



State of Illinois
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For Immediate Publication
Friday, April 14, 2006

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Letter-to-the-Editor
by Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn
(397 words; electronic version available)

REMEMBER OUR WOUNDED HEROES THIS EASTER SEASON

Dear Editor,

On December 22, 2004 – three days before Christmas – Marine CPL Tyler (Ty) Ziegel of Metamora, Illinois was horribly injured in Iraq when a suicide bomber detonated a car full of explosives. Two days later, on Christmas Eve, his parents Jeff and Becky Ziegel, his brother Zachary Ziegel, and his fiancé Renee Kline were flown, for free, to his bedside at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

As CPL Ziegel recovered from injuries that included third degree burns over his face, head and arms, a broken jaw, and shrapnel to the brain, his family was there. Although he suffered the loss of most of his nose, both ears, and vision in his right eye, they were there. When his left hand and three fingers on his right hand were amputated, they were right by his side. After nearly 30 surgeries, Lance CPL Ziegel is credited with a miraculous recovery, no doubt due to his family's support.

And it was made possible by the Hero Miles program. The Hero Miles program gives military families free airline tickets to visit loved ones who are recovering in military hospitals from injuries received while on duty. Fisher House has helped secure free round-trip airline accommodations for more than 20 Illinois families like the Ziegels so they could be at their loved one's bedside as they recover.

Although some of those free airline tickets come from the nation's top airline carriers, the majority of those tickets are donated by people like you and me. Here on the homefront, people across the nation want to recognize the sacrifices of the brave men and women who have served their country and are now recovering from their injuries far from home.

During this Easter and Passover season, as we gather with our families to celebrate this joyous time, let's thank our wounded heroes for their service by helping to reunite them with their families.

I encourage every Illinois citizen to consider donating some of your frequent flyer miles to the Hero Miles Program.

The Hero Miles program is administered by the Fisher House Foundation, a not-for-profit group that is a "home away from home" for military families whose loved ones are receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers. For more information on how you can donate your frequent flyer miles, visit www.OperationHomefront.org. Let's remember our military heroes – our real heroes – today.

Sincerely,

Pat Quinn
Illinois Lieutenant Governor