

## When Disaster Strikes, AmeriCares® is There



Matthew McDermott photo (Courtesy of AmeriCares)

*An AmeriCares relief worker offloads medical supplies for earthquake victims at the Port-au-Prince Airport, Haiti*

Much can be said of the human condition and spirit when disaster strikes. Death, destruction, homelessness, hunger, pain and despair can lead to violence, desperation and the collapse of public order. But even when calamity strikes and chaos ensues, the human spirit still shines through. Such was the case on January 12, 2010 at 4:53 p.m. local time, when a 7.0-magnitude earthquake devastated the city of Port-au-Prince in Haiti. According to government sources, more than 222,600 men, women and children perished in the quake, a figure roughly equal to almost one percent of Haiti's population. It was one of the single most deadly events in human history.<sup>1</sup> Not only were lives lost, but essential infrastructure and sanitation in this already bitterly poor island were simply ripped apart.

Yet, into the unspeakable devastation stepped Connecticut-based AmeriCares. Within forty-eight hours of the Haiti quake, AmeriCares relief workers including doctors and nurses arrived in Port-au-Prince and were on the ground coordinating the delivery of life-saving medical assistance for survivors. Within another seventy-two hours, the first AmeriCares emergency cargo plane arrived, carrying nearly thirteen tons of triage medical supplies; over \$6.5 million worth of antibiotics, bandages, gauze and other desperately needed medical aid was delivered on the first planeload.

Just forty-six days after the Haiti quake, on February 27, 2010 at 3:34 a.m. local time, another massive earthquake hit the city of Concepción, Chile. This time, it measured an 8.8-magnitude on the Richter scale, one of the strongest temblors ever recorded. The moving tectonic plates also triggered a destructive tsunami near the Chilean Pacific coast. Due to stronger architecture and better earthquake preparedness, the damage in Chile was not as severe as the damage in Haiti. Nonetheless, hundreds of Chileans lost their lives and thousands more were injured and left temporarily homeless. Again, AmeriCares was there with a swift response. Within days of the quake, an AmeriCares emergency response team was on the ground in Chile delivering nearly \$600,000 worth of personal hygiene products and relief supplies for survivors in the immediate aftermath. In the ensuing months, AmeriCares built a field hospital to replace one damaged by the earthquake.

The devastation left in the wake of these two back-to-back disasters was staggering, particularly in Haiti. By conservative estimates, more than 1.2 million people in Haiti became homeless and about 700,000 others had little left to return to. As many as 250,000 homes and 30,000 businesses were destroyed or badly damaged by the quake. The economic impact has been estimated at nearly \$4 billion, or roughly one-third of Haiti's total annual GDP. The Haitian government estimates the cost of rebuilding over the next three years at \$11.5 billion.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Geological Service, the Haiti earthquake may be the second deadliest earthquake disaster in modern times, second only to a 7.5 magnitude quake in China in 1976 that killed 255,000.

What these unspeakable tragedies were not able to destroy, however, was the great humanity displayed through the love, kindness, and generosity that flowed from both the victims and millions across the world who responded with immediate help. Haitians came together to bury their dead and begin the process of rebuilding and healing, in the physical and spiritual sense. Newly-elected Chilean President Sebastián Piñera held a day of national unity just after the quake and called for a massive reconstruction effort that will take more than two years to complete. In Connecticut and throughout the world, governments, volunteers, and relief organizations, financially supported by millions of charitable individuals, joined together to rush aid to the stricken citizens of Haiti and Chile.

Among the first and most dramatic responders was Connecticut-based AmeriCares. One of the most responsible and effective disaster relief organizations in the world, AmeriCares was established in 1982 by Robert C. Macauley, a paper broker from New Canaan. According to some, Bob Macauley has no patience for bureaucracy. His motto: “You act now, and worry about the red tape later.” This viewpoint is reflected in AmeriCares’ mission to deliver urgently needed medical and humanitarian aid to survivors of disaster and people in crisis around the world in the first critical hours after tragedy occurs.

