

**A VERY SPECIAL
MEMORIAL DAY ISSUE
DEDICATED TO OUR
GOLD STAR MOTHERS**





Honoring Gold Star Mothers



SoldiersAngels.org



The following pages are dedicated to some of our members who are Gold Star Mothers, and replied to our request to tell their child's story.

We honor those whose Blue Star has turned to Gold

We thank them for sharing their stories with us

We say their names

We stand by our Gold Star Sisters

We will Never Forget



Luc Ichiro Yasuda
Son of Vivien Yasuda, CA30

Our hearts are filled with immense sadness upon the peaceful passing of Luc Ichiro Yasuda on Sunday, February 26, 2023. Though he left us far too soon, he will always be remembered by family and friends for the impact he had on their lives. Luc had a unique sense of humor, always willing to be the brunt of the joke to bring laughter to those who knew him.

Luc was born on September 26, 2001, in Long Beach, California and grew up in La Palma, California. He was named after legendary Los Angeles Kings player Luc Robitaille, hence the French spelling of his first name. Luc graduated from Kennedy High School, then enlisted with the United States Navy in August 2019.

His tenure with the US Navy began with bootcamp in Great Lakes, Illinois. Luc then trained at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California where he learned Arabic over the course of his first year. He then spent 6 months in San Angelo, Texas before arriving in Augusta, Georgia where he attained the rank of CTI3, Cryptologic Technician Interpretive, as part of the Navy Information Operations Command (NIOC). While in Georgia, Luc enrolled in online courses with the University of Maryland seeking a degree in Criminal Justice.

Luc will be missed dearly by his family but will remain in all our hearts and thoughts forever.



Paul J. Stock III
Son of Carla Wicks, TX 6

My son knew he wanted to fly F-14's from his first watching of Top Gun.
He was 14 years old.

When his aptitude scores qualified for Nuclear School, he turned that down to pursue Navy training with Top Gun School in his sights. While only enlisted for several months, he began to petition the Navy for out processing to finish his college degree and return to the ranks commissioned. He was determined and constantly requested this departure for school, not awarded until 4 years served. Paul had achieved some very high awards in his first years and while away at a temporary duty station his CO and the board agreed they would let him return to college after only serving 2 years. He was to be given his signed paperwork upon return to his permanent duty station. He never knew that all he dreamed about and persevered to accomplish was about to be achieved because the night before his flight he was killed in a vehicular accident where the driver of the car, he was the passenger, fell asleep. These fatalities are the most difficult. I'm proud of the time he spent in the Navy and he was admired by all who knew him.



**SSgt Zachary Wood Lyon, Jr USAF
Son of Courtney Chavez, NC 17**

Zack would call me nearly every day, after BMT of course. Even when he deployed, we often talked several times a week on a video call. He used to ask me, "None of the others call as much as me, do they?" Being the second youngest of six, he was indeed the only one who stayed in touch so frequently. Seeing his name scroll across my phone announcing his call was a welcome disruption to my days. He grew up in rural western North Carolina, never shied away from adventure, and talked to anyone, never met a stranger. Zack was a kind and respectful leader, displayed impeccably good manners, and demonstrated character that others desired to achieve. I miss his beautiful soul, the sound of his voice, his handsome face, and so much more. Always in my mind, forever in my heart, eternally my son, SSgt Zachary Wood Lyon, Jr USAF.



**In Loving Memory of Private First Class (PFC) Bryan Juan-Carlos Baltierra
September 18, 2001 - July 30, 2020
Evelyn C. Baltierra, CA 30**

Private First Class (PFC) Bryan Juan-Carlos Baltierra was born on September 18, 2001, in Federal Way, Washington, to Carlos and Evelyn Baltierra. He was a beloved son and a cherished brother to his sisters, Natalie, Emily, and Sara. Bryan's warmth and strength touched everyone he met, and his bright spirit made him a pillar of love in his family.

At just 17, Bryan made a courageous decision that would define his legacy: on July 29, 2019, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, ready to answer the call to serve. Bryan celebrated his 18th birthday while enduring the challenges of boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, where he earned the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, officially becoming a U.S. Marine. After his graduation, Bryan continued his journey at the School of Infantry at Camp Pendleton, training as a rifleman (MOS 0311). On January 29, 2020, he joined the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, embarking on a path marked by honor, commitment, and sacrifice.

Despite the demands of military life, Bryan's connection with his family remained strong. He often reached out to share stories and memories, keeping his loved ones close even from afar. His dedication to his country was matched only by his devotion to those he loved.

