

THE INFORMATION SOURCE SINCE 1856 FOR THE CAPITAL REGION

TIMES UNION

We're Your Source

John's room feels like home

By JOHN B. SNYDER

Published: 12:00 a.m., Monday, January 3, 2011



I recently visited John McKenna's room. What a wonderful place it is. In a space about 10 feet by 12 feet, one will find all the comforts of home.

TV? Check.

Computer? Check.

Refrigerator? Check.

Quilts knitted by moms? Check.

Love, compassion, and support? Check.

John's room is not as comfortable as my old room at home. It is better.

Although John wasn't there, Albany County Sheriff Lt. [Douglas Buzzard](#) was there to ensure John's room was well-stocked with food supplies and ready for visitors.

Manning John's room with Buzzard were two veterans, [Jim Moody](#) and Bill Mahoney. Together, these three were on duty.

As I was reading a note that was posted on the refrigerator from a 7-year-old girl -- which was addressed to "Soldiers" and thanked them for all that they did -- a soldier walked into John's room.

Pvt. [Deven VanWormer](#), with duffle bag in hand, shyly walked into the room and had a look in his eyes, just like a kid in a candy store. All the marvels that a young soldier could have, from video games to a TV to recliners, were in the room.

VanWormer was hesitant at first until Buzzard, Moody, and Mahoney made him feel at home and told him to help himself to anything in the room. Although I love my mother, she was never as accommodating as those guys were.

After VanWormer settled in, Buzzard asked him why he was there, in John's room. VanWormer said that he had been on leave from the Army and he was finding his way back to Fort Benning, Ga.

Buzzard looked in VanWormer's hand and saw he had a ticket. Buzzard asked about his flight plans and found that VanWormer had a long layover in Albany, as well as in a connecting city en route to Atlanta.

Not wanting the young soldier to have a difficult travel day, Buzzard latched onto him and marched him to the ticket counter. Within minutes, VanWormer had a direct flight to Atlanta and would be leaving in a matter of minutes.

As I talked more to Buzzard, Moody and Mahoney, I discovered that they, as well as 100 other volunteers, have provided support to more than 2,800 troops since April 2010. All of this thanks to the comforts of John's room.

I liked John McKenna's room and wished John could have been there. All the comforts of home, including love, compassion, and caring, resonated from wall to wall, and from volunteer to volunteer.

I'm sure John would be proud of what the volunteers have achieved, of the community spirit, and the fact that servicemen and women would have a safe, comfortable place to ease them through their many challenges of travel.

Yes, John would like what I saw. Maybe he did.

Marine Capt. John J. McKenna was killed in action in Fallujah, Iraq, on Aug. 16, 2006.

His room, The Capt. [John J. McKenna Military Courtesy Room](#), was established at the [Albany International Airport](#) by Buzzard and John's father, John J. McKenna III, in April 2010.

According to the John J. McKenna website (<http://www.jmckennamilitarycourtesyroom.org>), "Capt. McKenna and his unit were on foot patrolling the streets of Fallujah, Iraq, when his unit came under coordinated sniper attack. Lance Cpl. [Michael Glover](#), who was the point man for the patrol, was struck by a sniper's bullet and lay wounded on the ground. Capt. McKenna immediately called for his men to throw smoke grenades around Cpl. Glover. Capt. McKenna ordered his men to maintain the position of cover and went into the cloud of smoke to aid Cpl. Glover. As Capt. McKenna was dragging Cpl. Glover to safety, he was hit by sniper fire."

John served with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines in Albany. He was also a New York state trooper.

The Military Courtesy Room is open 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and is located on the third floor of the Albany International Airport.

John B. Snyder works in the public affairs office of the [Watervliet Arsenal](#).

Read more: <http://www.timesunion.com/default/article/John-s-room-feels-like-home-933327.php#ixzz1AkuH9bqU>