(AmeriCares / Tom Turley Photo)

*An AmeriCares physician examines an earthquake-injured girl in Port-au-Prince, Haiti*



Robert Macauley’s journey to found AmeriCares began in April 1975, when a U.S. jet carrying 243 Vietnamese orphans crashed into the jungle killing a third of the children and leaving many of the survivors critically injured. After learning that a rescue mission by the U.S. military would not be possible until ten days later, Macauley immediately chartered a Boeing 747. Within forty-eight hours he rescued the children and brought them safely to California. After the successful rescue, he considered how to handle the “red tape”—including the \$251,000 cost of chartering the plane. In a profound act of generosity, Macauley and his wife, Leila, co-founder of AmeriCares, mortgaged their home to fund the rescue. As Leila Macauley describes, it was a fair trade: “The bank got the house and Bob got the kids.”

The Vietnam rescue was followed in 1982 by aid to Poland, which at the time was under martial law. Invited to Rome by Pope John Paul II to discuss the needs of Poland’s besieged citizens, Macauley pledged to deliver \$50,000 of medical supplies to the Polish people. Far surpassing this goal, AmeriCares delivered three airlifts of more than \$3.2 million in humanitarian aid to the citizens of Poland in 1982, signaling the birth of a new and unique disaster relief organization. Thus, with a second major successful international aid mission, the organization AmeriCares was born.

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Currently headquartered in Stamford, AmeriCares is one of the world’s top nonprofit health and disaster relief organizations; able to deliver medicines, medical supplies and aid to people in crisis around the world and across the United States. AmeriCares has a longstanding commitment to fiscal responsibility and efficiency. The Better Business Bureau and others that monitor charities have consistently given the organization their highest rankings: it has received an “A” rating by the American Institute of Philanthropy, ranks seventh on the Chronicle of Philanthropy’s list of top 400 charities in the nation, and has received a four-star rating by Charity Navigator. These ratings reflect the fact that more than 98% of total expenses directly support programs and relief for people in need and less than 2% represent administrative costs. Thanks to its impeccable reputation and the hard work of its co-founders, leadership, staff, volunteers, and generous donors, AmeriCares has delivered more than \$9 billion worth of aid to 147 countries since 1982.

Since 1984, AmeriCares, through its local health care partners, has delivered more than \$145 million worth of medical aid and humanitarian relief to Haiti. Within the first two weeks of that country's January 12, 2010 earthquake, AmeriCares filled empty hospital shelves with over \$12.5 million worth of medicines and supplies and sent more than one hundred volunteer medical teams. It has also pledged \$50 million in aid to help rebuild Haiti's health care system. Likewise, since 1989, AmeriCares has delivered over \$16 million in relief aid to Chile.

Haiti and Chile are now on the hard road to recovery, thanks to the support of Connecticut, national, and international aid organizations, and their thousands of volunteers and millions of generous donors. It is reassuring to know that when disaster next strikes, AmeriCares will again be ready to respond at a moment's notice—a testament to the indomitable human spirit lived every day by the people who make AmeriCares work, always rising to the occasion in the face of adversity and tragedy.

We are profoundly grateful for the selfless dedication to helping others in great need displayed every day by the men and women of AmeriCares, and proud that Connecticut is home to such a great worldwide beacon of humanitarianism.

In recognition of its commitment and unique ability to provide immediate lifesaving medical aid and recovery assistance to survivors of disaster around the world, I am honored to dedicate the 2010 edition of the *Connecticut State Register and Manual* to AmeriCares.



