

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION HONORS WILLIAMSON & BOOKER



While remembering those that sacrificed their lives while serving in our country's armed forces, the Community Foundation of Switzerland County, Inc. would like to pay tribute to two special gentlemen this Memorial Day holiday: Robert "Bobby Joe" Williamson and Kenneth Raymond "KR" Booker.

Robert Joe Williamson was born on March 3, 1945. He spent his youth in Vevay, loved playing baseball and was a member of the high school cross country team. Bobby Joe graduated from Vevay High School in 1963 and enlisted in the U.S. Army in July following his graduation. He was on his third tour of duty when he was mortally wounded on January 31, 1968 as he tried to relieve some trapped men. His fearless actions inspired his men to continue the attack and defeat the enemy forces. Sergeant Williamson was Switzerland County's first soldier killed in action in Vietnam. Due to his extraordinary heroism, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, an award earned by very few. Sergeant Williamson was also honored with inclusion in the group of inaugural inductees into the new Indiana Military Veterans Hall of Fame in 2014.

Kenneth Raymond Booker was born on February 5, 1982. He was raised in Switzerland County and was an active member of the Switzerland County FFA. Kenneth graduated from Switzerland County High School in 2000 and joined the U.S. Army shortly after graduating. Kenneth served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. His exemplary service earned him an assignment in military intelligence but Kenneth preferred working in the field and requested a transfer back to infantry. Joining a Stryker Brigade Combat Unit, Kenneth returned to Iraq for his third deployment. On November 14, 2007, he was killed in Mukhisa, Iraq when an enemy improvised explosive device blew up the Stryker tank he commanded. Sergeant Booker was Switzerland County's first resident to die in Operation Iraqi Freedom. His distinguished service earned him a Bronze Star, Purple Heart and many other awards for his service to his country.

Robert Joe Williamson and Kenneth Raymond Booker had a lot in common. Both grew up in Switzerland County. Both enlisted in the U.S. Army immediately following high school. Both excelled while serving their country. Both made the ultimate sacrifice while defending and protecting the freedoms the rest of us get to enjoy. And both were the first Switzerland County residents killed in their respective wars.

Endowments have been created in memory of both of these gentlemen at the Community Foundation of Switzerland County, Inc. An endowment is a permanent fund set up to produce income for a charitable purpose- in this case, scholarships. It will distribute a portion of the income generated from investments but the principal will remain intact. What this means is that both the Bobby Joe Williamson Scholarship and the Sgt. Kenneth Raymond Booker Memorial Scholarship will be doing good here in Switzerland County long after we are all gone. And just as important, both of these gentlemen will be remembered forever for their heroic actions and for giving the ultimate sacrifice.

The Community Foundation is honored to play a role in ensuring that the endowments created in memory of both Robert Joe Williamson and Kenneth Raymond Booker continue to enable Switzerland County students to pursue their postsecondary educations. To pay our respects in honor of Memorial Day, the Community Foundation is donating \$1,000 to both the Bobby Joe Williamson Scholarship and the Sgt. Kenneth Raymond Booker Memorial Scholarship. In addition, the Community Foundation is offering a matching gift opportunity for anyone wishing to donate to either of these two endowments. The first \$1,000 in gifts received for each scholarship endowment will be matched \$1 for \$1 by the Community Foundation. The match is effective immediately and will end on June 30, 2017 or whenever all the matching funds have been used, whichever comes first. The Community Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization so all donations made will be tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by the IRS.

Memorial Day is a day to remember those that made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the many freedoms we now enjoy today. The Community Foundation would like for everyone to take a moment on May 29th to remember Bobby Joe Williamson, Kenneth Raymond Booker and the many others from Switzerland County that sacrificed their life while serving our country.

If you have any questions about either the Bobby Joe Williamson Scholarship or the Sgt. Kenneth Raymond Booker Memorial Scholarship or would like to make a donation to one of the funds, please stop by the Community Foundation's office at 303 Ferry Street in Vevay, call 812-427-9160 or email info@cfsci.org.