. YOUNG was NASA's longest-serving astronaut. He was the first person to orbit the Moon by himself and the ninth person to walk on the Moon as well. He was the first person to travel to space six times during NASA's Gemini and Apollo lunar missions, and into the space shuttle programs as well.

John Young commanded the first space shuttle flight mission, an iconic view that so many central Floridians and so many Americans have seen over the years during that program. He was awarded the prestigious Congressional Space Medal of Honor in 1981. He represents the very best of the Orlando area.

Rest in peace, Astronaut John Young.

□ 1030

HONORING ISABEL CASTANO-LUGO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARSHALL). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Isabel Castano-Lugo, who will turn 112 years young on January 11. Isabel, a supercentenarian, is one of only a handful in the Nation who has lived through some of the brightest times and darkest chapters in our history.

Born in 1906, in Manizales, Colombia, Isabel was one of 13 brothers and sisters. At age 41, Isabel married and had 2 sons, Omar and Danilo Lugo. Because

of the increasing violence in her home country and the kidnapping of her husband, Isabel began a new life with her children in the United States in 1970, and, for 26 years, she resided in my district in beautiful Miami Beach.

Throughout her long and distinguished life, Isabel has never ceased placing the needs of others before her own. Isabel has served as a strong advocate for many important issues and organizations, such as the Jewish Community Center of Miami Beach, and has continued to serve as a voice for the voiceless to this day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating this historic birthday with Isabel, who is the oldest living person in the State of Florida.

CONGRATULATING COACH MARK RICHT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mark Richt, head coach of the Miami Hurricanes football team on being named the Walter Camp 2017 Coach of the Year and the ACC Coach of the Year.

In only two seasons at the helm, Coach Richt has created a winning environment at my alma mater, the University of Miami. This season, the Hurricanes won their first ACC Coastal Division title and ended a 7-year losing streak against rival Florida State University.

Coach Richt's success on the field this past year also earned him two notable accolades. He is the first Miami Hurricane's coach to be named ACC Coach of the Year and only the second UM coach to receive the Walter Camp award. Coach Richt is truly a phenomenal leader, and I am confident that he will continue to guide UM's football program to greater victories in the years to come.

Once again, "congratulations," "felicidades," to Coach Richt on your success this last season, and "Go Canes."

CONGRATULATING COACH JIM MORRIS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Jim Morris on celebrating his 25th and final season as head coach of the Miami Hurricanes baseball team. Coach Morris has dedicated his life to college baseball. He has won over 1,500 Division 1 games, the fifth most in the history of the sport.

During his tenure, the University of Miami, my alma mater, qualified for the College World Series more times than any other baseball program throughout the country, and he led the team to two national championships. Coach Morris has also been named National Coach of the Year three times.

Coach Morris' outstanding leadership for the past 25 years has left a positive and lasting impact on the University of Miami. I am confident that this historic legacy will continue to inspire and will continue to shape Hurricane baseball in the years to come.

Once again, "congratulations," "felicidades," to Coach Morris on a long and distinguished career.

"Go Canes."

RECOGNIZING THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA FOOTBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the football team at the University of Central Florida located in my congressional district.

The Knights finished the season ranked sixth in the Nation by the Associated Press. They had a perfect 13-0 record—the only team in college football to go undefeated. UCF won the American Athletic Conference championship with an exhilarating—and excruciating—double-overtime victory against a talented team from the University of Memphis.

The Knights shook up the world of college football in the Peach Bowl on New Year's Day when they beat Auburn University, one of the most storied football programs in the country.

I had a personal stake in the outcome of the Peach Bowl, having made a friendly bet on the game with Congressman MIKE ROGERS, whose Alabama district is home to Auburn. I am excited to collect my winnings from Congressman ROGERS later today, a bucket of delicious Florida oranges that he will deliver to me while carrying a UCF helmet.

I thank the football gods that UCF did not lose. Under the terms of the wager, I would have been compelled to blanket a tree on the Capitol grounds with toilet paper, pursuant to a time-honored and, frankly, bewildering Auburn tradition. I am grateful that the Knights saved Capitol Police from the trouble of having to arrest a Member of Congress for vandalism.

Even though UCF was not given the opportunity to play for the national championship, the players and coaches of this team are national champions in my book. The Knights didn't just win games, they also won our hearts. They didn't just beat opponents, they also beat the odds. Sports—in particular, team sports—have a unique power to captivate, to unify, and to inspire.

