Supporting the Families of Fallen Soldiers

It is tragic when a military service member loses his or her life, and even more so when they leave behind a widowed spouse and children. While grieving, those left behind must also face their new reality and figure out how to make ends meet on their own.

Such was the case with Darian (DJ) Torres. During childhood, DJ and his sibling lost their father while their mother, a disabled veteran, was suffering immensely from coal workers' pneumoconiosis as a result of her military service.

DJ was just 4 years old when his family discovered Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund.

His mother's lung disease continued to worsen to the point where Becky Campbell, founder and CEO of Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund, felt there was a possibility that DJ's mom may not be able to survive much longer.

"Due to the severity of [DJ's] mother's disease, [my husband and I] decided that we would adopt her children if the time ever came where she was no longer with us," Becky says.

DJ Torres's high school graduation photo 15 months after he was shot

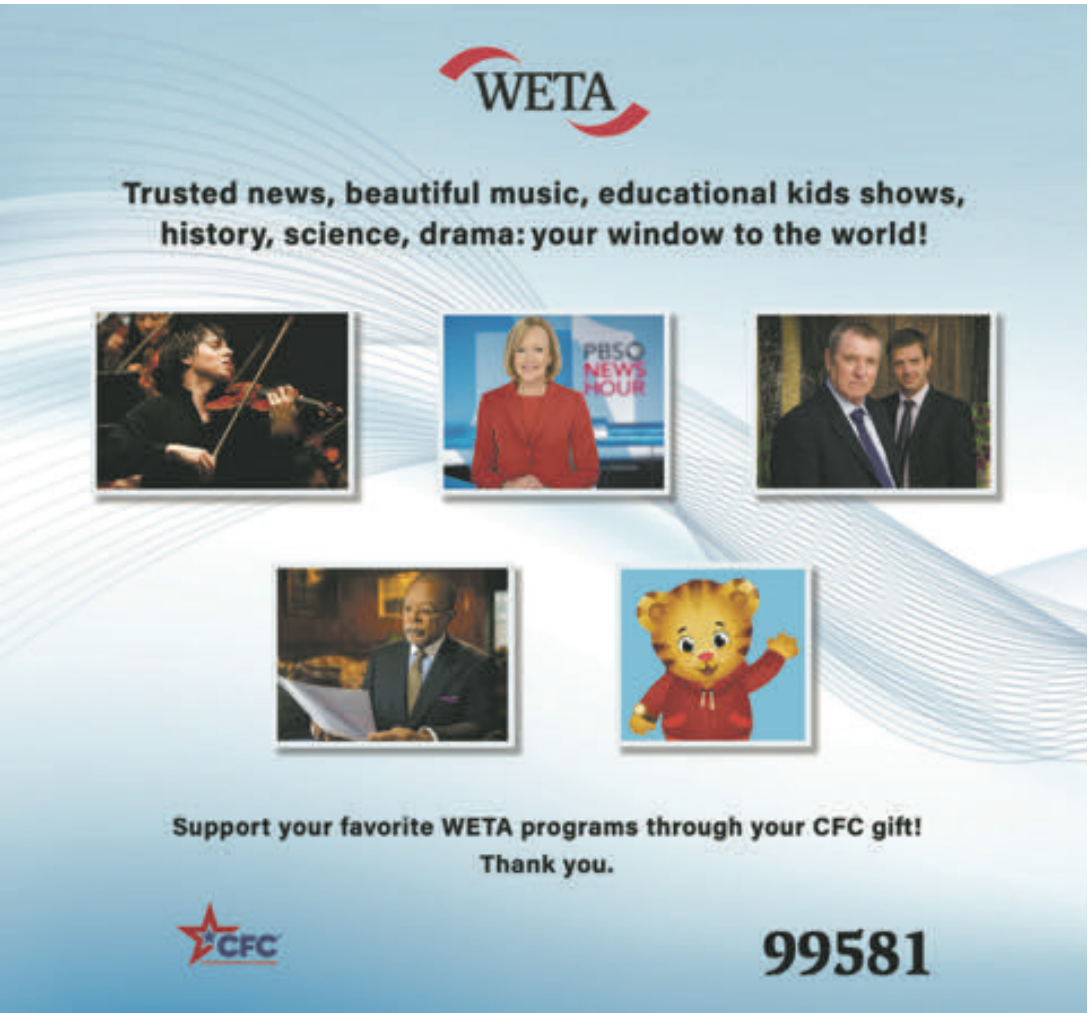
While it never came to that point, the Campbells still did everything they could to support the Torres family. Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund provided the family with housing, furniture, food, clothing, school supplies, auto repairs, and more. Still, they encountered setback after setback over the years, like homelessness and even DJ getting shot when he was just 16 years old.

"The first person his mother called was me," Becky remembers. "I was at their sides within an hour, wiping blood off his legs and arms, and holding onto prayers that he would come through and survive this tragedy."

That was in 2016. Now, Becky speaks proudly of DJ's successes after having overcome so much hardship. He was in honors classes while in grade school, she says, and is now in college, continuing to achieve good grades.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF REBECCA CAMPBELL

Rebecca Campbell with DJ Torres at Rebecca's son's grave.



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- Jacques Yves Cousteau

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This is just one example of how vested the Campbells are in the individuals and families who come to the nonprofit organization to seek assistance.

Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund has provided more than $4.2 million in college scholarships and financial assistance to hundreds of military children, gold star spouses, and severely disabled veterans.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF REBECCA CAMPBELL

Diana McGee, DJ Torres's mom, crying during the National Anthem in Texas at an event.

Becky has poured her heart and time into Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund since she founded it in October 2003. When her youngest son, David A. Campbell, was deployed with the U.S. Army to Iraq in February 2003, his absence got her thinking about the tragic reality of military children who are left without a parent.

"These children of our fallen were in my daily thoughts and prayers," she says. "After a short discussion with my husband, I decided to plan a fundraising event to help provide college to one or perhaps two children. That was the idea in 2003. The reality is that I could not find it in my heart to stop."

Years later on August 26, 2009, while David was still active military and eager to return overseas, he died in a car accident.

"Even though I struggle with my own loss over my youngest son's passing, I have committed myself to keeping his memory alive by helping other families deal and handle their own losses," Becky says.

Aside from financial assistance, Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund has also maintained a retreat home since 2010, called the Patriot House, which sits on the Potomac River in River Bend Park, West Virginia. It is open seven months of the year and is provided free of charge to service members and their families, allowing them to spend quality time together away from the stressors of everyday life and medical facilities.

Looking forward, Becky isn't slowing her efforts for Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund any time soon. "In 2019, we are hoping to raise funds through donations so that we can continue our drive and support of our military and their beautiful families." •

PHOTOS COURTESY OF REBECCA CAMPBELL

May 2012 when Rebecca Campbell took DJ Torres to his father's grave in New Jersey.

Story by Tara Shubbuck
CFC #43573

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