

Parents of soldier killed in Iraq raise funds for banners

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RANCHO CUCAMONGA » As some of the city's 400 military banners become weathered, a Rancho Cucamonga couple has stepped forward to help raise money for replacements.

Rick and Kim Creed lost their son, Army Cpl. Matt Creed, in 2006 when he was killed by a sniper while on patrol in Iraq. Rick Creed said Matt's Gold Star banner, which hangs above Haven Avenue, is a way for him

to greet his son every day.

Some banners have been up for some time and have become brown, or faded.

"They're harder to see," Rick Creed said. "There are a couple of them that are hard to read. It's not a good or bad thing. It's just something that needs to be taken care of."

Wanting other families to have clean banners, the Creeds have begun a fundraising effort to provide the city with money to replace worn military banners for active-duty service members.

"Each year I walk up and down the streets and I take

pictures of all the banners," Rick Creed said. "In the last couple of years, some of them have become faded. I went to the city to get some of them cleaned up, and it turns out it costs as much to replace them as much as it is to clean them, so I said, 'OK. We'll start working to get a few of them replaced.'"

Francie Palmer, the marketing manager for the city's community services department, said the city replaces banners when they become torn by the wind but does not for those that become brown or faded.

"The Creed family last

year stepped forward with fundraising for Freedom Courtyard, and once the dedication (for the memorial area) occurred, they said, 'What's next? What else can we do?' They had mentioned seeing the banners that have appeared weathered and asked if they could assist with a funding mechanism. This is something that we're very appreciative of them adopting," said Palmer.

Freedom Courtyard is a monument and reflection area to honor American service members at Central Park's community and senior center, northwest of

Base Line Road and Milliken Avenue.

There are over 400 banners displayed throughout the city, and 15 contain a gold star representing service members who have died while in military service.

"It's being able to honor families and for them to say, 'There's my son; he's doing a good thing for my country,'" Rick Creed said. "'There's my daughter; she's doing a good thing.'"

The city's Armed Forces Banner Program was launched in 2005.

"Our son's banner is there on Haven, and when

I drive up and down Haven, I say, 'Hey, how are you doing Matt?'" Creed said. "But there will be a day when I can't do it any more and that will be bittersweet. I won't be able to wave when I go by, but at the same time, when the banners are down we won't be at war any more, and that's a very good thing."

The Creeds will be collecting donations for worn banners during the holiday season at their home at 11426 Tioga Peak Court, where they have a Christmas lights display coordinated to holiday and patriotic music.