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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Missouri teen with post connection honored by national organization**

**FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.** – A military child with connections to Fort Leonard Wood was recognized with a Military Child of the Year® Award from Operation Homefront, April 16.

Zachary Parsons, a sophomore at Sacred Heart High School in Warrensburg, Missouri, is the recipient in the National Guard Category. His father, Sgt. 1st Class Jason Parsons, is currently at the Wounded Warrior Transition Unit here.

While keeping up his GPA and volunteering with his community, Zachary was called upon to help keep things running smoothly at home when his father was injured during a deployment.

“When the main figure leaves your household there is a spiral of things to deal with. My dad was head of household, so when he left there were so many things left to do on the farm, as well as keep our life together. Dealing with that empty space is tough,” Zachary said.

His father, who is currently recovering from a shoulder injury, said his son is very deserving of the award.

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“Zach is a very driven young man and has a lot of ambition. He volunteers countless hours to community service. He volunteers at the local veterans home in Warrensburg; works at the local food pantry and is involved in many youth leadership organizations,” Jason said.

Zachary is club president of the county 4-H Council as well as a representative on state 4-H Council. He shows cattle, swine and participates in public speaking competitions. He volunteers as a camp counselor every summer at 4-H camp. He was just inducted into the National Honor Society carrying a 3.9 GPA. He has earned the Bronze Congressional Award, is a member of the Missouri National Guard Teen advisory council and speaks at numerous Yellow Ribbon events to promote the Post-9/11 GI Bill program.

“Zachary has accomplished all of these things and more while I have been deployed and here at the WTU,” Jason said.

From a pool of nearly 500 nominees, a committee including active-duty and retired military personnel, spouses of senior military leaders, veteran service organization leadership, teachers, and community members chose each award recipient.

Zachary will receive \$10,000, a laptop computer and other donated gifts.

“Zachary is resilient and has had to overcome many obstacles of being a military child. He has dealt with whatever has come his way in the last couple of years due to this deployment,” Jason said.

Through it all, Zachary has helped his mother, Debbie, keep things together, he said.

Operation Homefront staff members said Zachary was a great choice for the award.

“We’re thrilled to honor Zachary with our Military Child of the Year Award,” said Tim Farrell, chief operating officer for Operation Homefront. “These awardees represent the strength of our military Families, who sacrifice so much in service to our country.”

Operation Homefront provides emergency assistance to military Families and annually gives the award to an outstanding military child from each branch of service, and for the first time in 2015, the National Guard.

(Editor’s note: Melissa Buckley contributed to this story.)

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Encl. Photo (Courtesy photo) - Zachary Parsons, a sophomore at Sacred Heart High School in Warrensburg, Missouri

For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

## *About Fort Leonard Wood*

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*Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.*

*Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.*

*Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.*

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