

THE FIELD REPORT

WORKING TOGETHER TO SERVE WISCONSIN'S VETERANS COMMUNITY



Left to right: Justin and Ashley Reichert and Jodi and Josh Schoemann.

Walking for the Fallen

Group walking across Washington County to raise funds, awareness for veterans

After many years of serving our nation, Josh Schoemann and Justin Reichert are on a new mission in life.

On Memorial Day weekend, Schoemann and Reichert will be joined by their spouses and those in the community in remembering the fallen. On May 25, the group of four will trek 40 miles across Washington County in an effort to raise funds and awareness for local veterans.

“We wanted to figure something out that was tangible,

something that people could rally behind,” Justin said.

The goal of the walk is to raise both awareness and funds for Washington County’s veterans.

“It’s my hope that this concept picks up in the other 71 counties in the state,” Josh said. “Although it’s a small thing, it’s important. Over the long haul, maintaining those grave sites is an important thing for posterity for our veterans.”

The two veterans are being joined in their walk by their biggest supporters: Justin’s wife, Ashley Reichert, and Josh’s wife, Jodi Schoemann.

With a goal of eventually raising \$300,000, the plan is to fully fund the placement of American flags at every veterans’ grave in Washington County. In addition, the hope is to create a war memorial honoring those who served in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom at the future home of

Wisconsin’s 9/11 Memorial in Kewaskum.

“Justin and I have always been strong supporters of veterans and different initiatives, and I know Josh and Jodi are also very strong supporters,” Ashley, who works as the Washington County Clerk, said.

Serving Our Country

During the walk, both Josh and Justin will be wearing 22 additional pounds to symbolize the average of 22 veterans lost each day across the nation because of suicide. Being veterans, it’s a statistic that is especially near and dear to both of their hearts.

Josh served in the United States Army for eight years and

earned an Army Commendation Medal. He was deployed to Iraq in 2003 with the 75th Exploitation Task Force, Task Force Badger and now serves his community as the Washington County administrator.

“For the rest of my life, I’ll try to earn the service and sacrifice of the guys who didn’t make it back home,”

he said. “Everything that I do is oriented toward earning my sacrifice. This is one small thing for us to do to forever remember our veterans throughout the county and the country.”

Justin also served in the Army for eight years, enlisting shortly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. He was deployed in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 and served as a Sergeant in the Army on its Anti-Terrorism Unit.

He was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, three Army Commendation Medals and a Joint Service Achievement Medal.

“There’s a lot of people that we were connected with that didn’t make it back or didn’t come back the same way,” Justin, who works at Menasha Packaging’s plant in Hartford, said. “We both have the advantage of coming back and hitting the ground running in a way that didn’t negatively impact our lives. As a dad, there’s nothing more important than continuing that. I want to show my kids and show my friends and family exactly the respect that all veterans should receive on a daily basis.”

Though the two couples didn’t know each other during their service time, they formed a bond through giving back to veterans in Washington County.

“Josh and I met and we just had the veterans bond and that’s something that’s really grown,” Justin said. “Our friendships have grown, our families are closer and our kids hang out together. It’s come complete full circle and we have a strong bond with everyone.”

Support From the Community

Ashley said that since the group decided the walk is something they wanted to pursue, the community has been extremely supportive. She added that “quite a few members of the public” have offered to walk a portion of

the 40 miles with them. Because of the response, the four decided to have the community join them for a 2.5-mile portion of the walk on the Eisenbahn State Trail in West Bend.

“Our goal is to get there around 12:30 p.m.,” Ashley said. “After the walk is complete, we’re also going to have an event at the Washington County Fair Park.”

Justin said he is hoping that joining up with the community around mile No. 23 or 24 will allow them to gain the excitement and endurance to complete the walk.

“That will give us a chance to shake their

hands and thank people for rallying behind our veterans,” he said. “Once we break off from them, we will have about 10 miles left. The thought of having the event at the fair park after will drive me, personally...that will be such a huge contributing factor in my excitement to just keep pushing on.”

It’s not just physical support of the walk, either. Businesses from around the area have provided an outpouring of support. Recently, Quad announced it would donate \$25,000 to the cause, and other businesses like Zuern’s Building Supply in Cedarburg and Allenton have contributed commemorative T-shirts with all proceeds going toward the organization.

“It’s awesome to see so many people from our community on board supporting our veterans,” Ashley said.

Visit bit.ly/WashCoVeterans to find out more information about the cause and the walk.



(L) Josh Schoemann, (R) Justin Reichert

“Our friendships have grown, our families are closer and our kids hang out together. It’s come complete full circle and we have a strong bond with everyone,”