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Sign honors Hays native killed in Afghanistan

A highway sign honoring the memory of a Hays native killed in an August 2011 helicopter crash in Afghanistan was unveiled by his family and others today during a ceremony in his hometown.

The sign honors Bryan J. Nichols and will be installed near the junction of Interstate 70 and U.S. 183 at Hays. Earlier this year, the Kansas Legislature passed legislation designating the junction as the "CW2 Bryan J. Nichols Fallen Veterans Memorial Interchange".

Nichols, a member of the Army's 7-158th Aviation Regiment, was piloting a Chinook helicopter on Aug. 6, 2011, when it was shot down in eastern Afghanistan. On board with Nichols were 22 Navy SEALs, three Air Force Special Operations personnel and four other crew members. It was the deadliest single loss for U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

The legislation to name the interchange was introduced earlier this year by Sen. Allen Schmidt of Hays. By state law, funds to pay for construction and installation of the signs, as well as future maintenance costs, must come from donations. The cost of two signs to be placed on U.S. 183, maintenance included, is \$3,450. Plans are to eventually install two more signs on I-70.

Speaking at today's event were Nichols father, Doug Nichols, Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer, Sen. Schmidt and Kansas Transportation Secretary Mike King. Nichols' son, Braydon, helped unveil the sign.

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