

# **New Bedford's Fort Taber Flag to honor PFC W. Becket Kiernan Five Years After His Death**

During the month of February, the 42nd Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory of PFC W. Becket Kiernan who died at the age of 18, on February 5, 2018, while attending training at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms in California.

As the five-year anniversary of Kiernan's death approaches, a fundraising event has been arranged which will take place on Feb. 19, from 7 pm – 12 am at the Galactic Theatre, 440 Main St., Warren RI. All proceeds will go towards a memorial project in Becket's name. For more information, you can contact [raynsrevolver@gmail.com](mailto:raynsrevolver@gmail.com)

**Please Join Us For A Benefit  
To Honor**

# **USMC PFC BECKET W. KIERNAN**

**FEBRUARY 19TH 2023**

**7PM -12AM**

**JOIN US FOR A NIGHT OF LIVE MUSIC WITH LOCAL ARTISTS!**

★ **KAIYA HOPE** ★ **CASSIE LEE** ★ **SASQUATCH** ★

**GALACTIC THEATRE 440 MAIN ST. WARREN RI 02885**

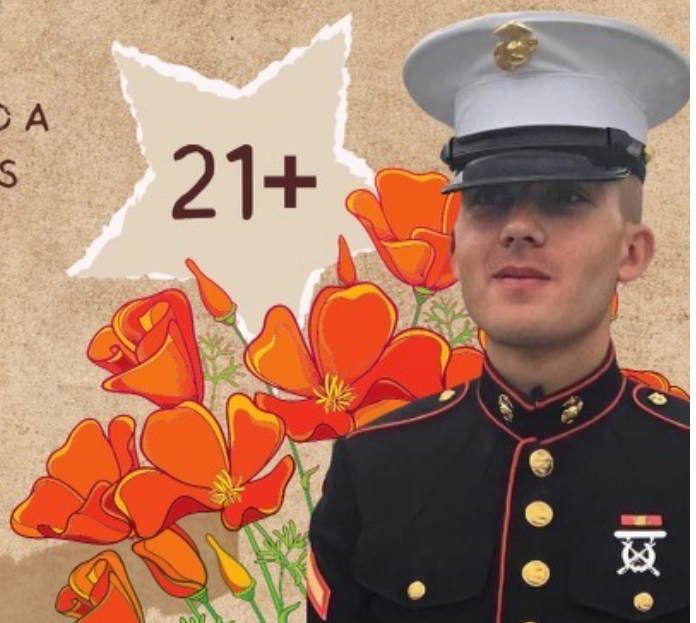
**THREE RAFFLES WITH  
HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS IN  
PRIZES!  
\$1 A TICKET!**

**TSHIRTS. STICKERS,  
AND BUTTONS FOR SALE!**

**ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TOWARD A  
MEMORIAL PROJECT IN BECKET'S  
NAME. IN HIS HOME TOWN OF  
ROCHESTER MA!**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A  
DONATION PLEASE CONTACT:  
RAYNSREVOLVER@GMAIL.COM  
@RAYNS\_REVOLVER**

**21+**



Kiernan was born in Wareham and resided in Rochester where he attended Rochester Memorial School and Old Rochester Regional High School.

According to his family, Becket dreamed of becoming a U.S. Marine at an early age and enrolled in the Fall River Young Marines Program at the age of ten. According to their website, this “premier, award-winning program” helps kids from ages eight to eighteen learn the values of “self-confidence, academic achievement, honoring our veterans, good citizenship, community service, and living a healthy, drug-free lifestyle,”.

Becket served in the Young Marines over the course of seven years, working his way from Recruit to the rank of SgtMaj of the New England Regiment. As a leader in the Young Marines, he earned several awards including Unit Young Marine of the Year, Battalion Young Marine of the Year, the Young Marines Achievement Award, a Marine Corps League Commendation, and a Personal Commendation Award from the National Executive Director of the Young Marines Program. According to Frank Andrade, Unit Commander, Kiernan distinguished himself by earning the highest rank one can obtain in the organization.

His family and friends describe him as brilliant, humble, kind, inquisitive, and funny with an infectious laugh, but above all, driven, determined, and focused to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a Marine.

Many people shared their impression of Becket with the Standard-Times in previous articles including, Camryn Melo, a 16-year-old member of the Young Marines described Becket as “a great leader, mentor” who “wanted everyone to be the best they could be. It was an honor to be with him.” Jay Travis, a 13-year-old member said, “He was honest. He was trustworthy. He was one of the greatest people I knew.”

Michael Hoar, a retired Fall River police officer, Army veteran, and Executive Officer of the Young Marines describes Becket as “destined for greatness” and “a born leader, wise beyond his years,” while Patrick McMahon, Regimental Commander of the Young Marines, stated “The world is a lesser place

without him. I'm a better person for having had him around me. He was challenging and inquisitive."

