***(Submitted photos)***

**INFO BOX:**

**JAMES A. WATERS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION**

In memory of her son, Valerie Waters started the James A. Waters Memorial Foundation to honor Jimmy’s passion for athletics. The foundation helps supply student athletes with equipment or funds they need to participate in school sports. The foundation has served approximately 200 athletes. The foundation is selling shirts as a fundraiser through Aug. 20. Short sleeve, crew neck, long sleeve, baseball shirts and a youth option are available in many colors. For more information, please visit the James A. Waters Memorial Foundation Facebook page.

**Greenwood man honors local former athlete, fallen soldier by mowing flag in yard**

**By Nancy Price**

A Greenwood resident decided to celebrate freedom last month by mowing his 4-acre lawn in the shape of the American flag – with 13 stripes and 50 stars.

Rob Merchant decided he wanted to honor a former middle school wrestler he coached many years ago: Jimmy Waters, a Whiteland High School graduate who joined the Army. Waters was killed July 1, 2011 in Afghanistan.

When Waters joined the middle school wrestling team as a seventh-grader, Merchant remembered him as “a super quiet kid, kind of in the shadows.” Waters was not yet confident in his athletic abilities. However, when Clark Pleasant Middle School was set to compete at a match against Franklin Community Middle School, a team nearly impossible to beat, the coaches – including Merchant, worked intensely with Waters for a week before the match.

“We basically took it upon ourselves to be his partner,” Merchant recalled. “It was a rough week – we pounded him and showed him techniques. As the week went on, he was stronger and better and more confident. He went into (the match) with confidence and knocked down the No. 1 team.”

Merchant created stripes in the lawn by mowing in the opposite direction, which produced a darker green color, and used a paint sprayer for the stars.

Once word spread about the flag during a two-minute segment on WTHR in Indianapolis, it was posted with 10,000 “likes” and 2,500 shares. “There were articles based on it all over the country,” Merchant said. Then, “it was posted in Afghanistan and Cairo. I talked to the Smiley Morning Show (a local morning radio program on WZPL) the next day. It was a cool 15 minutes of fame for a few days.”

To Merchant, “the flag means to be a better person today than you were yesterday. A better husband, a better father than you were yesterday.”

Before 9-11 this year, he plans to create the shape of the Twin Towers and the letters NYFD to honor the New York Fire Department next to the flag.