

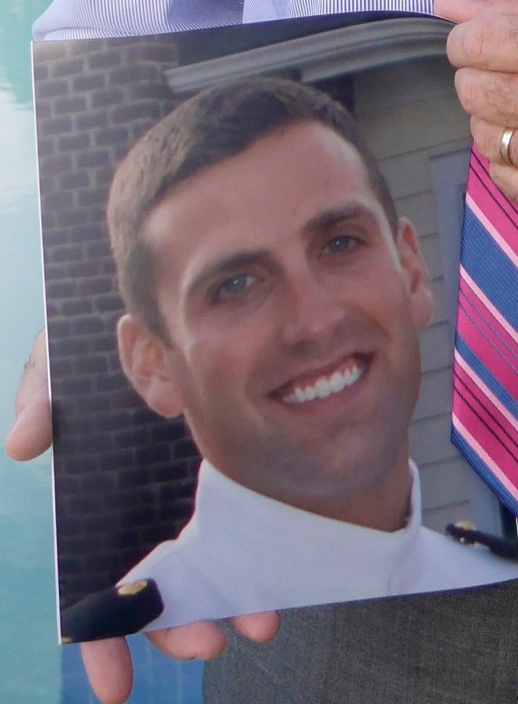
COVER STORY

# Channeling Chris

## A FATHER'S LOSS; A SON'S LEGACY

*by Lisa Maguire*

Looking at John Mosko, you'd never know he's experienced the worst nightmare of every parent – the loss of a child. John is the epitome of fortitude. Though grief-stricken, through Chris's strength, John found his as well.





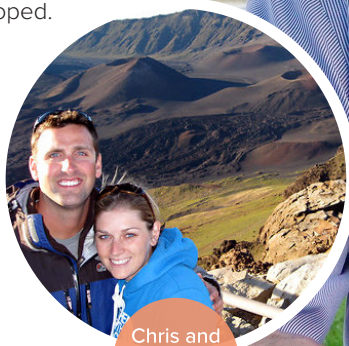
Navy Lt.  
Christopher E.  
Mosko – Chris  
– was killed  
in action on  
April 26, 2012  
along with  
SSgt Brandon  
Eggleston, SSgt  
Dick Alson  
Lee, and Fibi



the German Shepherd, a naval bomb dog. The unit was traveling through Ghazni, Afghanistan when they were hit with an IED (Improvised Explosive Device). This event was catastrophic for Chris's family, but it is not what defines Chris's life. His ultimate sacrifice was a tragic ending, however, it is what led him to that fateful day that has empowered those who loved and knew him, and those who didn't, to challenge themselves to live as he lived.

Chris had always been self-directed, achieving whatever it was that he set his mind to. He always excelled in school and sports. Some of his high school teachers and mentors remember him as an innate leader - fearless and driven; but equally compassionate and community-oriented. In elementary school, he'd seen the Army-Navy game and it was from that moment his passion for the Navy developed. He'd once had dreams of the Naval Academy, but as he grew through school and extracurricular activities, he eventually found his way to Drexel University and their ROTC Program. He graduated in 2007 from the Commerce and Engineering program which provided him with work experience while still finding time to serving through ROTC and the Drexel Honors program.

After graduating, Chris forged a path as a Navy officer, entering the Naval EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Community where the whole team must learn to render harmless explosives on land, under the water and potentially in the air. His first deployment was just three months after he married his wife, Amanda, his college sweetheart. While deployed, he acted as Assistant Officer in Charge and found himself in Haiti offering relief from the massive earthquake in 2010. The following year, he deployed to Afghanistan as the Platoon Commander under Operation Enduring Freedom. His second deployment was his last, but he lives on through his family and loved ones.