Kiernan not only excelled with the Young Marines, but he also excelled academically in school. He was a member of the National Honor Society and an Advanced Placement student. As a Senior at ORR, he was awarded the "Unsung Hero Award" and the "Best Laugh Award" which demonstrates his selfless character as well as his humor. Under Kiernan's student profile, he acknowledged how the Young Marines made him a better person and urged his peers to pursue a rewarding field. He wrote, "Do something that, when you look back on life, you will feel fulfilled. Don't chase money, do something that makes you happy and don't stop working until you get there."

His mother, Lynda Kiernan, describes her son as a "scholar-warrior." She explained that Becket was a brilliant writer and avid reader who especially enjoyed reading about military history, "from the art of war to pieces written about every conflict and war throughout history, and pieces written by contemporary Marines – he absorbed it all."

Many people described Becket as a natural leader. "He personally cared about the well-being, safety and advancement of hundreds of Young Marines," under his leadership, his mother explained. "One of his greatest gifts was his ability to make people see the good and the great potential in themselves. He inspired people. He made people believe in themselves."

As a leader, Becket organized yearly Toys for Tots campaigns, collecting more than 1,000 toys for disadvantaged children. He also participated in countless community events over the years and served as the Color Sergeant for the Color Guard of the Young Marines Unit in Fall River.

Lynda Kiernan explained that her son, Becket struggled with whether to enlist in the infantry for the U.S. Marine Corps or

go through Officer Candidate School and become an officer. "But he was adamant. He wanted to enlist as infantry," telling her that he felt "he couldn't be the most effective leader unless he walked in the shoes of those he was leading."

Becket shipped out for basic training on September 5, 2017, attending Boot Camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina. He completed his basic training on November 22, 2017.

He then went on to Marine Combat Training in North Carolina before shipping out to Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School of the Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms in California. His military occupational specialty or MOS was Communications. He was training to become a Radio Field Operator.

W. Becket Kiernan died on Feb. 5, 2018, from a bacterial infection, a life cut short for a young man who had already accomplished so much in his life.

Today a huge mural and plaque hang on a wall at Old Rochester Regional High School in Becket's memory and his Class A uniform is on display aboard the USS Massachusetts. Mike Devoll, ORR Principal, is quoted as saying, "I've never met a student who entered Old Rochester with such a focus, determination, and conviction for what was important to him and what he wanted. He was fulfilling a lifelong dream."

"He truly lived the tenants of selfless leadership, generosity of spirit, loyalty, honor, character, and service," explained his mom. While U.S. Representative William Keating summed it up by saying, "He was a Marine long before he was a Marine."

Becket is survived by his mother, Lynda Kiernan, of Dartmouth, and his two sisters Meagan Kiernan, of Peabody, and Mallory Kiernan of Dartmouth.

Since Kiernan died just 8 hours after a diagnosis of

necrotizing fasciitis, after multiple attempts to seek medical help over several days, Lynda Kiernan filed inquiries with congressional representative and according to the Military Times, “learned that because PFC William Becket Kiernan was a Marine, the Navy doctors who failed to diagnose his condition would face no repercussions.”

According to the Metro West Daily News, James LaPorta, a Marine Corps veteran and award-winning journalist, conducted a 7-month investigation into Becket’s death. He concluded that there were “institutional failures with the Marine Corps and US. Navy medicine.”

Mrs. Kiernan met General James Mattis, the former Secretary of Defense at a ceremony honoring the work of Mr. LaPorta at Marine Base Quantico. General Mattis had ordered the Inspector General of the Marine Corps to conduct an investigation into her son Becket’s death. However, Kiernan received a letter stating that she “would not receive the results of the investigation, due to a federal law that prohibits the military from disclosing the fruits of the investigation to anyone, or any organization outside the Department of Defense,” as reported by the Metro West Daily news.

Now Lynda Kiernan’s focus has switched to changing the law. She along with other Gold Star families are lobbying legislators to enact the SFC Richard Stayskal Military Medical Accountability Act of 2019 which would amend the current law. “That would provide our military personnel with the medical care that you and I take for granted,” Mrs. Kiernan commented. “We have accountability in our medical system and the people who are serving us don’t.”

Mrs. Kiernan is also a founding member of a non-profit organization called Save Our Service Members (SOS), which according to their website, “advocates for victims of military medical malpractice and negligence.” Kiernan urges the public to learn more about SOS and support service members by going



to [SaveOurServicemembers.org](http://SaveOurServicemembers.org).

Linda Ferreira, of **Empire Ford of New Bedford**, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford of New Bedford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran in the future can contact Ferreira at [lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com](mailto:lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com).