Susan Bysiewicz  
Secretary of the State



Matthew McDermott photo

(Courtesy of AmeriCares)

*Survivors of the Haiti earthquake, assisted by AmeriCares*

## PERFECT...AGAIN



The great test of any remarkable scientific achievement is – can it be repeated? When the UConn Women's Basketball team put together an undefeated season for their sixth national championship in 2009, we were inspired and amazed at their incredible feat. For the team under the leadership of Geno Auriemma and the rest of the coaching staff to do it again, completing another record of 39-0 and winning its seventh national championship, is nothing short of

legendary. In fact, the UConn Women made history. No other team in the history of college athletics has ever completed two consecutive undefeated seasons and in the process earned two straight national titles. After achieving so much, the Huskies have successfully won seventy-eight straight games and sit ten wins shy of the all-time record for NCAA consecutive wins. We congratulate Head Coach Geno Auriemma and the entire Women's Team on another historic season.

To excel and accomplish the goal of perfection as these women have done takes more than simply showing up each day to play basketball. It takes dedication, hard work, practice, academic excellence, and hours of endless training. Perfection doesn't come easy. It is the culmination of years of long hours spent working at what truly matters the most. For the UConn Women that is not simply winning games. Rather, this constitutes working hard at improving the unseen and unglamorous fundamentals of play: shooting, passing, rebounding, assists, blocked shots, and physical endurance. This type of excellence also requires both players and coaches to self-correct, learning from their mistakes and improving as the season goes. A team wins a game by scoring more points than their opponents. But victory is not merely measured by the amount of points that a team scores, but rather by how a team improves on a day to day basis and perfects their craft. Every member of the team has an important role to play, and the group as a whole cannot achieve greatness if each individual does not do the very best job they can.

Once again, the UConn Women are an inspiration to us all, proving that anyone can reach their dreams with the right combination of hard work, perseverance, and yes, a little bit of luck. After completing their unimaginable victory in 2010, the UConn Women are far from finished. Their hard work and dedication will continue during the off-season and into the 2010-2011 season. It is a well known fact that champions do not get complacent with their success. Every game is a new day, and the UConn Women have consistently been able to focus on their task and achieve it. To coach Geno Auriemma and his entire team, who have brought so much joy and happiness to thousands of Connecticut residents who closely follow the Huskies, we say thank you.

Thank you for your unsurpassed skill on the court and the absolutely inspiring way you have represented the great State of Connecticut. You have all worked tirelessly to achieve this goal and we are so proud of you again. Congratulations UConn Women and may your lives be blessed with many more successes!

Susan Bysiewicz  
Secretary of the State

## In Memoriam

On the fateful Sunday morning of February 7, 2010, a powerful explosion ripped through the Kleen Energy Power Plant in Middletown claiming the lives of six hard-working men. The physical impact of the explosion was felt as far as thirty miles away. The emotional impact, however, has been felt for thousands of miles as families from Ontario, Canada to Missouri, New Hampshire, and here in Connecticut are grieving the loss of their loved ones. This tragedy is also being felt across three generations, as each of the men left behind wives, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, and, in some cases, parents—all unprepared to face such sudden, great loss. As we honor the memory of these men, we also pray for the well-being of their families.

We must all remember that although our existence is just temporary, it is also meaningful. At the time this tragedy occurred, the workers were nearing completion on the final preparations for bringing the natural gas energy plant online. From all accounts, it was mentally and physically demanding work, and indeed many of the plant's workers were putting in long hours in the days and weeks leading up to the tragic explosion. At times like this, we must pause to remember that men and women put their lives on the line every day to ensure that we have the energy we need to run our homes, businesses, hospitals, and schools.

Not surprisingly, this tragedy has filled us all with a sense of unity as well as profound love and admiration for the men who lost their lives that fateful day as they went about their normal work duties to earn a living for their families. They were good men who each gave all they had for their families and communities. They provided their time freely to help others in need and earned the respect of their peers. We owe them much for their hard work, dedication, and contributions, and, surely, owe them and their families the responsibility to make every effort to prevent another such tragedy from taking place.

In this edition of the *Connecticut State Register and Manual*, I join the families, friends, colleagues, and members of United Association Local 777 Plumbers and Pipefitters, with heartfelt sympathy, in honoring the memory of Peter C. Chepulis, Ronald J. Crabb, Raymond E. Dobratz, Jr., Kenneth Haskell, Roy Rushton and Chris Walters.