Chris and  
his wife  
Amanda

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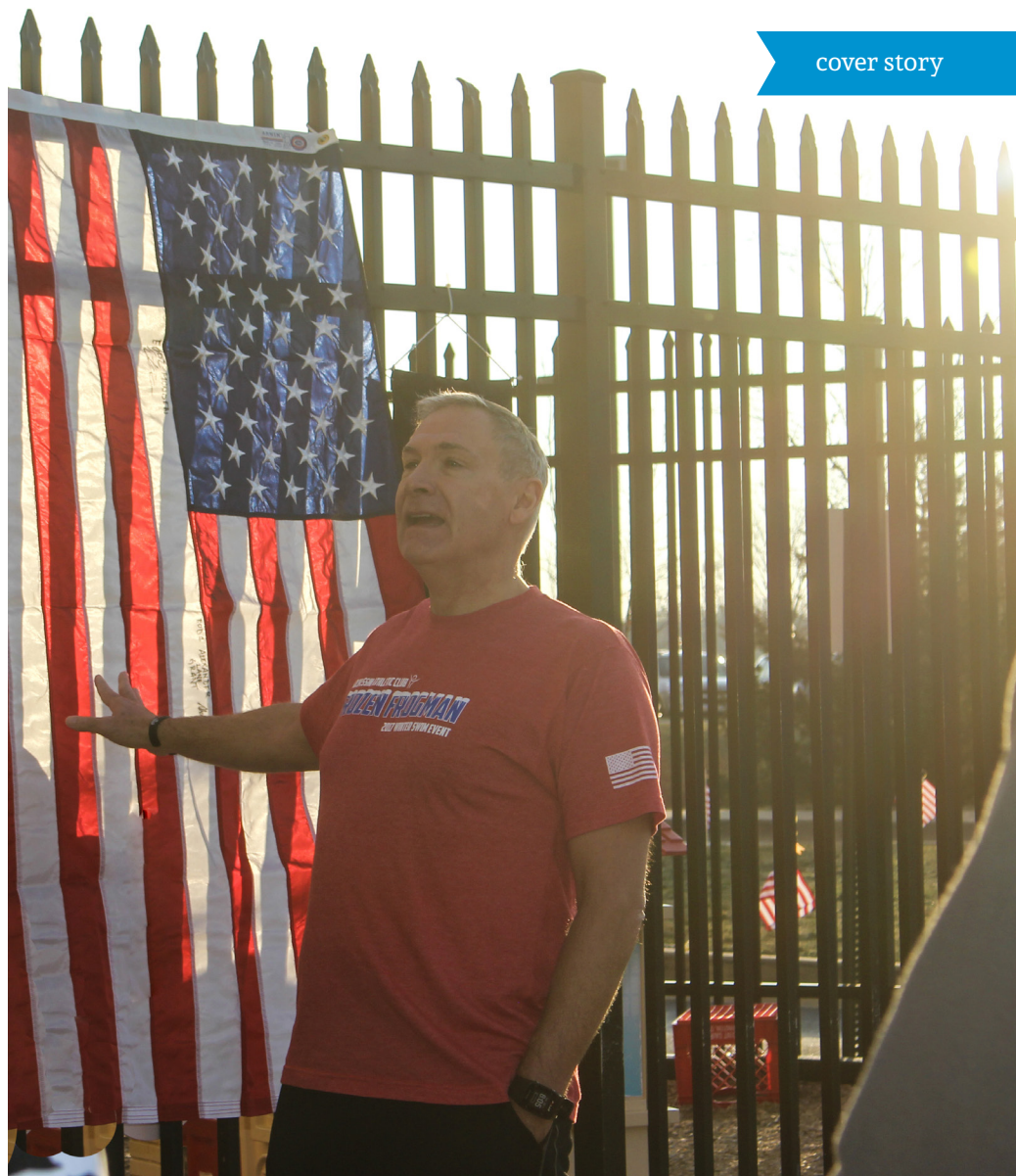
*Time has not changed the hole that was left in my heart and my life and I have learned to pour memories into the hole and let them flow through the empty space. Now, instead of a hole, I have a conduit to him.*

In getting to know John Mosko, it isn't hard to see where Chris got his personality. John is quick-witted, smart, and resilient. John originally received a degree and practiced in the field of chemical engineering, but moved on to a path better suited to his interest and skills. John has focused on product management and marketing, which has taken him all around the world. Despite the demands of the corporate world and his goals and ambitions, has always made time for family, faith, and community.

John, his wife, Gayle, and their two children, Chris and Meredith, made a number of moves over the years (Gayle reminds us that they have lived in nine homes over the course of their lives together), having to change schools, friends, and routines, but some might say that it also strengthened their bond as a family unit. In each new home, they always had each other, and they all share the same wonderful warmth and positive attitude that they direct at the world around them.

