

2nd Annual Tanner Higgins Warrior Run set April 12

Written by By FAITH HUFFMAN, News-Telegram News Editor
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Army Sgt. Tanner Higgins will be remembered and honored for paying the ultimate sacrifice for his country during the 2nd Annual Tanner Higgins Warrior Run April 12 at Cooper Lake State Park.

Higgins joined the Army in October 2007, following his spring graduation from Sulphur Springs High school. He was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. Higgins was on his fourth deployment, having served one tour in Iraq and was on his third tour in Afghanistan in April 14, 2012, when the assault he was leading against an enemy compound in Logar Province, Afghanistan, came under fire; he was mortally wounded by small arms fire.

Higgins family and friends, especially those back in Texas, pledged to keep their Tan-Man's memory alive.



Following the outpouring of continued support from family, friends and Sgt. Higgins' "brothers" in the Army, his loved ones became aware of a need among Armed Forces personnel.

"When Tanner joined the Army in 2007, bonuses and monetary incentives were given, although I think it's safe to say no one joins the Armed Forces for the money! But today, with so many military cuts, our young men and women joining the military aren't given incentives and often have to purchase a lot of their own uniforms and other necessities. I think it's a shame. I just wanted to help these kids who are sacrificing so much so they can live in freedom and enjoy the many liberties and privileges we have here in the USA. It's the least we could do to show some support for the few that answer the call," said former *News-Telegram* feature writer Patti D. Stone Sells, mother of Higgins, whose middle son Dillon Henegar is a specialist with 1/75th ranger Regiment, B-company stationed in Savannah, Ga., at Hunter Army Airfield.

Sells explained that Henegar injured his knee during Ranger school, and while recovering was found to have a compressed fracture in his lower back and two bulging discs in his upper back, "most likely injury of a jump during Airborne." He's stationed in the 1/75th Ranger Regiment in B- Company.

"Tanner was in D-company. The 1/75th is on rotation right now — deployed. Dillon did not

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have to go ... It has been an uneventful deployment so far, THANK GOODNESS, as many of Tanner and Dillon's buddies are amongst them. I may not have Tanner to worry about any more, but I have about a dozen others to worry about in his place. They have all been so good to me. Checking in and just stepping up to the plate for anything I should need. ... so special... my Army boys," Sells said.

Thus, the Tanner Higgins Warrior Run was started in 2013, slated the weekend each year nearest the day Higgins made the ultimate sacrifice for his country.

A registration fee is charged for participating in the five-mile run/walk through Cooper Lake State Park-South Sulphur Unit to benefit the Tanner Higgins Military Memorial Fund, which is awarded to at least one Sulphur Springs High School senior who has answered the call to serve their country by enlisting in one of the four branches of United States Armed Forces.

Last year's race drew more than 200 people and enough funds to for three awards. Recipients were Mason Doss, Navy; Hayden Smith, Army National Guard; and Daisy Sosa, Marine Corps.

"We had such a great turn out for last year's event, such a wonderful response from participants," Sells said. "I've had people contacting me all year long asking if we are going to do it again. We are and it will be much more organized now that we have that first year of experience under our belt. This year, we're giving participants a chip for their shoe or tracking bracelet that will record their pace and time. This year's registration is done by Race Chip Timing. It's \$5 more than last year but will be handled professionally by that company," Sells said

As of March 24, only 40 had registered for the race. Participation is even encouraged for individuals from out-of-state who want to help but can't make the trip to Texas April 12. They can simply register online and have their own private run with a party of one or small group wherever they are at. Those out-of-state simply designate in the comments section on their registration form that they won't be in Texas and include their address and their shirt will be mailed to them.

Registration can be done online in advance or by downloading and mailing a registration form for \$40. Race day registration will be \$45. Those who registered in advance will receive a t-shirt; if there are any shirts left after the race, they will be sold at a discounted price. Finisher bracelets will be handed out to those who finish the race. Register online at <http://tannerhigginsrun.com> or print a registration form to mail in.

The 2nd Annual Tanner Higgins Warrior Run will begin with pre-race check-in, registration and packet pick-up beginning at 7 a.m. Saturday, April 12, at Cooper Lake State Park-South Sulphur Unit, 1650 FM 3505. At 8:15 a.m., Hopkins County Military Coalition will post the colors. The race will start at 8:30 a.m. and continue along Coyote Run Nature Trail.

Medals will be presented to race winners in the following male and female age divisions: 15 and under, 16-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70 and up, including an over-all male and female winner and masters.

There will be free snacks, drinks, drawings for prizes. A first aid station with an EMT will be available at the park on race day as a precaution. There will also be two water stations.

Those who want to help out, but are not up to making the trail are invited to stop by race headquarters. There will be DJ music and lots of fellowship and opportunities to share memories of Higgins among friends, or to simply learn more about this local hero.

Those planning to attend should note, however, that there is a \$5 park admission free for

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those 13 and older who are race spectators April 12.

Those participating in or showing support at the race should park in Gulls Bluff Day use Area, the trailhead is located at Heron Harbor Day Use Area. Go online to <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/cooper-lake> for directions.

For more information about the Tanner Higgins Warrior Run or the local hero go online to: <http://tannerhigginsrun.com>
or on Facebook: Tanner-Higgins-Warrior-Run or InRemembranceOfTannerHiggins