On July 30, 2020, a year after his enlistment, Bryan participated in a training exercise aboard an amphibious assault vehicle (AAV) near San Clemente Island, preparing for his upcoming deployment. In a tragic accident, the AAV sank, claiming the lives of Bryan, seven fellow Marines, and a Navy sailor from Bravo Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

In recognition of his service and sacrifice, Bryan was honored with the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Armed Forces Service Medal. His memory endures as that of a courageous Marine who served his country with pride and an unwavering commitment to his brothers-in-arms.

PFC Bryan Juan-Carlos Baltierra's legacy is one of bravery, loyalty, and love. His spirit lives on in the hearts of his family and friends, in the brotherhood of the Marine Corps, and in all who were fortunate to know him. He is forever missed and deeply honored.



USAF MSgt. Robert (Bobby) E. Connelly, Jr.
August 20, 1980 – May 5, 2017
Son of Michelle Connelly, CA 30

Born in Anaheim, CA, Robert E. Connelly Jr. graduated high school in 1998 and embarked on a distinguished career in the United States Air Force (USAF) on January 13, 1999. Initially serving as a Security Forces Defender, he later transitioned to the elite role of a Phoenix Raven Airman. Ravens are tasked with the critical mission of detecting, deterring, and countering threats to Mobility Air Force Aircraft, performing close-in security, and ensuring flight deck denial to onboard threats.

During his deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2008 to 2009, Connelly served as a Special Operations Sniper. His mission included training Iraqi police on law enforcement operations, crime scene preservation, and patrol tactics. Connelly executed 131 combat missions, covering 3,700 miles throughout Baghdad's Rasheed district, a mission considered one of the most dangerous in Security Forces history. He notably saved the life of an insurgent injured in an IED blast, obtaining vital intelligence for future operations.

Connelly's commitment to service extended beyond the battlefield. As an Investigator at the Inspector General Office of AFSOC, he provided critical support to those suffering from PTSD. At Offutt AFB, Nebraska, as a First Sergeant, he enthusiastically advocated for the Air Force's Wounded Warrior Program. He not only supported regional CARE events but also established a Wounded Warrior Advocacy Office at his home base, embodying his ethos of hard work and a positive attitude.

Throughout his career, MSgt Connelly served at McChord AFB, WA; RAF Mildenhall, England; Cannon AFB, NM; and Offutt AFB, NE. He was a humble international humanitarian, skilled sniper, talented artist, gifted musician, entertaining radio DJ, and devoted family man with a passion for hot rods.

MSgt Robert E. Connelly Jr. passed away unexpectedly on Friday, May 5, 2017. He was preceded in death by his grandmother, Marie Williams. He is survived by his wife, Shantae; children, Savana Mae, Mickey Danger, Davin Riot, and Vida Love; parents, Robert and Michelle Connelly Sr.; sister, Amber Connelly; grandfather, Richard Williams Sr.; grandparents, Roy and Geraldine Southall; and many other loving family members and friends.



Daniel "Lucas" Elliott
Son of Patti Elliott, NC 17

Lucas was an adrenaline junkie! He loved the outdoors and hunting and fishing. He joined the Army Reserve because Mama wanted him to go to college, but he volunteered for a deployment as quickly as he could because that's what he was training to do. In a conversation three days before he was killed, he outlined his plans to get serious about college when he came back from that deployment so that he could make his dreams come true. He had decided to apply to transfer to UNC-Wilmington to major in journalism and film so he could learn all he needed about having his own outdoors show.

He was always ready for the next adventure. When he was in Iraq, he "acquired" the front grille off a military vehicle and turned it into a grill and quickly became the grillmaster for all the folks he was deployed with. On the outside, he didn't ever seem to take life or himself too seriously, but he had deep, passionate beliefs about standing up for what was right, family, God and serving and protecting.

Lucas is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Prior to his first deployment, we were attending a family briefing. One of the workshops we were in stressed the importance of having those "difficult" conversations with your service member about what their wishes were "just in case something happened." Lucas loved country music and one of his favorite songs was Trace Adkins' "Arlington." He loved the symbolism of the lyrics and the thought that he'd be in the best of company there. Of course, we never thought it would happen to us, but when it did, it was his choice where he would be buried.



Ryane Glenn Clark **Son of Tracy Clark, MN 1**

Ryane was a very active person from a very young age up until his passing. In elementary school, Ryane started Piano lessons, Cub Scouts, and Wrestling. Piano lessons ended in 10th grade, but the wrestling took him through his Sr. year in High school, taking all-conference. Ryane also stayed very active in Scouting, earning his Eagle Scout at the age of 15, and helped as an Assistant Scout Leader. One of Ryane's passions was to help and teach others whenever he could. He spent 5 summers at Many Point (a Boy Scout camp) as a Zip Line and Rock Climbing Instructor. Ryane was also in Football, Choir, and Band.