After Chris passed, John struggled with "days of progress and moments of regress," he says. While people grasp how this is a loss no parent is prepared to endure, he reminds us that the loss has had an impact on so many others — particularly his daughter, Chris' sister, Meredith. Her loss is unique as she lost a friend and a mentor. She lost the man who she knew would be great uncle to her son, Christopher, who is now 10 months old. As an Army wife living overseas in Italy, she is still tied to the military community and the unique challenges it creates.

On the first anniversary of his son's death, John wrote, "Time has not changed the hole that was left in my heart and my life and I have learned to pour memories into the hole and let them flow through the empty space. Now, instead of a hole, I have a conduit



to him." And just as he mentioned days of progress and moments of regress, it was a roller coaster of emotion for the first two years after his passing.

On the first Father's Day following Chris's passing, John wrote about the phrase,

"Hope for the best, but plan for the worst." How he'd only planned for the best — enjoying life's most precious moments with his son as time went on. Diving trips, or Meredith's wedding, simple Father's Day phone conversations or dinners. But those were not to be. The following Memorial Day, John realized how different a

meaning the day would take for he and his family. For many Americans, it is the start of summer, a reminder of warm weather, family gatherings, and delicious cookouts. And while it is a day to honor those who have

fallen, for John, it became a reminder of all those still in harm's way.

The feeling that it was no longer enough to remember the fallen, but to begin thinking about the living was enough to motivate John to start taking action. Finally, August

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29th, 2014, more than two years after that fateful day, that John began to take some action to honor both the living and the fallen, but he didn't know that this action might also lead him on a path to repairing his broken heart.

John has been doing triathlons since the early 1980s, so fitness challenges seemed like a reasonable place to start. John and Chris had always enjoyed sports and athletic challenges together. Almost on a whim, John decided he would take ride on his bike to honor Chris — from Avondale to Bethany Beach — in August —



112 miles in the summer heat. His friend, Frank Masley, asked if he could come along, and the two made the ride dedicating their effort and time to the memory of Chris. Since that time, he has worked with the Travis Manion Foundation on their programs and raised money for their 9/11 Heroes runs that are done in memory of the fallen – including those who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. John feels driven by the Travis Manion Foundation motto: “Honor the fallen by challenging the living.”

Since then, John has been actively involved in the Travis Manion Foundation,

## *John speaks to young men and women about how important standing up for the right thing is, no matter the hand you were dealt.*

from participating in events to giving speeches at high schools to students on the premise that “Character Does Matter.” In these talks, John speaks to young men and women about how important standing up for the right thing is, no matter the hand you were dealt. Through hard work and perseverance, you can be your personal best.

John came to HAC in August 2015, just about the time another HAC Member, Bob McArthur had suggested a swim event to benefit the Navy SEAL Foundation – the Frozen Frogman. John supported the event with his participation and swam 3.1 miles in the pool in Chris’s name. He raised more than \$1500. It was a no-brainer to partner with the Mosko’s for the 2017 event, which with his help and Bob’s drive and vision, the popularity of the event grew and it grew from its first-year total of \$9,000 raised to a whopping \$36,000 raised.

The Travis Manion Foundation has three main focus areas. The first is to provide support for the loved ones of a fallen hero. The second is to help veterans as they



John and fellow swimmers from the 2017 Frozen Frogman

For the first year of our Frozen Frogman, John supported the event with his participation and swam 3.1 miles in the pool in Chris’s name. He raised more than \$1500. In 2017, John contributed to growing the event three-fold, helping us raise \$36,000 for the Travis Manion Foundation. Join us on January 29, 2018 for next year’s Frogman swim.

transition from the military into the non-military world. Finally, they work on bringing the message that Character Does Matter to students in middle and high school through the “If not me, then who?” motto which anchors the Travis Manion Foundation.

This year’s event helped support a Survivors Expedition of high school students who had lost either a parent or a sibling. These expeditions include a service project as well as the opportunity to share their experiences and help each other heal. Amanda, Chris’ wife has participated in a number of Survivor expeditions including one that took her to Peru to help a local

community as well as trek the mountains to Machu Pichu.

While each participant in any event may question what their real impact is, they need to remember that each of them can focus on the “If not me, then who?” ethos. Others will see them and follow and the impact is now multiplied by two. As we grow these events, we change the course of other’s lives because they will be helped and experience hope. John hopes that the Frozen Frogman can continue its exciting growth and provide that support for families of the fallen. <<<