

bomber killed him and three other soldiers. Private First Class Gonzalez was only 21 years old.

Born in Bridgeport, CT, Orlando is being remembered today for his dedication to the U.S. Army, and for his warm and giving nature. "He always had a smile on his face," said his high school principal, Brian Cashman. "He was kind of a handful, but you couldn't help but like him."

Private First Class Gonzalez rose above what his principal described as a "rough" background to find purpose and discipline: first at a faith-based camp for students, and then as an American soldier.

"We just loved him around here," said Patrick LeBlanc, director of Summit Grove Camp. The first thing that came to LeBlanc's mind on hearing of Orlando's death was his infectious playfulness. LeBlanc recalled seeing a wild rabbit on the camp grounds, and telling Orlando he was fast enough to catch it. Orlando only nodded—and a few hours later, knocked on LeBlanc's door, petting the rabbit and beaming.

But it was in the Army that Private First Class Gonzalez found, as so many have found before him, meaning and a second home. "I think the Army is what he needed," said Principal Cashman. Patrick LeBlanc agreed: "It was the second happiest place I'd seen him, other than camp here. . . . He was doing what he wanted to do."

As a scout javelin gunner for the 82nd Airborne Division, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, Private First Class Gonzalez immediately distinguished himself. "On a daily basis, Private First Class Gonzalez displayed courage, honor, and selfless service in the struggle to keep America safe and improve the nation of Iraq," said Captain John Carson of the 73rd Cavalry. Private First Class Gonzalez was already highly decorated at the time of his death, and we can only wonder what an outstanding career might have been waiting for him.

Instead, Private First Class Gonzalez leaves behind two grieving parents, Orlando G. Gonzalez of Bridgeport, and Carmen Diaz of New Freedom, PA. But he leaves behind, as well, an example of dedication that won't soon be dimmed.

"This hero will be sorely missed and will forever live in our memories," said Captain Carson.

Orlando, though, might have used other words. "Call him a hero and he would get mad," Orlando's friend and pastor, the Reverend Paul Juchniewich, said in a funeral sermon. "He would just say he was doing his duty to rescue those who are in peril. He did not die in a conventional battle, but rather a battle for the hearts and minds of the future generation."

The struggle's outcome is still uncertain. But we will keep fresh the memory of one man who advanced it with all his strength, Private First Class Orlando E. Gonzalez, whose last act on this Earth was to give. ●

#### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On April 7, 2007, in New York City, NY, Akino George pleaded guilty for his part in the beating of a gay man. George and three other men attacked Kevin Aviance, a popular entertainer, after he left a gay bar. The four men threw bags of garbage and a can of paint at Aviance before knocking him to the ground, punching and kicking him. Aviance suffered several injuries including a broken jaw. George testified in his plea that Aviance was targeted for being gay.

I believe that the government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### TRIBUTE TO THE PEACE CORPS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate the Peace Corps on its 46th anniversary and to pay tribute to the many volunteers both at home and abroad for their dedicated service to our country.

Since its inception in 1961, the Peace Corps has helped change the lives of millions of people all over the world. There is no organization that better demonstrates America's commitment to developing nations than the Peace Corps.

I recently had the opportunity to travel to South America and was able to meet with Peace Corps volunteers in the Andean region. The numerous projects they have been working on to help the local communities are truly impressive. I have known several individuals—members of my staff, former interns and my own family members—who have volunteered their service to the Peace Corps. The stories of their experiences are remarkable.

The gift of service is driven by a passion for something greater than one's self. The men and women of the Peace Corps possess this passion and have shown what a difference one person can make. By helping individuals in developing countries who seek a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities, the Peace Corps shows the world that Americans do truly care. It is vital that the organization and its volunteers continue this important work. Their service is great-

ly appreciated, and I commend the Peace Corps and its volunteers on 46 years of successful service.

#### SECOND CHANCE ACT

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of the Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act, a bill to strengthen community safety and reduce poverty by improving the reintegration of people returning from prison. I am pleased to work with Senators BIDEN, SPECTER, BROWNBACK, and LEAHY as a cosponsor of this very important bill.

It is estimated that approximately 650,000 prisoners are released into communities across America every year. They have paid their debt to society and now return to their homes and neighborhoods, to their families, and back to their lives.

The problem is that for most of these returning prisoners, their families, neighborhoods, and prior lives often lack what it takes to ensure successful reintegration.

In the best of cases, incarcerated individuals maintain contact with their families and receive rehabilitation services while in prison; they are released to a network of law-abiding peers and quickly find a rewarding job that provides the skills and career development for long-term opportunity. Released prisoners can help support their families, become active in their churches and other community organizations, stay off drugs, away from trouble, on track, and out of jail.

Unfortunately, that rarely happens. Up to two-thirds of all released prisoners nationwide end up back in prison within just 3 years. They don't manage to find and keep effective jobs and to care for themselves and their families. Many become a drain on their families and a drain on the system. They are more likely to resort to criminal activity and to perpetuate poverty and family dysfunction.

Their failure is our failure since we all share the high cost, lost opportunities, and other burdens of unemployment, crime, community failure, and cycles of recidivism.

Fortunately, people have been hard at work in hundreds of communities and community organizations all across the country to improve the process of reintegrating prisoners. As one example, the Safer Foundation in Illinois has managed to cut the State's recidivism rate by almost 50 percent for the people who receive Safer's supportive employment services. And Safer has further demonstrated that ex-prisoners who are still employed after 12 months of supportive services have a recidivism rate of lower than 10 percent. One of Safer's program models, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, provides participants with job placement and support services, and matches them with mentors from the neighborhoods where the participants reside. Only 2 percent of the participants in this community and faith-