



## Alyssa Etheridge

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**Issue** Our students on our "Day of Caring" have for years written soldiers who are serving overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan, but how do we honor those Oregonians who have died? In response to Lincoln's request in the Gettysburg Address that there is "unfinished work remaining before us," how do we ensure and honor these soldiers so that their families know that they "shall not have died in vain"?

**Project Description** Bayard Wilkeson, an artillery officer in the Civil War, died at Gettysburg, after he courageously tried to save his life by amputating his seriously wounded leg. His father Sam, a war correspondent covering Gettysburg for the NY Times, found his son on July 4th, 1863, the day after the end of the battle. In his editorial the father wrote: "Who can write the history of a battle whose eyes are immovably fastened upon a central figure of transcendently absorbing interest—the dead body of an oldest born... My pen is heavy. Oh, you dead, who at Gettysburg have baptized with your blood the second birth of Freedom in America, how you are to be envied!" Moved by the unimaginable pain of a son's death and inspired by Lincoln's words, three middle school historians, Alyssa Etheridge, Lauren Lonas and Acacia Ricks, created the Bayard Wilkeson Project. Wanting all Oregonians to know that our fallen heroes "shall not have died in vain" and in memory of "these honored dead," these young women worked every day of the 2013/2014 school year to honor each of the 142 soldiers from Oregon that have died in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Project Outcome** The Bayard Wilkeson Project website and interactive Google map has a picture of each Oregonian killed in battle, a brief biography, and a hyperlink to each soldier's obituary. "The unfinished work remaining before us" is to present our "gift of honor" to the parents of Oregon's fallen this fall. The four-year plan is the other 49 states create maps for their own fallen soldiers linking to our site.

**Request** We need from our representatives and senators the wisdom and efforts to help contact the parents of Oregon fallen soldiers. As Lincoln said to Mrs. Bixby, "I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

**Project Link** <http://bayardwilkesonproject.org>