Ryane had many passions in life, but none more important than making time for his nephews, his sister, and his parents. Ryane loved the outdoors, whatever the season. He loved hunting, fishing, four-wheeling, auto racing, motorcycling, camping, snowmobiling, skiing, snowboarding, swimming, water tubing, and video games.

At the age of 5, Ryane knew what he wanted to do when he grew up, talking about the Military every chance that he could, making goals that would carry him towards his dream. After graduating in 2007 from High School, he continued his education at Alexandria Technical College in Law Enforcement and graduated in May of 2009. In June of 2008, he joined the Alexandria National Guard. After graduating from College, Ryane went full time Army and reported to Fort Leonardwood in May for Basic Training and AIT. On Oct. 1st, 2009, Ryane was stationed at Fort. Bragg and had orders to leave for Afghanistan in December 2009.

As the Soldiers from his unit have said, Ryane loved his country and wanted to do what he could to protect and defend our families. Life in a Sapper company like the 57th isn't always easy, but Ryane seemed to thrive, earn respect from both peers and leaders as they executed route clearance operations in Wardak and Gazni provinces. Ryane was the Soldier who carried the heaviest equipment, volunteered for the most difficult jobs on the battlefield and always did his part to ensure his platoon was successful. "We called him Clarence, we called him the Beast, we called him the Crimson Chin with the 100-mile smile".

Ryane is loved by his family and friends, and his fun sense of humor is so missed. Ryane loved life and had a big heart that matched his smile. Ryane was a very determined, organized, and goal-oriented person. We always told him, "You will make a great husband and dad someday". Being a Soldier made him very proud and a great man that he had become. Ryane told us before he had passed on, "I am where I need to be and I love what I am doing".

Joey Martens Lenz
11/16/89-2/1/22
Son of Margie Taylor, TX 18



My son, Specialist Joey Martens Lenz, 32, lost his life while actively serving at Fort Hood, Texas in the United States Army. Joey took the oath twice to serve our country and unfortunately, he died before he could complete his commitment. As his mother it is my mission to complete his oath as long as it takes. My purpose is to make our country a better place in honor of Joey and his military career, so that anyone who knows me, will know my son, Joey Lenz.

He enlisted in the Army on September 18, 2017, completed Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina on December 4, 2017, and Advanced Individual Training as a 91D Generator Mechanic at Fort Lee, Virginia on March 7, 2018. He deployed to the Republic of Korea from October 2019 through February 2021 where he served as a Tactical Power Generator Specialist. As a generator mechanic he received many accolades including the National Defense Service Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

Joey was always making people laugh. He was known as the life of any party or group gathering. His fellow soldiers and friends back home always enjoyed hearing the antics of Joey. He made them feel good about themselves. He was a kind soul that always made sure stray dogs and cats were fed. He even kept a supply of food in his car to take care of strays when he came upon them. All he wanted in his life were kids, a cat, and a dog. He was kind, compassionate, and caring. Joey was a mama's boy and he knew his mother would always assist him out of any bad decision he made- but not without sound advice, support, and love. Joey was devoted to a career in the Army and re-enlisted prior to his death. This changed when he was confronted with a toxic leadership.

On February 1, 2022, SPC Lenz tragically passed away while sleeping in his barracks at Fort Cavazos. Several indicators contributed to his death including a toxic and hostile leadership, prescription drug interaction (serotonin syndrome), depression, and anxiety. At the time of his untimely passing, SPC Lenz's heart was significantly enlarged, with his heart being 3x the normal size. This medical issue was previously noted in a lab report done on March 17, 2021, almost a full year prior to his death, while he was being treated in the ICU at Darnell Army Medical Center. The Army medical staff failed to share this finding with SPC Lenz at that time, and no follow up on his enlarged heart was ever done prior to his death. SPC Lenz was also prescribed medications for his mental health conditions that have known side effects for individuals with heart issues that should not have been provided to him after the issue with his heart was noted by medical providers. SPC Lenz's death was preventable and medical intervention, counseling on medications, and/or follow up that should have been done after his heart condition was noted in March 2021 could have saved his life.

H.R. 1014, The SPC Joey Lenz Act of 2025 is currently in the House Armed Services Committee sponsored by Congressman Morgan Luttrell to ensure members of the armed forces receive annual periodic health assessments that require electrocardiograms, blood work, and a sports physical. Our active military have not had in person physicals (unless a higher ranked officer or specific Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) since 2016. Most active military do online assessments. The Specialist Joey Lenz Act of 2025 will help ensure the health and well-being of our military and accountability in military medicine, and undoubtedly safe lives of our service members by preventing deaths like my son's from occurring in the future.

