

Letterkenny dedicates day care in honor of fallen Waynesboro soldier

By JIM HOOK Senior Writer

CHAMBERSBURG, Wednesday, June 8 - The children at Letterkenny's child care center can look up every day to see a hero smiling down at them.

"When these small children pass through the door and see Richard Tieman's picture, they will know what a hero is, not superman or Batman, but Staff Sgt. Richard Tieman, (who will) live in their hearts as a hero," said First Sgt. Gregory Stevens.

Tieman is smiling in the photograph.

Tieman, a 28-year-old Waynesboro man, was in the lead vehicle of a convoy targeted by a suicide bomber on May 18, 2010, in Kabul, Afghanistan. He was among five Americans killed in the blast.

"He's the only person I know who could make you smile on the worst day," said Sgt. Andrew Rodriguez of Houston, Texas. "He did it with his smile alone."

Rodriguez was among five soldiers who flew in from Germany to attend the dedication Wednesday of the Letterkenny Child Development Center. About 75 soldiers, family and community leaders gathered to honor Tieman.

On that fateful morning "TNT" Tieman had argued with Platoon Sgt. Hugo Webster about who was going to lead the convoy. Webster wound up riding in the second vehicle, which had its windshield blown out in the attack.

"It's because of Staff Sgt. Tieman that we can stand here," Webster said, introducing his fellow soldiers. "That's my story and I'm sticking to it. I never had a hero. I grew up without a dad. I'm proud to say Staff Sgt. Tieman is truly my hero."

Tieman's men smiled and nodded when Maj. Gen. Reuben D. Jones described him: "He was tough. He was arrogant. He was arrogantly proud." Tieman was up early, caring, demanding and the first one there, according to Jones, who flew in from San Antonio. Tieman would not let his soldiers do anything that he wouldn't do.

"That's a soldier," Jones said. "That's a hero."

Non-commissioned officers, such as Staff Sgt. Tieman, are the primary and most visible leaders in the Army, Letterkenny commander Col. Cheri Provanca said. It's fitting that a child development center with the responsibility of teaching and caring youngsters should bear his name. Tieman had planned to become a drill sergeant.

The ceremony sometimes dislodged memories for which words failed.

Retired Sgt. First Class Deanglo Bivins struggled to tell:

n How Tieman on a dare slapped his new ranking officer's back.

n How Tieman helped him assemble his wife's furniture.

n How Tieman reacted in early 2006, when Bivins was clearing a route in downtown Ramadi, Iraq - Time magazine's most dangerous city. Bivins sputtered: "My vehicle took a pretty bad hit. I was cut off trying to get the vehicle out. It was too dangerous to put anybody on the ground. We started to take small arms fire from different buildings. What he did for me and my guys that night is the reason I believe wholeheartedly this building is named after him."

Tieman's wife and father said having his name on a child center was appropriate.

"Kids adored him," said his widow, Paulina.

Why? "It could be his smile," she said. "He was just a funny guy." "We miss him dearly," said his father Richard Tieman Jr