Susan Bysiewicz  
Secretary of the State



### **Peter C. Chepulis**

Peter “Pete” C. Chepulis, 48, was born on May 3, 1961 in Waterbury, Connecticut, to Mildred (Skerstonas) Chepulis of Thomaston and the late George B. Chepulis. Raised in the Brooklyn section of Waterbury, Mr. Chepulis was a graduate of St. Joseph’s Grammar School and Kaynor Technical High School. A Thomaston resident, he was a proud member of the Pipe Fitters and Plumbers Union Local No. 777, the Thomaston Fish and Game Club, and the NRA. His passions in life were bird hunting with his Springer Spaniels, Preacher and Rancey; riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycles; participating in wood chopping competitions at the local fairs; cooking; and traveling. He was husband to Dyann “De” (Beveridge) Chepulis and stepfather to Alicia G. Beveridge of Southington. He was also survived by his mother; his brother James T. Chepulis of Thomaston; his nephew Stephen J. Chepulis; and great-nephew Jason S. Chepulis.

*Photograph courtesy of the Chepulis family*



### **Ronald J. Crabb**

Ronald Jeffrey Crabb, 42, was born on August 16, 1967 in Spring Valley, Illinois to Marilyn T. Crabb of Chicago, IL and the late Carle (Bart) Crabb, III. He was married to Jodi M. Thomas on July 2, 1994 in Fairfield, Connecticut, and the couple later moved to Colchester where they made their home. Ronald worked as a Steamfitter for Local 777 Connecticut Plumbers and Pipefitters Union for eighteen years. As an apprentice, Ron received the Department of Labor's Fitzgerald Award for outstanding apprenticeship. Throughout his career, he was a champion of workers rights and job safety. Ron was immediate past president of the Local and had also served as Recording Secretary and Executive Board member. Appointed by the Governor, Ronald also served for six years on the State Licensing Board for Heating, Piping, Cooling and Sheet Metal Workers where he worked to maintain the integrity of the profession and protect consumers from fraudulent contractors. A civically-minded resident in his home town, he served on the Colchester Democratic Town Committee and on the Board of Finance, where he served a six-year term. In recognition of his long standing dedication to public service, Ronald was also the recipient of the Secretary of the State's Public Service Award. Ronald J. Crabb is survived by his wife Jodi Thomas and his children, Dylan Thomas-Crabb of Colchester and Tyler Barboza of Spring Valley, IL; a brother, Carle Ray Crabb, IV of Spring Valley, IL; step father, Jerome Sisul of Chicago, IL; step siblings, Tawny Sisul, Francie Sisul, David Sisul, and Jerome Sisul; and a special aunt, Sandra Thomas of Stratford.

*Photograph courtesy of the Crabb family*



**Raymond E. Dobratz, Jr.**

Raymond E. Dobratz, Jr., 58, was born in Meriden on August 9, 1951 to Maureen M. Dobratz and the late Raymond E. Dobratz, Sr. A well-known and respected resident of Old Saybrook, Mr. Dobratz was a member of the United Association Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777 for more than thirty eight years. He served in the Army National Guard and, for thirteen years, on the Old Saybrook Police Commission. Mr. Dobratz also served as an Old Saybrook Parks and Recreations Commissioner for thirteen years, on the Board of Trustees of the Westbrook Elks, and as a former member of the Democratic Town Committee. Ray Dobratz devoted time to youth by coaching youth sports and as one of the co-founders of the Old Saybrook Youth Football Athletic League in the 1980s. Ray was an avid fisherman; so much so that in 1982 he moved his family from Bristol to Old Saybrook to be near the water. He was married to Paula (Vance) Dobratz, wife of thirty eight years, and is survived by three sons: Erik R. Dobratz and his wife Denise of Hamden, David J. Dobratz of Old Saybrook, and Matthew P. Dobratz and his wife Sarah of Old Lyme. He is also survived by a sister Marie Heck of Meriden; five grandchildren—Lily, Cole, Lauren, Kendall, and Keegan; and many nieces and nephews.

