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Honoring a hero: Naval ship commissioning at Port Everglades



Hero is a word often used. On rare occasion, it describes an ordinary person who does something extraordinary. Marine Corporal Jason Dunham was a real hero, one who gave his life on the battlefield to save two of his fellow Marines.

Dunham threw his Kevlar® helmet and his body on a live grenade in April 2004 during Operation Iraqi Freedom in Karabilah, Iraq, sustaining massive injuries. He died eight days later. Jason was 22.

His selfless and heroic act was honored posthumously with the Medal of Honor in 2006 and will continue to be remembered as the United States Navy has named its newest guided missile destroyer the U.S.S. Jason Dunham (DDG 109).

The ship will be commissioned on November 13 at Port Everglades, as part of 10 days of community activities surrounding the destroyer's entry into the U.S. fleet.

"This is going to be an inspirational and important community event honoring the ultimate sacrifice Jason gave for his country," said Chuck Black, event chairman. "Commissioning ceremonies are emotional experiences and this one will be especially meaningful to us in South Florida."

During the next few months, there will be several fundraising [events](#) to help the Fort Lauderdale Council of the Navy League of the United States cover costs for the commissioning, Black said.

The first was August 7, with an evening cruise aboard the Sun Dream Yacht, Caprice. Jason's mother, Deb, and U.S.S. Jason Dunham (DDG 109) Commanding Officer, Commander Scott Sciretta were guests on the cruise.

Later this summer and fall, Jason's commanding officer in Iraq, Major Trent Gibson, will visit Fort Lauderdale, as will Michael Phillips, the *Wall Street Journal* reporter who wrote a book about Jason titled "The Gift of Valor."

This will be the fourth ship commissioned at Port Everglades, including the U.S.S. Cole in 1996, the U.S.S. Higgins in 2000 and the U.S.S. Bainbridge in 2005.

For more information about donations, contact Chuck Black at 954-547-8858