

Wing, who are returning home throughout May after a 2 month deployment overseas.

The airmen spent 2 months at Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan, flying 12 to 16 flights a day. Their day-and-night operations supported the ground troops who were fighting enemy insurgents. The work in Afghanistan was the unit's first combat deployment using A-10s. The unit flew F-16s until April 2007, including during their 4 month deployment in 2005 to Balad Air Base in Iraq.

Along with all Arkansans, I honor these servicemen and women for their bravery, and I am grateful for their service and sacrifice.

More than 11,000 Arkansans on active duty and more than 10,000 Arkansas reservists have served in Iraq or Afghanistan since September 11, 2001. It is the responsibility of our Nation to provide the tools necessary to care for our country's returning servicemembers and honor the commitment our Nation made when we sent them into harm's way. Our grateful Nation will not forget them when their military service is complete. It is the least we can do for those whom we owe so much.

REMEMBERING SENATOR CRAIG THOMAS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to remember the life of Senator Craig Thomas.

Senator Thomas passed away on June 4, 2007. On that day, the people of Wyoming lost a native son. His presence back home is still missed.

One week from tomorrow will be the third anniversary of Craig's death. A column recognizing Craig's life and the Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation will be circulated across Wyoming next week. It reminds us of Craig's toughness, his love for Wyoming, and his commitment to challenging young people to succeed.

It is an appropriate tribute to Senator Thomas. I ask unanimous consent that the column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CRAIG THOMAS—A LIFE'S WORK GOES ON (By Gale Geringer)

It's hard to believe that June 4th marks the third anniversary of Senator Craig Thomas' death in 2007.

Craig's wisdom and dedication to Wyoming people is dearly missed.

The passion he had for making Wyoming an even better place lives on strong when we need it most. In these economic times, when some young people have an especially tough time with financial or family issues, Craig Thomas' dedication to our future is an example we need to remember.

Craig was compassionate but it came with toughness. He respected young people and so expected a lot of them. He encouraged our youth to succeed and he approached that

from the standpoint of a Captain in the United States Marine Corps. He taught personal responsibility and self reliance. He believed in being on time and ready to learn or work.

Craig motivated thousands of young people, urging them to be the best they can be, whatever their circumstances. He didn't come from money and didn't place a lot of value on pedigrees. He believed each individual had it within him/herself to rise above hardships and become productive, contributing members of society but he also recognized that everyone learns at a different level.

So for kids who might have fallen through the cracks, or were in the middle or bottom of their class, what a welcome inspiration they could find in Craig Thomas.

The Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation is born directly from that ethic and from the life-long experience and caring counsel of his wife, Susan.

The Foundation, now in its third year, continues to fulfill a promise and helps young people try for that second, third, even fourth chance at education and life fulfillment.

With scholarships to Wyoming's community colleges, the University, vocational and technical schools or online education, the Craig and Susan Foundation is changing lives. The Foundation believes that it doesn't matter where students are from, what their grade point average was, or whether they had excelled in something before. It matters that today they want to try and know that someone cares.

In addition to its other programs, the Foundation also gives annual leadership awards to adults who work to support at-risk youth in Wyoming, mentoring, educating or counseling children to achieve their goals.

One scholarship recipient, who is finishing his second year in college, tells this story, "My early years were spent in various stages of poverty, abuse and neglect. I spent my teen years in foster/legal guardian care situations. I am and will remain drug free. I choose my circle of friends wisely. Now I'm majoring in Business Management at LCCC where I am getting good grades. It is very expensive and I need help. I ask for your assistance in helping me to make the very best of my life. College expenses are the greatest obstacle between me, my education and my success as a self-reliant, valuable member of my community."

To date, 53 scholarships have already been awarded, including five to students who are older and have been able to improve their job prospects because they've obtained degrees or certificates.

The idea is simple. Our children deserve an opportunity to build happy and successful lives for themselves regardless of power or place. And when and if they fail, we have a responsibility to show them another way and offer them another chance.

Craig Thomas never thought he would grow up to be a United States Senator. He was a humble kid from outside of Cody who liked people and was willing to work hard at whatever he did. He would have also told you that there were special people in his life that pushed, prodded and, at times, literally willed him to succeed.

Not all of the students who are awarded a scholarship from the Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation and receive mentoring from Susan Thomas will become elected leaders some day. But one thing is sure, they WILL build Wyoming's workforce and they are inspiring assets to a better state—because they pulled themselves up by their bootstraps . . . with a little help.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of National Foster Care Month, a time to recognize and shine a light on the needs of our foster children in Arkansas and across the U.S. and to highlight the countless men, women, and families who work tirelessly on their behalf.

Arkansas has more than 3,500 children in foster care. It is imperative that we ensure their safety and well-being and work to find them a permanent family to provide the love and support they need and desire. That is why I have introduced my Child Welfare Workforce Study Act, which will help identify the barriers that prevent children and families from accessing the essential services they need. It will also better ensure that necessary steps are taken to recruit and retain a quality and experienced workforce that can effectively address the needs and risks of our Nation's most vulnerable children and the families that provide them care.

With thousands of children in Arkansas seeking nothing but a safe and stable family to provide them comfort and security, we have a responsibility to ensure that families are adequately prepared to provide them with the care and supervision they deserve. These families should be appropriately supported and equipped with the resources they need.

Our current system is burdened by the ongoing challenges of recruiting and retaining enough families to care for and welcome these children into their homes, and experienced caseworkers to effectively manage their cases. We have children slipping through the cracks, and that is simply unacceptable. We need to create an environment that best provides for the well-being of these children and that most effectively helps them find a loving and permanent home.

I have also introduced the Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act, which establishes much-needed standards of consistency in agency and state policies for foster and adoptive care. It also calls on agencies to follow best practices proven to increase and retain the number of foster, adoptive and kinship parents. These practices include efforts to allow foster parents to actively participate and have input in the case-planning and decision-making process regarding the child; to receive complete and timely responses from the agency; and to receive support services and appropriate training that will enhance the skills and ability of resource parents to meet their children's needs. Finally, the bill establishes a grant program to better allow states to develop innovative methods of education and support for families.

As lawmakers, it is our role to honor the critical role that foster families play in the lives of foster youth and