

Death of a Marine

The son of a long-time Life Care associate has paid the supreme sacrifice for his country. Sergeant Christopher "Chris" Heflin, a 26-year-old Marine from Paducah, Kentucky, died from enemy action in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq. He was assigned to the Third Battalion, First Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, First Marine Expeditionary Force. His military vehicle ran over an explosive device.

Heflin, who had served for 10 years in the Marines, was the son of Lisa Ellis, who has been employed as a certified nursing assistant at Parkview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Paducah for 15 years. She is a wonderfully dedicated woman who must now suffer this searing heartbreak. Her work, in fact, is part of her family's commitment to this center. Her mother, who is now deceased, was a certified nursing assistant there for several years. Lisa's daughter-in-law (not the wife of the deceased soldier, for he was single) works at Parkview, and she had another son who was employed there at one time in housekeeping.

The funeral service for Heflin was conducted Tuesday at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Paducah, where he was a member.

Lisa had received an e-mail from her son about one month ago, in which he told her he loved her and may not be able to communicate with her for a while, because he was going into an unstable area. He reassured her and told her not to worry because he wasn't afraid.

Chris Heflin was the oldest of Lisa's four sons. His youngest brother, Derrick, recently enlisted and is scheduled to leave in January with his Marine unit for Iraq. He wants to go.

Lisa's associates at Parkview and her friends in Paducah have rallied to her side -- taking meals to her, collecting donations, assisting her in other ways, and praying for her. The staff at Paducah asks Life Care associates around the country to also pray for her, and to send her messages of support. E-mails can be directed to her at the customary address for Bill Boyd, the executive director at Parkview, and cards can be sent to her at: Parkview Nursing and Rehabilitation, 544 Lone Oak Road, Paducah, KY 42003.

And at this season, in particular, let us give thanks for the men and women in uniform -- and their families -- who make enormous sacrifices for our freedoms.

--Beecher Hunter