GRATEFUL NATION

GRATEFULNATIONMONTANA.COM

HONORING MONTANA'S FALLEN

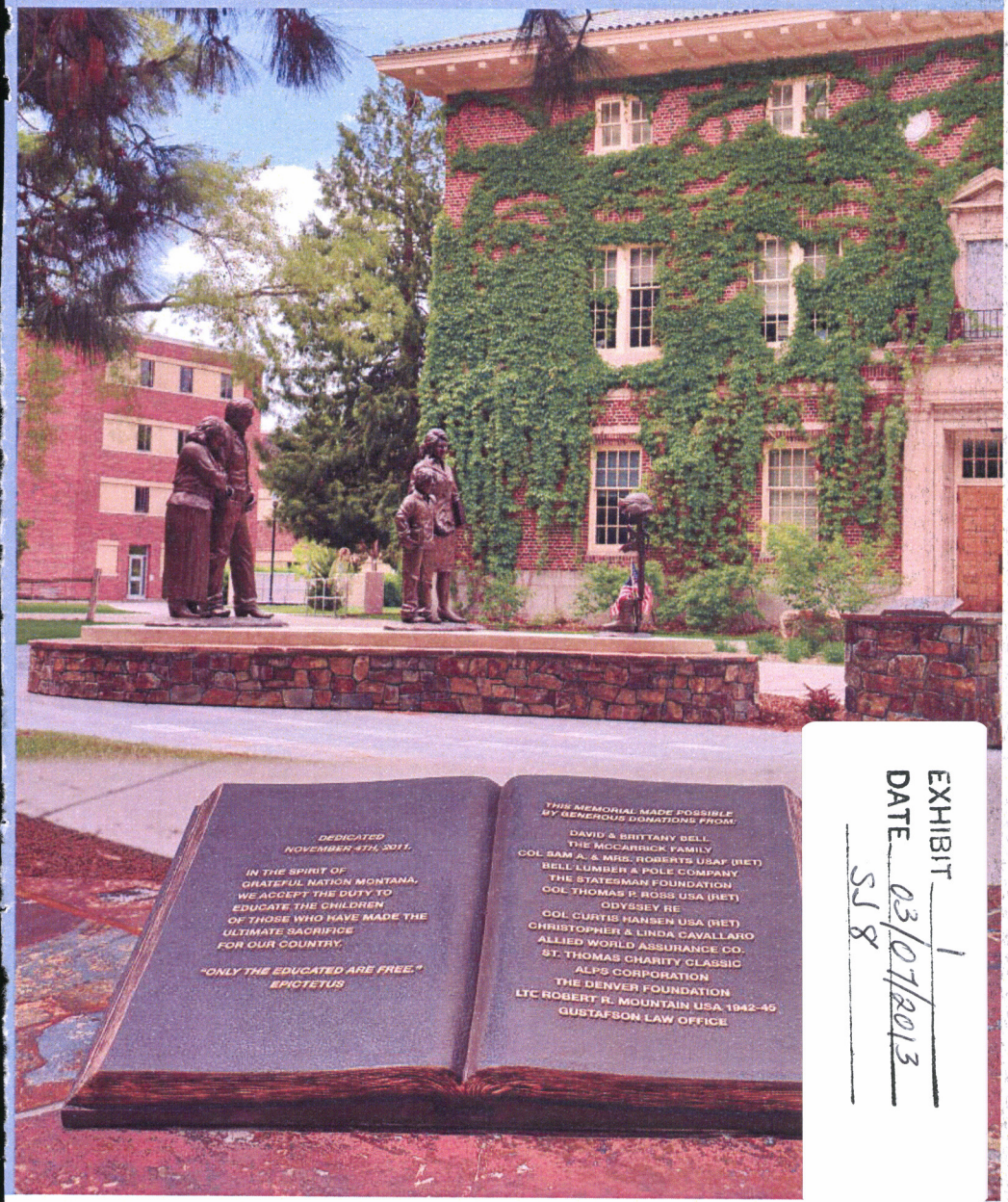

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 03/07/2013
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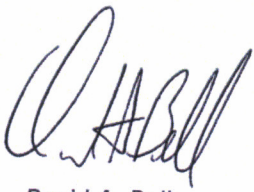
GRATEFUL NATION MONTANA is a first-of-its-kind program in the United States. We ensure that the children of our state's soldiers who have been killed in Iraq or Afghanistan have the opportunity for a successful college experience through tutoring, mentoring and a full scholarship to a state university. While GNM partners with the Montana University System, leaders of The University of Montana guide the initiative.