*Photograph courtesy of the Dobratz family*





### **Roy Rushton**

Roy Rushton, 36, was born to Joan and the late David Rushton. A resident of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Mr. Rushton was a supervisor working on turbine insulation at the Kleen Energy power plant. According to a family friend, Rushton was supposed to be in Connecticut for just a week before returning to his family that Monday and had made plans with two friends to go to Daytona Beach, Florida upon his return. Roy Rushton was a proud member of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95. He was a lifetime beach strip resident and an active member of the Hamilton Beach Rescue Unit, a division of the Auxiliary Coast Guard. Mr. Rushton is survived by wife Patricia and their four-year-old daughter, Clare; his mother; a sister, Jodi Rushton; and various nieces and nephews.

*Photograph courtesy of the Rushton family*



### **Chris Walters**

Chris Walters, 48, was born to Dr. E. Vance and Mrs. Kae Walters. A resident of Florissant, Missouri, Mr. Walters was, for over twenty years, a construction safety engineer who once worked as a safety manager during the construction of the new Busch Stadium in downtown St. Louis. According to those who knew him, he had seen his share of industrial accidents. Unable to find work in the St. Louis area, Chris Walters accepted the opportunity to work at the Kleen Energy Power Plant in Middletown. An active Eagle Scout leader, he had recently received a prestigious scouting leadership award. He was also a member of the A.S.S.E., an amateur ham radio operator, and a Red Cross Instructor and Volunteer. Chris Walters was married to Fran, his wife of seventeen years, with whom he shared three children—Alexandria (15), Zachary (13), and Andrew (10). He is survived by two sisters, Susan (Dean) Morris and Sharon (John) Deagan.

*Photograph courtesy of the Walters family*

## **Kenneth Haskell**

A resident of New Durham, New Hampshire, Kenneth Haskell, 37, was a superintendent for Keystone Construction and Maintenance Services, the electrical contractor at the Kleen Energy Plant. One of two men monitoring gas levels at the plant before the explosion, Kenneth Haskell was the last victim to pass away as a result of severe injuries suffered. He loved snowmobiling and riding motorcycles with his wife Lisa. He was active in various community service efforts in his home town. According to a neighbor, Kenneth Haskell was “very kind and caring.”

***In Memory of***

Edward C. Kramer

Benjamin A. Sklaver

Xhacob LaTorre

Ronald J. Spino

Tyler O. Griffin

Edwin Rivera

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
June 2009 – May 2010*



### **Army Sergeant First Class Edward C. Kramer**

Army Sergeant First Class Edward C. Kramer, who grew up in Southington, Connecticut, died June 29, 2009 while serving on his second tour of duty in Iraq. He was 39 years old. Kramer, a resident of Wilmington, N.C., was one of four North Carolina National Guard soldiers from the same battalion killed while on patrol in Baghdad, when their Humvee was attacked with an improvised explosive device.

Sgt. 1st Class Kramer was an infantry soldier and section leader with Company A, 120th Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Jacksonville, N.C. He began his military career as a Marine at age 18, and was a veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991. He enlisted in the North Carolina Army National Guard in November 1994 and was previously deployed to Iraq and Kuwait in 2004.

A dedicated firefighter in civilian life, Kramer served for nine years with the City of Wilmington Fire Department, before joining the fire and rescue department at U.S. Army Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, the nation's largest ammunition terminal, in Southport, N.C.

Speaking at a memorial service for the four fallen North Carolina National Guardsmen, Lt. Col. Jack Mellott, commander of the 120th Combined Arms Battalion, remembered Sgt. 1st Class Kramer as a dedicated soldier and "the guy you wanted as your platoon sergeant." Kramer and his fellow soldiers "were known for always being ready to go, first on the line," Mellott said. "They had no fear about the mission."

