When James Lyons '03 enlisted in the army after graduation from Syracuse University, he probably didn’t realize the extent to which his commitment—and ensuing sacrifice—would impact his alma mater.

On September 27, 2006, the first lieutenant and tank platoon leader was shot and killed in Baghdad while defending a strategic facility against enemy forces. His death sent shockwaves through his hometown of Rochester, New York, and through those on campus who knew him. At the age of 28, this former biochemistry major was SU’s first casualty of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“James was a respectful and determined young man,” recalls former academic advisor Christina Walker. “He was involved in many activities and worked hard in biochemistry—not an easy degree program.” His father, Bob Lyons, echoes this assessment. “James was caring and supportive of almost anyone in need. But he was also humble. Most people never heard about his good deeds.”

Scholarship to Ease Burden of Loss
Despite their grief, Lyons’s fiancée, Hillary Trent ’02, and fraternity brother Marc Klein ’03 looked for a way to turn tragedy into opportunity. Together, they established The James Lyons ’03 Sons and Daughters Memorial Scholarship Fund to benefit children of fallen or disabled U.S. veterans.
“When a parent is killed or seriously injured in the line of duty, the challenge of coping is enormous for the child,” says Klein. “And the burden of providing financial support for the child’s college education is nearly insurmountable. This scholarship will give these children the chance to attend SU, so they can build better lives for themselves in the aftermath of a tragedy.”

Both Klein and Trent know how important it is that the scholarship becomes fully endowed. Only then will the fund generate enough income to provide financial assistance for deserving students, and do so in perpetuity. Additional gifts will enable the fund to yield even greater support.

“When James graduated from college, he elected to serve our country instead of beginning a career,” adds Klein. “My hope is that this scholarship will honor James’s memory and sacrifice, while instilling a sense of pride among our alumni.”

Gifts of any type—one-time, deferred, or annual—and any amount can support this cause, and help create opportunity for children whose parent has made the ultimate sacrifice.

**To Learn More...**

For more information about how you can contribute to The James Lyons ’03 Sons and Daughters Memorial Fund, contact Christina Walker G’05 in the Office of Gift Planning at 315.443.3991.

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James Lyons came to SU to prepare for medical school. But as the namesake of his great-grandfather, a Civil War veteran, he had the military in his blood. When 9/11 hit, Lyons felt it was his turn to serve. With a year of ROTC under his belt, he graduated from SU and enrolled in Officer Candidate School.

More training led to an assignment at Fort Hood, Texas, and then to his deployment to Iraq. “He was under fire every day,” Bob Lyons recalls. “He lost his first tank to an IED [improvised explosive device] in January 2006, and a second only days before he was killed.”

Lyons was highly decorated at the time of his death, having earned the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Meritorious Service Medal, among other honors. “It’s important to have something positive result from James’s sacrifice,” his dad says. “This scholarship will be a way to support the families of those who have given so much to our country.”

James Lyons visited with his parents, Bob and Marcia Lyons, in his hometown of Rochester, New York, prior to his tour of duty in Iraq.