The economic and social realities for the families of our soldiers who have paid the ultimate price create a perverse irony; the road to realizing the American dream through a college education is actually harder because of these soldiers' sacrifice. GNM reverses that trajectory and provides resources, tools and support to ensure that we honor our lost heroes by helping their children.

While much progress has been made, our goal is far from realized. You can help GNM by volunteering your time or giving a donation. Visit GratefulNationMontana.com to learn how you can help those who have sacrificed so much to keep our country safe.



David A. Bell

MacKinnon Letter

With each and every soldier who has paid the ultimate price in service to our country, lives are forever changed. Children lose their fathers, wives lose their husbands and countless other family members and friends mourn a life cut tragically short.

We wish we could tell the deeply human story of each of our 42 heroes. Since that is not possible, sharing this letter from Captain Michael MacKinnon to his wife Bethany and their children -- written in case he did not return from war -- must serve as just one example, where 41 others exist, of the toll exacted from our soldiers' families in order to keep us safe.

Dear Bethany, Madison and Noah,

If you are reading this, then I failed to be fast enough, smart enough, or lucky enough. Writing this is very difficult for me so bear with me if I ramble along. I needed to write this letter because there are some things that I needed to say and that I wanted you to hear. Bethany, you are the love of my life. I'll never forget the first time I saw you. You were so beautiful. I had so much fun falling in love with you. Our long walks at West Point, our trips to New York City and Niagara Falls. The times we spent in Montana even if we almost froze on the river that day. I loved every second that I spent with you. I know that through the years we had some rough times, but our love and enjoyment of each other was so much stronger. A funny little thought I always had. You know that all the formals at West Point were nothing but a competition of who had the prettiest date? I'm not going to lie, but I always checked the competition. Every time you were the most strikingly beautiful woman in the room. I know I told you that every time and you brushed it off, but I truly believed it. I think ring weekend was the most beautiful I had ever seen you second only to watching you hold and sing to babies Madison and Noah. I want you to know that my biggest regret during my relationship with you is that I never gave you the wedding ring you/we both deserved. I have never doubted that someday we would make it happen and that we would have our day in the sun. I hope someday you will find someone who loves you as much as I do. I want you to be with someone who sees you as beautiful as I did. Don't ever feel guilty if you fall in love again. You don't deserve to be alone and unhappy the rest of your life. I understand. I believe there is a heaven and I think I have been a good enough man to be there. I'll watch you and I'll watch the kids grow up with a tear in my eye wishing I was there to see with my own eyes. Some day we will all be together again. I don't think words could ever describe how much I love you. I want you to know that I loved my life. You made me very happy. I became a better person after meeting you – more complete. When you think of me in years to come, I want you to celebrate my life and not mourn my death. Don't think about all that you, Madison and Noah and I missed but think of the good times we had together.

Madison, I'm sorry I broke the promise I made to you when I said I was coming back. You were the jewel of my life. You made me so happy every time I saw you. You are the

sweetest little girl. Don't ever change. I wanted nothing more in my life than to be with you as you grew up. I want you to know that I loved you more than I can ever imagine. If you can do anything for me, you can take school seriously and do well. With a good education you can become anything you want. Stay away from drugs. They will ruin your life. Finally, stay away from bad men. You deserve too much. I don't think that anyone would ever be good enough for you. I have to tell you that you really broke my heart that day when I left you and you said "don't go, I need my daddy, I don't want my daddy to go." I nearly cried in front of all the army guys. Stay beautiful, stay sweet. You will always be daddy's little girl. I loved every minute of my life that I spent with you. From the first time I held you, to pushing you on the swings, playing steamroller and walking you to school. I always felt that that was our little thing. I loved holding your hand and walking you to class. You are a good girl. I am so proud of you. You made me so happy. I will always be with you.

