

South Central District Office
500 N. Hendricks
Hutchinson, KS 67504-0769



phone: 620-663-3361
fax: 620-663-1804
www.ksdot.org

Julie Lorenz, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

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For more information: Tim Potter

620-860-7389; mobile: 620-727-2278; Tim.Potter@ks.gov

Ceremony for Sgt. Evan S. Parker Memorial Highway to be held

A ceremony to dedicate the Sgt. Evan S. Parker Memorial Highway along U.S. 166 will be held on Aug. 6 at South Haven, Sgt. Parker's hometown.

The ceremony, organized by Sgt. Parker's mother, Anita Faye Dixon, will take place at 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, at South Haven Community Church, 314 Main. The public is invited.

The stretch of highway named in his honor is on U.S. 166, soon to be designated with a sign just east of the junction with U.S. 81, at South Haven, and another sign just west of Arkansas City. State Rep. Bill Rhiley, Wellington, sought the legislation authorizing the signs to be installed by the Kansas Department of Transportation.

Sgt. Parker was assigned to the Army's 1st Battalion 487th Field Artillery. He died from wounds received from an improvised explosive during an ambush while on patrol in Balad, Iraq, in October 2005.

With the Army's help, his family was able to be with him at a hospital in Germany when he was removed from life support. "That was a wonderful gift that they gave to us," his mother said of the Army's assistance.

Later, in the National Gold Star Family Registry dedicated to fallen soldiers, his mother remembered his passing this way: "I know in my heart my son waited for me to get there. I kissed his freckled face, roughed his blond hair and removed him from the ventilator. I promised him: 1. He would never be forgotten. 2. He would always be remembered and 3. His name would always be spoken."

He was 25, survived by his parents, brothers and sons.

Sgt. Parker was the recipient of the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts. He had been previously wounded while serving in Iraq.

He had graduated from high school in South Haven, where he competed in football, basketball and track. He attended Cowley College.

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