

# Akron Marine is killed in action

## East High graduate Cpl. Derek A. Wyatt dies in Afghanistan

By Jim Carney

Beacon Journal staff writer

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Friends of Marine Cpl. Derek A. Wyatt gathered at the home of his longtime friend Andy Falcone in Akron on Monday night, played Wyatt's favorite music and told stories about him.

Their friend, a 25-year-old 2004 East High School graduate who left for Marine boot camp just a few months after high school, was killed in action in Afghanistan, Falcone learned this week.

The friends at Falcone's house listened to his favorite band, the Deftones, looked at pictures and shared memories.

"It is a cliché to say he loved his country," said Falcone of his friend, but it was true. He called the Marines Wyatt's calling.

"He loved his country, and he firmly believed in the cause," Falcone said. "He was all about his country and the Marines."

The Department of Defense said Wyatt died Monday while conducting combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment 1st Marine Division I Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Wyatt, who was a member of the East High School Junior ROTC program, was married. His wife, Kait, is expecting the couple's first child, Falcone said.

John Osolin, the East High School varsity baseball coach from 2001 to 2007, said it was devastating news to learn of Wyatt's death.

"What a crushing blow," he said of the player who was an All-City Series second baseman on the City Championship team in 2004.

Wyatt was a great fielder and started out one year batting ninth and finished the year batting first, said Osolin, who now works for the city of Akron.

"You knew this guy was going someplace," he said.

Wyatt always worked hard, was a leader and "stood out as an example for the other kids," Osolin said.

"He did what he was supposed to," Osolin said. "I can't say enough good things about him."

Jim Ballard, who was the school's pitching coach when Wyatt played, called him a great kid and "an amazing young man."

"It has not been a good day," Ballard said of the grief he and others who knew Wyatt felt upon learning the news.

Ballard, who runs Skyline Recording Studio, said Wyatt often returned to East after joining the Marines to talk to ballplayers.

A Facebook page — R.I.P. Derek Wyatt — has been set up. Many friends already have posted their thoughts.

"I am still just in shock," one posting on the site reads. "I never got the chance to tell you how absolutely proud of you I am and it sucks that this is the way things are."

Another friend wrote: "It's a shame your time here was cut so short. May you rest in peace. You will be missed greatly. A lot of people loved you and thought highly of you. Your family is in our prayers."

Falcone said his friend loved all kinds of music, especially rock, loved baseball and excelled at games of trivia.

"If you take him to the bar and play trivia with him, he wins all of the free wings," he said.

Wyatt always had a smile on his face, Falcone said.

"Nothing could get him down," he said, even as he left for his first combat mission this summer.

"No matter what was thrown at him, he made the best of it."

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Jim Carney can be reached at 330-996-3576 or [jcarney@thebeaconjournal.com](mailto:jcarney@thebeaconjournal.com).



Cpl. Derek Wyatt