An expert marksman, Sgt. 1st Class Kramer's many military awards included the Army Meritorious Service, Commendation and Achievement Medals, the North Carolina Meritorious Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Edward C. Kramer was the 44th service member with ties to Connecticut to die in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002. Survivors include his wife and two daughters in North Carolina, his parents, and his brothers and sisters.

*Information courtesy of: North Carolina National Guard Office of Public Affairs; U.S. Army, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office, Multi-National Division-Baghdad; The Wilmington Star, The Southington Observer; NBC30 (Connecticut) News; U.S. Army Surface Deployment and Distribution Command.*

*Photograph courtesy of the North Carolina National Guard Office of Public Affairs.*



### **Army Captain Benjamin A. Sklaver**

Army Captain Benjamin A. Sklaver of Hamden died Oct. 2, 2009, when his unit was ambushed by a suicide bomber in Murcheh, Afghanistan. He was 32 years old.

Capt. Sklaver was assigned to the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, in Greensboro, N.C. He graduated from Hamden High School in 1995, was a graduate of Tufts University and had a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

As an Army Reserve civil affairs officer, Capt. Sklaver could be called from civilian life to active duty whenever and wherever needed to act as a liaison between the Army and civilian authorities and populations. Prior to duty in Afghanistan, he had served in the military's Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa in 2006 and 2007, with a mission to mentor Ugandan military units and help reconstruct wells destroyed by rebel forces.

While in Uganda, he was struck by the high rates of child mortality linked to dirty drinking water. When he returned home, he founded ClearWater Initiative, a New Haven-based nonprofit organization dedicated to providing clean water to populations affected by humanitarian emergencies, with a focus on conflict-affected areas of northern Uganda. The organization has brought clean drinking water in the form of wells to more than 6,500 people since 2007.

While not on active duty, Capt. Sklaver served for six years as an international emergency and refugee health analyst at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and also led its public health emergency response team in Dallas following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Shortly before being deployed to Afghanistan, he had relocated to New York to work for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"This was a young man determined to make the world a better place," his father, Gary Sklaver, said. "He certainly touched a lot of people with his work," he said. "He was certainly special to us. Every soldier over there is a hero."

Army Capt. Benjamin A. Sklaver was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. He was the 45th service member with ties to Connecticut to die in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002. Survivors include his parents, his brother and sister and his fiancée.

*By Peter Marteka, Courant Staff Writer  
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*Additional information courtesy of FEMA Region II Weekly Bulletin, April 10, 2009*

*Photograph courtesy of the Sklaver family.*



### **Marine Corporal Xhacob LaTorre**

Marine Corporal Xhacob LaTorre of Waterbury died December 8, 2009 of injuries he suffered in a roadside bombing in August 2009 while serving in Helmand province, Afghanistan. He was 21 years old.

While a student at Crosby High School in Waterbury, LaTorre joined the JROTC program. Shortly after graduating in 2005, he enlisted in the Marine Corps at age 17.

Cpl. LaTorre was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He had served two previous tours of duty in Iraq before being fatally injured while on foot patrol in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Xhacob LaTorre was an open, happy and friendly person, said his mother, Nicolasa LaSalle. In school, every time there was an event that required audience participation, there was LaTorre, raising his hand, she said.

When he was 7 years old, a restaurant owner promised him a job if he could keep a table of ten laughing for an hour, LaSalle said. He did. He was too young to be hired, but he got a fist full of cash from the patrons who gave him a dollar for every joke that made them laugh.

He couldn't stand seeing people sad, LaTorre's mother said. "You could be sad. You could be crying," she said, "but he would look for the way to make you laugh."

Cpl. LaTorre was awarded the Purple Heart at a ceremony in his hospital room the day before he died, and was buried with full military honors in the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown.

He left behind a wife and 18 month old son, as well as his parents, a sister and a brother, Marine Cpl. Daniel LaTorre, who re-enlisted after his brother Xhacob was wounded.

