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OUR OPINION

Yates' memory lives on with lounge, scholarships

Feb 11, 2022

First Lt. Eric D. Yates dedicated his life to this country he loved so much, and in the end he gave his life for it.

While Yates is no longer amongst us, his memory deserves to live on forever and we believe with past and recent announcements that it will.

Yates, a 2008 Western Kentucky University graduate, was killed in action while serving in Afghanistan on Sept. 18, 2010.

He was 26 years old.

His funeral that year was so large that the family had to extend it for another day to accommodate all those who came to give their final respects. It's worth noting some of these visiting his funeral didn't even know Yates but were drawn to his life and story.

This is very telling about the man.

People had the utmost respect for Yates as a man and as someone who fought bravely on the battlefield far away and ultimately paid the highest price for it.

It was fitting after he was killed in action that a scholarship was started in his name that to date has granted 21 awards of \$3,000 each to support WKU Army ROTC cadets in their studies.



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It has to make Yates' family very proud in knowing that past and future WKU ROTC cadets will use this scholarship in his name to help with their studies and like Yates join the military after graduation and do great things with their lives.

To honor his life even further, a ribbon-cutting was held Feb. 1 as the ROTC program's newly renovated lounge at WKU's E.A. Diddle Area was renamed in his honor.

Speaking to students and ROTC program staff there, Yates' mother, Kathy Yates, hoped to convey who her son was and how much WKU meant to him.

From those who were at the event and who covered it, we were told that she did a very admirable job of telling those present about her son's life, his love for WKU and his love of our country.

To top off the event, Kathy Yates received an American flag assembled from the staves of a Woodford Reserve bourbon barrel, which was Eric Yates' favorite bourbon.

The flag was created by Cruise Customs, and business co-owner Chris Cruise said he initially offered to donate the flag when Kathy Yates ordered one specifically for the new student lounge in the WKU ROTC offices. However, she wanted to personally commission it as a way of honoring her son.

These were all very appropriate ways to honor the life of a true patriot. We believe he is looking down from Heaven with much joy seeing that his life and sacrifice are being remembered in this most fitting way.

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