

Flags of remembrance: memory across the miles

NASSAWADOX – U.S. Fighter planes on a mission over Afghanistan, a military family living in Great Britain, and Shore Memorial Hospital—all connected for a poignant moment by a bond that recognizes no boundaries—the bond of love.

The story begins with a close-knit Eastern Shore family whose members for three generations had been employed at Shore Memorial. Grandmother Thelma Downes worked there as a Certified Nurse's Assistant in Maternal Health in the 80s and 90s. Her daughter, Kendall Chandler has been at the hospital for 30 years, working in many different capacities, including her present position as a Compliance Associate. Chandler's son, Edward Ames, earned extra money during high school by working in Shore's Dietary department. Ames then graduated from Northampton High in 1989 and joined the Air Force in 1990, rising to his present rank of Senior Master Sergeant.

Despite being posted overseas, Ames and his family kept in close contact with his relatives back home. He was especially fond of his grandmother and was devastated she passed away in 1996 and he was unable to attend her funeral. For years, he felt a strong need to "do something" as a memorial and finally fastened on an idea. He acquired American flags and, in July of 2007, two F-15E Strike Eagle fighter planes carried the flags along on a combat mission in Afghan airspace. If he couldn't be with his grandmother, her spirit would be there with him and his comrades, flying high in the red, white and blue of the land they love.

Master Sergeant Ames has donated the flags for a continuing memorial to two Eastern Shore institutions that represent home to him. One goes to his elementary school, Occohannock Elementary, and the other to Shore Memorial Hospital where it will be on display in History Hall on the Second Floor.

The hospital commends Master Sergeant Ames for his devotion and determination and thanks him for choosing Shore Memorial as the recipient of his family history. It is indeed a fitting choice, since the hospital was christened Northampton-Accomack Memorial Hospital back in 1928 as a tribute to America's military heroes who perished in WWI. Later, the Board of Trustees expanded the scope of the memorial to honor soldiers who died in service to their country in all wars. History Hall on the Second floor is full of mementos of 80 years of healthcare on the Eastern Shore. It is open to the public during regular hospital business hours.