Noah, you are my miracle son. I loved you very much. I regret that we never got the bond together that we so much wanted. I know I was hard on you, but only because I saw so much potential. You made me very happy and proud. I admired how tough you were when you had your surgery. That was the first time that I realized you would always be a fighter and never give up on anything. I have the same dying wish for you as Maddie. Take school seriously and do well. Stay away from drugs. Try to live the rest of your life as the best man you can be. I remember holding you after you were born. I was so happy. You loved it when I stroked your head. You are now the man of the house. Take care of your mom and your sister. You now have the same burden as your father had, to carry on the MacKinnon legacy. Try hard to keep it alive. Noah, I loved you very much and am proud to have you as a son. You brightened up my life every time we spent together. I will always be with you.

I want you all to know that I loved my family very much. Every time I was away, all I could think about is all of you. I know I wasn't the best husband or father in the world, but I always want to be remembered as a family man. I don't care to be remembered as a smart guy, an athletic guy, or a good soldier. I want people to say "that Mike really did love his family." I want you to know that my last thoughts in my life were of you. All of you need to get on with your life and do the things that make you happy. It's OK to be sad that I'm gone but be happy for me that I got to spend time with a loving wife, a beautiful daughter, and an exceptional son. I got to see both your births, I got to see your first steps. I got to watch you grow into perfect children. I am very honored to have the three of you as my family. My greatest regret in this life is that I can't watch you grow up. I will be with you all for ever. I consider myself the luckiest man ever to have lived. I couldn't have asked for a better soulmate or better children. I don't think that in any letter I could ever say all that needs to be said, so I will end it here. I am proud, I am happy, I have been filled with so much love. I will always be there in your hearts.

Love always and forever,

Michael – Daddy

Printed with permission from the MacKinnon family

TRAVIS M. ARNDT
U.S. Army National Guard
Sergeant
1982-2005
Bozeman

TRAVIS W. ATKINS
U.S. Army
Staff Sergeant
1975-2007
Bozeman

SHANE S. BARNARD
U.S. Army
Staff Sergeant
1971-2010
Helena

PHILLIP E. BAUCUS
U.S. Marine
Corporal
1978-2006
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SHANE R. BECKER
U.S. Army
Staff Sergeant
1971-2007
Helena

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KYLE G. BOHRNSEN
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Hungry Horse

GARNET R. DERBY
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Ismay

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1987-2008
Dillon

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Helena

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Fairfield

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Billings

JONATHAN A. PILGERAM
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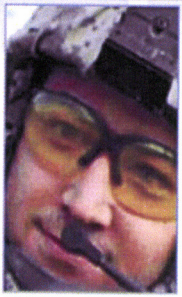
DEAN P. PRATT
U.S. Marine
Corporal
1982-2004
Stevensville



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1984-2007
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MICHAEL A. ROGERS
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Private 1st Class
1986-2009
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EDWARD M. SALTZ
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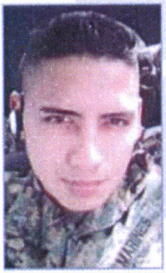
1st Lieutenant
1976-2003
Bigfork

DAREN A. SMITH
U.S. Army
Private
1988-2007
Helena

RALEIGH C. SMITH
U.S. Marine
Corporal
1983-2004
Troy

KRISTOFOR T. STONESIFER
U.S. Army
Private 1st Class
1973-2001
Missoula



STEWART S. TREJO
U.S. Marine
Corporal
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Whitefish

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U.S. Marine
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1989-2010
Bozeman

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U.S. Army
Sergeant
1983-2010
Darby

DONALD M. YOUNG
U.S. Army
Specialist
1988-2007
Helena

MATTHEW T. ZEIMER
U.S. Army
Private
1988-2007
Glendive

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The Grateful Nation Montana Fallen Solider Memorial at the University of Montana was created by Lincoln, MT artist Rick Rowley. Front & back cover photography by Dariusz Janczewski.