

pigmentosa, and Ushers syndrome belonged to a group of diseases that were underrepresented and under-funded. It was clear that if there was any hope for finding a cure, funding was needed. In 1990, the Hardages established the Vision of Children Foundation (VOC), with a mission to cure hereditary childhood blindness and vision disorders, and to improve the quality of life of visually impaired individuals and their families. It is the only international, non-profit foundation that funds genetic vision research into ocular albinism and connects affected families all over the world.

Until there is a cure, the VOC works hard to provide educational support and services. Families of the visually impaired often feel isolated and confused, and need support to face day-to-day life. The VOC believes communication between families, educators, healthcare professionals, and researchers who care for these children is critical, and the VOC does all that it can to facilitate the process. The Foundation maintains a worldwide Family Network that provides information and support via constant communication, a biannual newsletter, and an informative Web site. Joining the Family Network enables parents to contact other families who face similar challenges in their geographic region to offer support, and share experiences and local resources and programs. Hundreds of families around the world belong to the VOC Family Network.

The VOC strives to enable thousands of children to have a clear image of the world around them. The foundation continues to gather and share information and tools available to ease the daily challenges that the visually impaired face. For example, VOC developed a computer monitor system designed to accommodate students and adults with low vision. This system works to alleviate the stress and strain that individuals with low vision face when using computer technology. The Foundation donates monitor systems to schools and individuals nationwide.

VOC also partners with book publishers to provide educational books to eye clinics, schools, libraries, doctors' offices, and families, such as the illustrated storybook, "All Children Have Different Eyes." These books help to raise awareness, reduce emotional stress, develop social competencies, improve academic performance, and increase confidence in low vision children.

These efforts to provide support, education and needed assistive resources to children diagnosed with OA have enabled Chase and many others like him to have a more normal and functional life. Chase played varsity football on a championship team and was his high school's first CIF wrestling champion in 28 years. Today, he is a sophomore studying business at Southern Methodist University.

To foster scientific communication and collaboration, VOC hosts a biennial World Symposium on Ocular Albinism and genetic vision disorders. In this forum, the Foundation brings together top vision and genetic eye researchers from around the globe to present and discuss the latest discoveries and research efforts involving OA and related genetic conditions.

This year's World Symposium theme: "Understanding the Pathway—Discovering a Cure" was reflected in each of the presentations. The symposium was highly successful, with researchers agreeing to openly discuss

their latest discoveries and research efforts. Updated results from the successful recent human gene therapy trials provide continued hope for a cure. One of the most important outcomes of the symposium resulted in the formation of an informal, web-based forum for attendees to continue the collaborative relationships that were formed. The Vision of Children Foundation is a leader in fostering these kinds of relationships and helping move science forward.

For eighteen years, the Vision of Children Foundation has been a driving force in the worldwide quest for a cure for genetically caused childhood blindness. Progress and problems are discussed on a regular basis as VOC researchers gather for an invitation only Symposium sponsored by the Vision of Children Foundation. In October 2006, Dr. James Bainbridge of Moorfields Eye Hospital in London attended VOC's European Symposium and described his lab's plan for a human gene therapy trial to cure Leber's Congenital Amaurosis. In March 2008, his team achieved the world's first successful gene therapy trial on a human. Their success was quickly followed by the University of Florida and Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, successfully restoring the vision of nine young adults who were nearly blind. These young people can now see and some can even read lines on an eye chart. All nine patients had the treatment in one eye and all have volunteered to have their other eye treated. I am told that the medical community is equating this discovery to the first heart transplant.

The Vision of Children Foundation is one of the largest sources of non-governmental funding in the world for genetically caused childhood blindness research. The urgent mission of the Vision of Children Foundation is to drive the research that will provide preventions, treatments and cures for children affected by ocular albinism and the entire spectrum of hereditary childhood blindness and vision disorders. The Foundation has invested millions of dollars to support scientific research of diseases of the retina, which cause blindness. I commend the steadfast support of and determination of the Vision of Children Foundation to eradicating genetically caused vision disorders and blindness in children.

HONORING THE LIFE OF SPECIALIST PAUL E. ANDERSEN OF SOUTH BEND

HON. JOE DONNELLY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Specialist Paul E. Andersen of the 855th Quartermaster Company based out of South Bend, Indiana, for his dedication and service to the United States of America. A 24-year-veteran of the armed forces, Paul was completing his second tour of duty in Iraq when he was killed in action on October 1, 2009, by indirect fire of enemy forces. Paul risked everything in service to America, and for that we are eternally grateful.

Paul devoted his life to serving our country. He graduated from Buchanan High School in Michigan in 1979 and enlisted in the Army Reserves in 1985. He worked to better our

armed forces, and was prepared to answer the call for duty whenever his country needed him. In 2003 that time arrived, and Paul served his first tour in Iraq.

Upon his return home, he met his beloved wife Linda at the home of a friend. They fell in love and enjoyed listening to country music, watching old movies, and savoring strawberry milkshakes together. Within months, he proposed to her. Three weeks later they were married. Linda fully appreciated and understood the commitment that Paul had to his country. Paul had recently re-enlisted for six more years of duty, but only with the consent and blessing from Linda. When he asked her how she would feel if he opted to redeploy, she told him, "Go ahead." "I knew I married an Army man," Linda said. Her love for Paul was unwavering, as she said of Paul, "He's my world, my life, my friend."

After beginning his second tour in November 2008, Paul had the honorable duty of serving his country with the 855th Quartermaster, QM, Company, from South Bend, Indiana. Paul's mission in Iraq was to provide both shower and laundry services as well as operating a clothing repair, SLCR, shop supporting Coalition forces based in 10 different locations throughout the Iraqi theater. These locations are often dangerous, but despite the adversities the 855th QM Co. successfully accomplished their SLCR mission. Services of the SLCR team provided great contributions to the welfare and morale of the Soldiers they supported. Without their support, the Soldiers would not have been able to perform their duties and accomplish their own combat missions. It was a necessary job that his family and friends admired. Linda was in constant contact with Paul, and he was even allowed to take a leave in August to celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary. Paul had recently been informed that he was due to come home November 4, 2009.

Paul will be remembered as a devoted husband, father and grandfather. As a civilian, Paul worked at a tube and bending company. He loved to tinker with machines, and was notorious among family members for going overboard on the Christmas lights every year. He lived a life full of love and joy. He is survived by his wife; three biological children; three step-children; one biological grandchild; and eight step-grandchildren.

It is my somber duty to honor and remember Paul and a life cut tragically short. I am saddened by the loss to his family, our community and our country. We were all blessed by his presence and diminished by his passing.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, on October 13, 2009, I was unable to cast votes, due to personal reasons. I was not present for roll-call votes 772 and 773. Had I been present, I would have cast a "yea" vote for final passage of H.R. 3689. Also, I would have cast a "yea" vote on final passage of H.R. 3476.