



May 27, 2011

Attention: *SPORTS, NEWS*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARK FORESTER PRICE OF FREEDOM FOUNDATION

Smokies pitcher and radio broadcaster team up to support and bring awareness to a fallen hero

KODAK, Tenn. – Tennessee Smokies pitcher Trey McNutt and Smokies radio broadcaster Mick Gillispie have teamed up to support and bring awareness to the Mark Forester Price of Freedom Scholarship. The scholarship will assist one high school student from Haleyville High School, who embodies great character, leadership and patriotism going to college. Forester and McNutt both are graduates of Haleyville High School.

On September 29, 2010, Senior Airman Mark A. Forester, beloved son, brother and friend was killed in Afghanistan while attempting to save a fallen comrade. He was assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C. The Haleyville, Ala., native is survived by his parents, Ray and Pat, one sister, three brothers and 13 nieces and nephews.

In Mark's honor, family friend's McNutt and Gillispie have decided to support the Mark Forester Foundation. They are hoping to raise funds for the "Mark Forester Price of Freedom Scholarship" and awareness of Mark's sacrifice in defense of America.

"Being from my hometown, Mark was more than a man, he was a hero, even before he passed away in Afghanistan," McNutt said. "He represented our town heroically, with dignity and pride. He really just represents everything that Haleyville is about."

On March 27, 2011, Lifetime spotlighted the Forester family on an episode of "Coming Home." The reality-genre show highlights military families being reunited with loved ones returning from deployment. Mark Forester's segment was the first, and only episode this season, to spotlight a fallen military service member.

"I'm friends with Mark's brother Thad, and just felt like, after going to the funeral, and watching the television show [Coming Home], that it's a responsibility of mine, as an American, and I'm in a spot where I can make a difference to not allow us to forget how important his sacrifice was not only to the Nation, but the world," said Gillispie. "Mark Forester is a hero and I am grateful that there are guys like Mark defending our freedom. His sacrifice is far greater than anything I will probably ever give in my life. Honoring his memory and contribution is our reasonability. Trey and I salute him and his family."

To raise money, McNutt and Gillispie have decided to hold an auction. The auction will consist of signed memorabilia from members of the Chicago Cubs organization, University of Alabama and others. They will work throughout the season to raise funds kicking off the effort this Saturday, May 28th at Smokies Park as part of the teams Salute to Hero's night. They will conclude the fundraiser on July 21 to coincide with the National 9/11 American Flag's visit to Smokies Park. Items will be up for auction live at Smokies Park and on www.ebay.com.

For more information please contact Mick Gillispie at smokiesonradio@yahoo.com or call (865) 679-9182.