Marine Cpl. Xhacob LaTorre was the 46th service member with ties to Connecticut lost in service to our country in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002.

*By Christine Dempsey, Courant Staff Writer  
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*Photograph courtesy of the Office of the State Comptroller*



### **Army Staff Sergeant Ronald J. Spino**

Army Staff Sergeant Ronald J. Spino, a paratrooper and nurse, died December 29, 2009 of wounds suffered when he was shot while unloading medical supplies in Bala Morghab, Afghanistan. He was 45 years old.

Staff Sgt. Spino was assigned to the 247th Forward Surgical Team (Airborne), 44th Medical Command, located at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Raised in Waterbury, Spino graduated from Holy Cross High School and Teikyo Post University (now Post University). Before joining the military, he worked in the records room of Waterbury Hospital. There, Spino was known as a conscientious but quiet worker, said Kathy Mancini, a fellow employee, through hospital spokesman Matt Burgard. If someone needed information, Burgard said, “he’d go out of his way to help.”

Spino joined the Army in 1993 at age 29. “He blossomed when he joined the service. It was his true love,” his mother Rita Spino said. At first, he was a medic. Then he became a nurse, then a paratrooper and, finally, a paratrooper/nurse, trained to parachute into war-torn areas and help injured soldiers.

This was his fifth assignment, his mother said. Spino was deployed to Iraq in February 2009 and was re-missioned to Afghanistan in November.

Col. Scott Putzier, chief of staff of the 44th Medical Command, praised Staff Sgt. Spino as a dedicated non-commissioned officer and “a hardworking, diligent airborne command medic” who was quiet, “so when he spoke, everyone listened and [we] were often caught off guard by his sense of humor.”

The 16-year veteran’s many awards included the Meritorious Service Medal, the National and Korean Defense Service Medals, the Afghanistan and Iraqi Campaign Medals, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service Medals, the Non-Article 5 Medal for service with NATO in support of the International Security Assistance Force, the Parachutist and Combat Action Badges, the Bronze Star for valor and the Purple Heart.

Army Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Spino was the 47th service member with ties to Connecticut to die in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002. Survivors include his wife, who is also in the military, and stepdaughter in North Carolina, his parents, and his brothers and sister.

*By Christine Dempsey, Courant Staff Writer  
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*Photograph and additional information courtesy of the U.S. Army, XVIII Airborne Corps Public Affairs Office, Fort Bragg, N.C.*





### **Marine Lance Corporal Tyler O. Griffin**

Marine Lance Corporal Tyler O. Griffin of Voluntown died April 1, 2010 while supporting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan. He was 19 years old.

Griffin, a 2008 graduate of Griswold High School, was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force based at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He had been a Marine for 18 months and was stationed in Afghanistan for about 30 days before he was killed.

Teachers and students at Griswold High remembered Griffin as an energetic, enthusiastic and respectful student and peer whose primary goal in life was to be a Marine.

As a freshman, instead of asking Principal Mark Frizzell, a 30-year veteran of the Marines, for advice on whether to join the Corps, Griffin flat out said he would serve. "He had the mindset even before he joined. There were no second thoughts," Frizzell said. "He didn't ask me, he told me."

Griffin's neighbor, Bill Martin, recalled him as a "good kid" who would always wave when he went running around the neighborhood to prepare for basic training.

Wendy Vachon, a church youth leader, remembered Griffin as a vivacious young man with an infectious smile, healthy sense of humor and always a kind word to share. She also noted that his loyalty to his country was evident from an early age.

Echoing that observation, Col. Paul Kennedy, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Marine Regiment, said in a written statement that Lance Cpl. Griffin "will be forever remembered by this Regiment for his warrior spirit and devotion to defending his country."

Griffin was the son of Susan Perry Wilding and Brian Griffin, who predeceased him, and John Wilding. Survivors also include his sister and stepsister.