Joey made smiles wider and laughs louder. He was loved by family, friends, and soldiers. He made our life better!



**PFC Bryan C. Lounsbury- deployed to heaven 1/21/2008
Son of Karen Lounsbury NH 1**

HHT 4-9 CAV

PFC Bryan C Lounsbury, was born in Germany on May 18, 1989. He attended Tobin School in Cambridge and graduated from Minuteman Regional Technical School in Lexington, MA with the class of 2007. PFC Lounsbury was a member of the Noth Cambridge Little Baseball League and Pop Warner football. He was active in the Hanscom Civil Air Patrol. He earned the Mitchell Award allowing him to enter the Army as a PFC.

PFC Lounsbury enlisted in the Army on June 26, 2007, as a Cavalry Scout. After completion of One Unit Station Unit training at Fort Knox Kentucky, he was assigned to the 4 th squadron 9 th cavalry Regiment at Fort Hood Texas. Where he served in support of the squadron's redeployment from Operation Iraqi Freedom and was an integral part of the dismantling of thr Rear Detachment headquarters as well as the reestablishment of the new squadron footprint. He was the chosen above all the other rear detachment soldiers for a special duty at the Fort Hood Tax Center.

PFC Lounsbury died on Jan 21, 2008 in an accident, while stationed at Fort Hood Texas.

PFC Lounsbury's awards include the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medan and the Army Service Ribbon.



**Trish Slape, NC18 proud mother of:
SGT James Slape
NCARNG
KIA 10/4/2018
Helmand Province, Afghanistan**

Jimmy began his service to country early in his life as a member of both the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts of America. He continued down this path of dedication by participating in the NJROTC Program in high school. He joined the NCARNG his senior year of high school, then qualified for and completed the rigorous EOD training at Eglin AFB in 2015.

Jimmy loved life and he loved his friends and family. He was passionate about many things throughout his life. Many a day he would take off to the beach with guitar in hand or a surfboard or maybe just to spend time with friends. He loved sports and lettered in both Cross Country and Wrestling while attending West Carteret High School. Jimmy had a love of God and attended several different churches in Morehead City and while he was training at Fort Jackson and Eglin AFB.

He received the following commendations for his heroic dedication to our country: Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal w/ Bronze Service Star, North Carolina Commendation Medal, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Badge, amongst others.



Army Spc. Thomas Johnson
Son of Mary Johnson, MN 7

Tom was born on March 10, 1987. He enlisted in the Army in 2006. His first MOS was Fire Support Specialist, he was with the 101st and had a 15 month deployment to a small FOB in northern Iraq from 2008-2009. He re-upped and said to me, "Mom, I've been thinking about what you said. I should have the Army train me for a job when I'm out of the Army". (It took three years for him to figure that out!)

He changed his MOS to Food Inspector. He was then deployed to Guantanamo Bay for 18 months. His last duty station was the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. He died July 10, 2013.

Tom loved sports. He arranged his leaves to come home for the Minnesota Twins and Vikings games.

He is deeply missed.

Capt. John J Sax Son of Debbie Sax, CA 7



John and his grandma



My son was born a flyer. John would pick up a toy car and pretend it was flying through the air. His first flying lesson happened when he was 8 years old when a dear friend, and ex Naval Pilot, Rich Ward, took him up in his rebuilt "Yak." It was confirmed from that point, my son was born to soar. We spent every year, after that, camping at the Reno Air Races, right outside the Pit area. For 3 to 4 days every moment was all about planes, from talking to the pilots, watching the races and discovering the "Static Area" of where the military planes were held. He absorbed it all. John graduated from Embry Riddle with a Bachelors in Aeronautical Science. While he awaited a flight contract, he received his flight instructor certification and worked for two years before he took his oath and headed off to OCS. When he graduated from OCS he secured a flight contract and flew jets. John excelled in every aspect of his career and took on every task with exuberance. Of course, he was most happy when he was in the air. He made the transition from fixed wing to rotors and never looked back. John loved flying the Osprey and working with a crew. The last relocation base for him was at Camp Pendleton and I was thrilled. To have my children on the same coast for the first time in 7 years was a gift. John flew with the world famous Purple Fox Squadron. John loved flying and loved being a Marine. John lived a whole life in his short 33 years. In our hearts his bright smile will never fade.

Yet nothing can fully prepare you for what happens next.

