

Judson, IN, Joe was a shining star in the “greatest generation,” forced to learn the virtues of hard work, frugality, and self-reliance at a young age after losing his father when he was just 6 years old.

Joe was always proud of his service to our country during World War II. He served as a combat engineer in the 94th Division—a part of Patton’s Third Army and earned the European Medal with four bronze stars—signifying his participation in four separate military campaigns, including the Battle of the Bulge.

Recognized for his love of country, Joe was well-respected by those in his community. As one of the most patriotic men in Knox, his neighbors often referred to him as “Mr. Patriotism.” Many considered him a pillar of the Knox community, and over the past several decades, whenever there was a veterans function or celebration of patriotism in Starke County, chances are Joe was deeply involved. Joe worked to educate our youth about the sacrifices of our veterans and servicemembers by giving presentations about World War II at Knox schools and Veterans Day events. He also served as commander of VFW Post 748 in Knox from 1991 to 1994, and he was elected Starke County surveyor for 7 terms spanning 28 years.

I had the privilege of meeting Joe in 2009 when he visited Washington, DC through the Honor Flight Network. I am honored to have met such an admirable and patriotic man. Last month the State of Indiana laid this public servant—a veteran, a Yankees fan, and most of all, a hero—to rest. We are forever grateful for his service to our country.

Mr. Smrt is survived and deeply missed by his wife of over 63 years, Ursula Kelly, and their four children—Terry Smrt of Knox, Kevin Smrt of Knox, Christopher Smrt of Louisville, Kentucky, Madonna Johnson of Austin, Texas and five grandchildren and five great grandchildren, as well as friends, the United States Army family, and Hoosiers across the State of Indiana.

Joe Smrt was an American hero. He conducted himself with courage, bravery, compassion, honor, and integrity—both while serving our nation and throughout his time as a civilian back home in Indiana. Let us always remember and treasure the memory of this stalwart, brave man and honor his selfless commitment to serving his fellow citizens. May God welcome him home and give comfort to his family and friends.

RECOGNIZING JACKSON TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I applaud Jackson Township Elementary School of Brazil, IN for being recognized as a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

Established in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has recog-

nized over 7,000 public and non-public schools that demonstrate a vision of educational excellence for all students, regardless of their social or economic background. Since its inception, this program has offered the opportunity for schools in every State to gain recognition for educational accomplishments in closing the achievement gaps among student groups.

Recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education is based on a school either being measured as an Exemplary High Performing School, where schools are among the State’s highest scorers in English and mathematics, or as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School, where schools with at least 40 percent of their student body coming from disadvantaged backgrounds have reduced the achievement gap in English and mathematics within the last 5 years. Jackson Township Elementary School has made great strides in the area of improved proficiency in both English and mathematics.

In 2014 alone, Jackson Township Elementary School’s combined ISTEP+ passing rate for English and mathematics was around 96 percent for third through fifth grades. Jackson Township Elementary School’s effectiveness can be found in its Character Education program. In this program, students are familiarized with positive characteristics that are connected to character development introduced first in the home environment. Jackson Township Elementary School affirms that every student’s success is directly related to family and community support. With over 40 percent of its students identified as economically disadvantaged in a primarily rural farming town, Jackson Township Elementary School is seen as a beacon of light for the development of Indiana’s youth.

I would like to acknowledge Jackson Township Elementary School Principal Bradford C. Ennen, the entire staff, and the student body. It undoubtedly took hard work and dedication to achieve this prestigious award.

On behalf of the citizens of Indiana, I congratulate Jackson Township Elementary School, and I wish the students and staff continued success in the future.

RECOGNIZING HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I also wish to recognize Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School of Fishers, IN for being recognized as a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

Established in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has recognized over 7,000 public and non-public schools that demonstrate a vision of educational excellence for all students, regardless of their social or economic background. Since its inception, this program has offered the opportunity for schools in every State to gain rec-

ognition for educational accomplishments in closing any achievement gaps among student groups.

Recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education is based on a school being identified as “Exemplary High Performing,” schools that are ranked in the top 15 percent nationally in English and mathematics, measured by each State’s assessment, or as “Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing,” where schools with at least 40 percent of their student body coming from disadvantaged backgrounds are reducing the achievement gap in English and mathematics. Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School has made great strides in these areas.

Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School combines creativity and critical thinking with the tools of the 21st century. Students are taught complex problem solving, innovative collaboration, and the merits of integrity. Also, by offering mobile technology labs and focusing on college and career readiness, students are prepared for future success. These standards have led Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School to consistently achieve an A-rating and a four-star designation by the Indiana Department of Education. The staff and students’ hard work will continue to benefit the city of Fishers and all of Indiana.

I would like to acknowledge Principal Tim A. Mankin of Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School, the entire staff, and the student body. It undoubtedly took hard work and dedication to achieve this prestigious award.

On behalf of the citizens of Indiana, I congratulate the Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School community, and I wish the students and staff continued success in the future.

REMEMBERING ROBERT S. EDWARDS, JR.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I wish to honor the life of Robert S. “Bob” Edwards, Jr. Bob was an Army veteran, a successful businessman, a community leader, a friend, and an inspiration to us all.

Bob was an advisor with AXA Equitable Life Insurance Company and before that a successful textile executive.

Among his many business accomplishments, Bob received the Equitable’s Centurion Award and several Legion of Honor President’s Cabinet Awards. He also received recognition as Associate of the Year and as the agency’s representative to the national agents. Bob was also honored with the Equitable’s Community Leadership Award twice.

A compassionate community leader, Bob served as chairman of the Board of the Freestore Foodbank and founded its most popular fundraiser, the Rubber Duck Regatta. Proceeds from this fundraiser have provided millions of meals to Cincinnatians in need. This