Under the strong and steady leadership of Head Coach Scott Frost, the Knights captivated the school's students and alumni, filling them with pride. They united our Central Florida University community from Orlando to Oviedo, from Apopka to Altamonte Springs, and they inspired countless people, young and old alike, both football experts and novices. Importantly, UCF the football team brought national attention to UCF the university, which has quietly become one of Florida's and our Nation's academic gems.

To be sure, the Knights' squad was filled with talented players, seven of whom won first team all-conference honors, including rifle-armed quarterback McKenzie Milton, fleet-footed running back Adrian Killins, and one-handed defensive warrior Shaquem Griffin, who personifies courage and character.

Many members of the team justifiably played with a chip on their shoulder, having been overlooked by more established college football programs coming out of high school. They had to earn respect through their actions. Ultimately, what made the Knights so special and so successful was not what they accomplished as individuals, but, rather, what they achieved together as a team.

It was clear from watching the coaches and players that they loved and respected each other. The bond they shared made them teammates in the truest sense of the word. The team's motto, which is the name of the UCF fight song, is "Charge on." It is a message whose power extends beyond the football field and applies to life itself. When you confront challenges, charge on. When others doubt your abilities, charge on. And when you think you can't work any harder, charge on.

As a proud fan, I thank the UCF football team for showing us all what it means to charge on.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize seven students from my district who have received the 2017 National Merit Scholarships.

The criteria required to receive a National Merit Scholarship is quite difficult. In fact, of the 15,000 finalists selected, only half will actually receive scholarships. The recipients of this prestigious scholarship are Connor Schmidt of Ham Lake, Benjamin Caswell of Shoreview, Raffi Toghrumadjan of Blaine, Rachel Cho of Blaine, Piper Christenson of Spring Lake Park, Catherine Lewis of Blaine, and Kenneth Truong of Coon Rapids. Each one of these students has big plans for the future which include careers in medicine, science, and engineering—all fields that are critically important to the success of our Nation.

I congratulate each of these students on receiving this scholarship, and we look forward to watching you achieve great success in your respective careers.

Good work, and good luck.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN JEFFREY VOLLMER

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of one of Minnesota's heroes. On Tuesday, December 19, 2017, Captain Jeffrey Vollmer of the Mayer Fire Department died in the line of duty.

A loving father and husband, Jeff is survived by his wife, Emily, and their two daughters, Anika and Kennedy. He was a 12-year veteran of the all-volunteer fire department in Mayer, Minnesota. Friends and colleagues knew him as a selfless and kind leader who was always willing to help others.

Fire Chief Rod Maetzold described Jeff as the kind of guy you could count on when it mattered most. Jeff was an avid muskie fisherman who enjoyed hunting and photography. Jeff loved to work with wood. He built signs, tables, and even a bed set for his daughter.

We pray for peace and comfort for his colleagues, friends, and family. He will be missed by so many.

RECOGNIZING JAKE HENRIKSEN

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding servicemember from my district, Jake Henriksen. As a Centennial graduate and resident of Lino Lakes, Minnesota, Jake always knew he wanted to serve in the military. As a third-generation member of the U.S. Army, his service as a specialist representing the 173rd Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team continues a family legacy of service to our Nation.

In just under 2 years in the service, Jake won the U.S. Army Europe Soldier of the Year award. Each company of the Army made up of about 100 people selects a soldier to compete in the Best Warrior Competition. Jake was chosen as his company's representative. The competition tests soldiers' abilities in a variety of areas, including a physical test, a written test, marksmanship, land navigation, chemical defense, and medical tasks. Jake excelled in all, which is why he went on to earn the title of U.S. Army Europe Soldier of the Year affirming his commitment to excellence.

Our community is very proud of Jake and his accomplishments. We admire his dedication and his commitment to serve. Congratulations, Jake.

COMMEMORATING NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day to remember the men and women in blue who protect and serve our great Nation. The great State of Minnesota is home to many phenomenal law enforcement officers, men and women, who put their lives on the line each and every day to ensure the safety and security of our communities.

These are the true heroes, and some, tragically, have lost their lives in the line of duty. In 2016, Deputy Steven Sandberg was shot and killed in the line of duty in St. Cloud, Minnesota. While his death was both senseless and tragic, we remember the courageous way he chose to live and serve our local community.

In honor of brave officers like Deputy Sandberg today and every day, let us remember and honor the selfless service of our men and women in blue.

DEFENDING THE AMERICA WORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, this morning, a high school senior sat attentively in a Chicago classroom while