The tragedy on June 8 that took my son's life along with 4 other Marines was termed an unprecedented Catastrophic 3 system failure. Our world will never be the same. From speaking and sharing with the families who were involved, our sons sounded like they were so similar and would have been lifelong friends. We are now a part of a club no one wants to join. I remember when I signed up for the Blue Star Moms, I noticed on their web site there was mention of the Gold Star Moms. I remember asking John how I attained that, thinking it was task related and support for our troops. When he explained I told him most emphatically that I NEVER want to be in that group. Yet here I am. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all the Blue Star Moms and for walking along side us as we navigate through the heartbreak. Where would we be without you?

Say their names....

Capt. Nicholas P. Losapio

Capt. John J. Sax

Cpl Nathan E. Carlson

Cpl Seth D. Rasmuson

LCpl Evan A. Strickland



Glenn Douglas Bearson III
TSGT USAF
10/28/84 - 01/18/13
Proud mom: Jeanne Bearson, MN 13



Spc David W Taylor
KIA 29 March, 2012 Kandahar Afg
Operation Enduring Freedom
2/508 PIR 82nd Airborne Division
Son of Sarah Taylor, TN 3

David's focus since age 13 was to serve in our military. His passion to serve others and love of this country were evident by his actions. He always made an extra effort to thank a Veteran, always volunteering to help others and being a friend to anyone in need. David was a rowdy country kid who loved to hunt, ride 4wheelers and drive big trucks. He excelled in his academics, in sports and was a natural leader. He tested out and gave up his senior year in high school to enter the Army. David was witty and kept everyone laughing with his little comments and jokes. He was an all-around great kid, brought joy to the world and is greatly missed by so many. Even in death, David still inspires us to be courageous, smile a lot and be our best every day.



SGT GABRIEL GLENN DEROO

4-1-1981 to 8-20-2006

U.S. ARMY OIF

**Gabriel served with A Co. 2nd Battalion, 3rd Inf., 3rd Brigade, 2 Inf. Div.
Fort Lewis, WA**

Son of Laura De Roo, MI 179

Gabriel was a wonderful young man that loved the Lord Jesus Christ and lived to serve both the Lord and the United States of America. Gabriel lived life to the fullest and always at full throttle. A friendly game of softball became the world series, a touch football game was the Super Bowl. Gabriel was driven to be the best he could be in all things, whether it was work, play or relationships. Gabriel had a great sense of humor and a way of listen to you that made you, at that moment, the center of his world. Family was very important to who he was. Gabriel left behind a wife and son, father, mother, and four sisters.



**PFC Andrew S Westfallen
Illinois Army National Guard
Woodstock, Illinois Armory
Infantry Unit
Delta Company 1-178
May 03, 2020
Robyn Carpenter, WI2**

Andrew had an amazing love of adventure and zest for life. He is the third of four children, but the oldest son. He was the first to enter the National Guard, followed by his older sister and then his younger brother. His oldest sister stayed by my side cheering and supporting them. Andrew followed in the military footsteps of two of his maternal Great Grandfathers, maternal Great Grandmother, and his paternal Grandfather, plus many great uncles. Andrew always had a smile on his face, a hand to offer to a friend or neighbor, and a generous soul.



Captain Kevin Norman, US Army
Date of death 08-12-2003
Proud Mother, Laura Norman Northern CA
Proud Sister, Colleen Marchi

Captain Kevin Norman was a driven person even from a young age. He graduated from West Point in 1996 and became a pilot. He married his classmate and fellow Army Aviator, Brandi Bult. Kevin switched to fixed wing to fly the C-12 Huron. Kevin and Brandi were deployed to South Korea when his accident happened. He and Chief Warrant Officer Dave Snow were on a maintenance check flight when tragedy struck. Their aircraft began to go down and they steered the airplane away from an apartment complex and crowded restaurant in Seoul, South Korea to save civilians lives. Their last actions on earth were to save people they had never met, in a country that was not their own. Both were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their exceptional heroic actions and extraordinary flying achievement. While Kevin's death has left an enormous void in all our lives, his last actions were one of selfless service to others.

We honor and remember these two men's courage everyday.



**PO1 Matthew Grant Owens Rabe
U.S. NAVY
June 13, 1991 - May 3, 2022**

Proud USAF Veteran Mother, MSGT Connie F. Owens, CA 33

*I think the saddest day
That someone ever told
When someone tells a mother
That her blue star turned to gold.*

*Her head goes up so proudly
While her heart within her dies
She may be choked with sorrow
But she never cries.*

*She waited for days on end
For the war to pass
When she could see her child again
And hold them close at last.*

*Now, the news has come
In words so bleak and cold
Which tells her what she fears;
Her blue star has turned to gold.*