Marine Lance Cpl. Tyler O. Griffin was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, and was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. He was the 48th service member with ties to Connecticut to die in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002.

*Information used from The Day, Copyright 2010, with permission.*

*Additional information courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps, 2nd Marine Regiment, "Tarawa Times," April 2010, and The Globe (Camp Lejeune)*

*Photograph courtesy of the Office of the State Comptroller*



### **Army Staff Sergeant Edwin Rivera**

Army Staff Sergeant Edwin Rivera, of Waterford, died May 25, 2010, as a result of wounds sustained when enemy forces attacked his unit on May 20 in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. He was 28 years old.

A member of the Connecticut National Guard, Staff Sgt. Rivera was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment, based in Norwalk. He was serving on his second tour of duty in Afghanistan as part of the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Mountain, with a mission to assist, train and mentor Afghan army, police and border police forces. He had previously served an extended 15 month tour in 2006 and 2007.

Staff Sgt. Rivera was a 2000 graduate of Waterford High School and was a security guard at the Millstone nuclear power plant in Waterford.

Before his second deployment, he told his mother, Gladys Rivera, it was the sad faces of the children that he had seen in Afghanistan during his first tour, which reminded him of why American soldiers were there.

“When the U.S. soldiers drive by,” Rivera told his mother, “the children will scramble like mad in the dust just to get thrown a simple pencil from us. They don’t even have pencils. I was born for this; it’s my duty, to protect those families over there.”

Maj. Gen. Thaddeus J. Martin, Adjutant General and Commander of the Connecticut National Guard said, “The loss of Staff Sgt. Rivera, so close to the traditional Memorial Day weekend serves as a painful reminder to all of us, of the sacrifices young American heroes and their families are called upon to make on our behalf. For what Staff Sgt. Rivera has done in service to his state and nation makes him well deserving of the term hero.”

Army Staff Sgt. Edwin Rivera was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He is survived by his wife, his two sons, his parents and his sisters. He was the 49th service member with ties to Connecticut to die in service to his country in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2002.

*By Rinker Buck, Courant Staff Writer  
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*Photograph and additional information courtesy of the Connecticut National Guard, Public Affairs Office.*

*In Memory of*

John A. Chapman

Phillip A. Jordan

Kemaphoom Chanawongse

Wilfredo Perez, Jr.

Richard Selden Eaton, Jr.

David Travis Friedrich

Anthony D'Agostino

Phillip R. Albert

Jeffrey Braun

Eric Thomas Paliwoda

Benjamin Gilman

Tyanna Avery-Felder

Felix Delgreco

Nathan B. Bruckenthal

Melissa Hobart

Jacob D. Martir

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
March 2002 – September 2004\**

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\* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2004 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

***In Memory of***

William Brennan

Kevin J. Dempsey

Joseph Michael Nolan

Michael J. McMahon

Henry E. Irizarry

Robert Hoyt

Thomas E. Vitagliano

Lawrence R. Philippon

John T. Schmidt, III

Christopher Hoskins

Steve Reich

David Coullard

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
October 2004 – October 2005\**

---

\* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2005 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

***In Memory of***

Brian S. Letendre

Stephen Bixler

Jordan C. Pierson

Philip A. Johnson

Nicholas A. Madaras

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
November 2005 – September 2006\**

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\* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2006 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

***In Memory of***

Jason Hamill

Joseph E. Phaneuf, II

Richard L. Ford

Stephen K. Richardson

Keith Heidtman

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
November 2006 – May 2007\**

---

\* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2007 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

***In Memory of***

Andre Craig, Jr.

Jason D. Lewis

Jason Lantieri

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
June 2007 – April 2008\**

---

\* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2008 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual.*

***In Memory of***

Christian S. Cotner

Thomas J. Brown

*Service members from Connecticut lost in  
Afghanistan and Iraq,  
May 2008 – May 2009\**

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\* *Biographical sketches for the service members listed above were published in the 2009 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual*