

GOLD STAR

Michael Strange Foundation Newsletter

Prayers

Prayers for the Gold Star families of Sgt William Jerome Rivers; SPC. Kennedy Ladon Sanders; and SPC. Breonna Alexondria Mofett and others injured in the attacks on a U.S. base in Jordan.

Phillies

Charlie was recognized as a Hometown Hero honoring Michael's CTR1 skills at the Philadelphia Phillies game on September 22, 2023. Charlie had the opportunity to change the base in the third inning. A photo from the game can be seen on page 2, *Charlie's Corner*.

Rogue

Progressive Car Insurance's program *Keys to Progress* awarded Charlie and Mary the keys to a 2021 Nissan Rogue. The new vehicle will help them travel for speaking engagements explaining what a Gold Star is and the process of *Healing the Family* that the Michael Strange Foundation provides.



Gold Star Weekend 2024

On Father's Day weekend in 2024 the Michael Strange Foundation will host 35-40 Gold Stars for 3 nights and 4 days. The weekend will include grief counselor Mandi Love, who brings strong and much needed healing techniques.

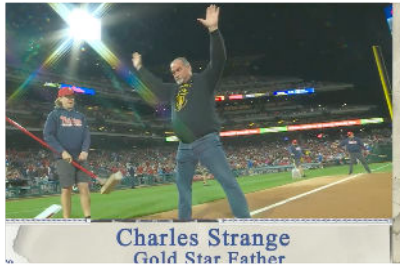
Gold Stars will have the opportunity to write a letter to their loved ones. Jimmy Kiminish will open the Bible and talk about John 15:13 and Psalm 23. In the evening on Saturday Gold Stars will join the community at the Michael Strange Foundation VFW Post with a live band, food, and drinks. As Charlie says, "we will walk with a limp the rest of our lives but we have to keep putting one foot in front of the other."

Please consider donating to the Michael Strange Foundation to continue support of Gold Star families.

Charlie's Joke of the Month: What's the difference between snowmen and snowwomen? Answer in Charlie's Corner.



VOICES FOR SILENT HEROES
THE MICHAEL STRANGE FOUNDATION



Charles Strange
Gold Star Father

Answer: Snowballs!

Charlie's Corner

Years ago at a Toby Keith concert in Kentucky honoring Michael, Charlie met SOLDIER and SAILOR Regan Shrevee from Utah along with their father Steve Shrevee.

Later, still years ago, Charlie had the opportunity to meet the Schrevees again at the Michael Strange mural in Port Richmond (Philadelphia), PA. The photo below captures this moment with Charlie, Soldier, Sailor, and Steve all wearing Michael Strange Foundation shirts.



Now, Sailor is on the monumental journey to become nuclear trained in the United States Navy! Sailor's photo:



Warrior Spotlight

Army Pvt. Travis C. Zimmerman

Travis Zimmerman, of New Berlinville, Pennsylvania, was only 19 when he joined the Army. Fresh out of high school Travis went to basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia, later followed by duty in Iraq in an area known as the Triangle of Death.

When Betty, Travis' step-mother who raised him from a young age questioned Travis, "My God, you're joining the Army right now during wartime!?" Travis replied that he knew we were at war, and that's why he was needed. And so he went. At only 19, Travis was initially teased in the Army for being so young, however, he stood his ground and was then respected by the group he served. Now, his friends from the Army have become lifelong friends with Betty and her husband, Lloyd.

Travis was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky. At the airport on his way to Iraq, after goodbyes to Betty and Travis's father, Travis called Betty back for a hug so big and hard he picked her off the floor. He asked Betty to hold onto his class ring, which Travis put Betty's birthstone in instead of his school colors because he knew how important doing well in school was to Betty. (Pictured below is Betty with Travis's memorial bear.)



One day Travis called Betty and asked her to send him some medical supplies like bandages because the ones he had in Iraq didn't work well. They didn't stick and weren't big enough. He told Betty that his arm got infected from an immunization. Betty ran to the store and packed up wound care supplies including tape, gauze, cleaning supplies. As it turns out, Travis was actually grazed by a bullet.

While in Iraq, the United States rented a house for Travis and his team. One night the owner's cousin came to the house. Since he was the owner's cousin, the team didn't think twice. However, the Iraqi set up an improvised explosive device (IED) just outside the house. No one noticed the IED until Travis stepped on it and detonated it as they were leaving the house for night-time reconnaissance. Travis arrived in Iraq on February 22nd and died April, 22nd of the same year.

It was 11 o'clock at night when the knock came to Betty and Lloyd's door. Betty was home for the evening, but Lloyd was at work about 25 minutes away. The CACO officers, due to the policies at the time, weren't permitted to tell Betty anything about Travis- a rule that Betty later fought and got changed. Now, the rule is if a soldier is living at home and unmarried and there's a stepparent, either father or mother, that has been living in the home, they now have the right to be informed. Betty wanted to ensure that no other person would have to go through that same pain she felt, knowing, but not knowing about her beloved Travis. And that's not the only rule that Betty got changed.

In December of the same year that Travis was killed in action, Betty received a phone call from the Navy asking for Travis to join. Betty, upset that Travis already had given his brave life, asked for a supervisor and eventually went as high as she could until the branches of the military now coordinate with each other to avoid such a mistake again. Betty was and still is clearly a pioneer for Gold Stars, as Travis died very early in the war on terror. Getting the branches of the military to cooperate due to new policies she was able to get enacted was one of Betty's greatest accomplishments, protecting other Gold Star families.

Betty learned firsthand that a soldier's death is not private. She learned firsthand how the media can be so information-hungry that they are "stealing your tears away from you." But fortunately, the small-town community pulled together for a fundraiser, raising funds from all over the world to memorialize Travis. Standing in the town of Boyertown is a fiberglass military bear, saluting, among other bear statues throughout the town. Betty's goal is to eternalize Travis's memorial by creating a bronze bear, saluting. Travis's monument will help us all remember Travis's courage and dedication.

Betty stated that it was during the Michael Strange Foundation Weekend Workshop that she was first able to actually cry. She cried so heartfelt she never wanted to cry like that again. When Charlie asked Betty if she would be coming back in 2024, she apologetically told Charlie she wouldn't be coming back. It was just too hard. Now, however, Betty is planning on attending next year's Weekend Workshop recognizing that she, including many other Gold Star families, is in need of the healing that the Michael Strange Foundation provides.

June 15 - Bensalem, PA Parx 3rd Floor, 12p-4p
August 31 - Somer's Point, NJ
EVERYONE WELCOME!

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War on the Water



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