

# **‘The Whole Community Came Together’**

## **Iraq War veteran charts Post in honor of fallen soldier**

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One year to the day after a soldier was killed in action in Iraq, his hometown rallied to charter a VFW Post in his honor.

Gabriel Conde, of Loveland, Colo, died April 30, 2018, due to enemy fire. He was 22. Conde’s death was the first in the community since Ryan Armagost, commander of Spc. Gabriel Conde Memorial VFW Post No. 12189 had moved to Berthoud, Colo., roughly six miles from Loveland.

“A friend of mine, the commander of the American Legion here, we both were hit pretty hard by that when they brought him through town,” said Armagost, who served in Iraq in 2003 and 2008 with the 222nd MP Co. and 193rd MP Bn., respectively. “I thought we need our own VFW in town. We both thought he’d be the perfect tribute for it.”

After reaching out to area VFW Posts, Armagost contacted the Department of Colorado to begin the charter process, which was completed in April. Because the process was completed near the anniversary of Conde’s death, Armagost said they thought officially chartering the Post on that date would be the “perfect way” to honor him.

Conde himself was a “well-known” student of Berthoud High School, according to Armagost, was the type of person to give the shirt off his own back.

“When that name hit the news as being one of the troops killed in action, the whole community came together,” Armagost said. “It was inspiring and amazing how many people just came out of the woodwork... [and] lined the streets.”

Armagost said when he approached Conde’s parents to get their permission to honor the fallen service member, they recommended including Conde’s uncle, a Vietnam War veteran, in the Post. Monse Conde became a charter member of the Post.

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“Thing that got us over the hump of our recruiting efforts was [Conde’s father] Bob also was in touch with a lot of members from his platoon,” Armagost said.

Fifteen of Conde’s platoon members joined the Post in honor of their fallen comrade.

The Post also purchased banners to be displayed in town with Conde’s name and service information and will begin working next year to name a local highway in his honor.

The Post currently has 55 members and will start an Auxiliary, which Conde’s parents are expected to join.

*This article is featured in the September/October 2019 issue of VFW Checkpoint. If you're a Post, District or Department Commander and aren't receiving the Checkpoint e-newsletter, please contact the VFW magazine at [magazine@vfw.org](mailto:magazine@vfw.org).*