

**Derek Farley**

**Class of 2004**

**Columbia High School**

“Now cracks a noble heart. Good-night sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!” Shakespeare said it well in commemorating Hamlet’s untimely death. It also applies to our honored Hall of Fame inductee, Derek Farley, who while in the service of his country gave the last full measure of his life at the age of twenty-four.

Although his mortal life was short, it was one that was highly motivated and unflinchingly directed. As early as seventeen years of age young Derek knew what he was destined to pursue as his life’s goal: a military career. He volunteered for the armed forces at a time when deployment to either Iraq or Afghanistan would be almost certain. He purposely volunteered to participate as a specialist in perhaps the most dangerous duty that exists in the war zone; an explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) specialist. It was Derek’s job to diffuse or disarm IED’s or improvised explosive devises. His duties quite often included preparing a “safe” path for visiting dignitaries, including the President of the United States.

Derek Farley left home a young soldier, but due to a combination of the nature of the conflict and his hazardous duties, quickly became a seasoned veteran, as well as an inspiration to his fellow soldiers.

The grueling twelve hour long missions were accepted without complaint despite his loss of an eardrum in the pursuit of detonating a device which earned him a Purple Heart. Derek, in an e-mail to his mother, perhaps summed up his role best when he stated, “Mom, I’m going over there. I’m doing a job. I’m saving soldier’s lives so these boys can come home to their moms just like I’m going to come home to you.” “My life is EOD, and if I get hit, then I do it as an EOD tech.” There would be no greater honor if it comes to it...because there are thousands of other mothers out there just like you who want their sons and daughters again.”

Derek was recognized by ABC World News as its Person of the Week, and has been included in the Rensselaer County’s Hall of heroes dedicated to military heroism.

Wang Yang Ming, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Chinese philosopher, said it best when he commented, “That to know, and not to act is not to know.” Derek Farley always knew what he had to do and never failed to act, and in doing so, in effect, gave life to others.

We, therefore, extend to Derek’s family and fiancé both our sympathy in their loss, as well as great pride in recognizing the nobility of his accomplishments in his brief but fulfilling life.

The East Greenbush School district is honored to be able to recognize Derek Farley, post-humously, for his unselfish service to community and country, and include him as a member of its Columbia Hall of Fame.