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Monday, October 15, 2018

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Fallen 5 Drive Has Ties to Dade County

by: Summer Kelley

Five. An important number for Wildwood resident Joshua Kapellusch. Five is also an important number for Chattanooga as it represents the Fallen 5 - Chattanooga's heroes who died in the shooting on July 16, 2015. The number five is represented many times in Kapellusch's drive to remember the Fallen Five and to take the memory of their sacrifice across the United States.



Kapellusch's "drive" is not just his passion, but quite literally his purpose - Fallen 5 Drive. Each year on the anniversary of the shooting, Kapellusch drives a specially modified vehicle across the U.S. to San Francisco where he hangs a memorial flag saved from the shooting on the Golden Gate bridge. The mission of this drive is, "To honor the sacrifices the Fallen 5 made on July 16th, 2015 and to show how Chattanooga comes together as a community, and as Americans".

The Fallen 5 Drive begins with the Fallen 5. The number of veterans who lost their lives in

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The Fallen 5 Drive begins with the Fallen 5. The number of veterans who lost their lives in Chattanooga during the shooting at the Lee Highway military recruiting center and the Navy Operational Support Center. From the Marines - Gunnery Sgt. Thomas J. Sullivan, Staff Sgt. David A. Wyatt, Sgt. Carson A. Holmquist, and Lance Cpl. Squire K. "Skip" Wells. From the Navy - Petty Officer 2nd Class Randall J. Smith. The shooter was shot and killed by police the same day and the incident was ruled an act of Domestic Terrorism.

A month after the shooting, Kapellusch visited the memorial site in Chattanooga and wanted to start "turning tragedy into triumph". Kapellusch collected one of the flags at the memorial site set for destruction, folded it up and kept it for future use.

Five fuels. A truck that uses five fuels was Kapellusch's brain child. He began with a 72 Chevy Blazer 4 x 4 truck because, as Kapellusch pointed out, a new vehicle has all kinds of technology and new fuels and new technology would not necessarily be that interesting. Kapellusch said he was able to convert the Blazer to use natural gas, propane, solar, ethanol and gasoline.

Not only did Kapellusch, who holds three degrees, want to create something interesting, but he also wanted to inspire others and the conversion of the blazer cost as much money as a new phone and was able to be done by him in less than a year.

On July 16, 2016, after the Memorial Service in Chattanooga remembering the Fallen Five, the "Blazer of Glory" set out on its maiden voyage.

Five-hundred miles a day for five days. Kapellusch, often joined by other riders, drive 500 miles for five days until he reaches the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, CA. 500 miles a day for each of the Fallen Five. On the Golden Gate Bridge, Kapellusch hangs the flag from the memorial. Lets it fly in honor of the Fallen Five, then takes it down, folds it and puts it away until next year as he starts the journey home - another 500 miles a day for five days for a round-trip total of 5,000 miles.

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next year as he starts the journey home - another 500 miles a day for five days for a round-trip total of 5,000 miles.

Five years. Kapellusch has now made the trip for three years (2016, 2017, 2018) and plans to make the trip for at least another two. He is very thankful for the sponsorship he has received, particularly from Lebron Clark at Ringgold MountainView Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram. Clark, a former Dade County High School graduate, is a big supporter of the Fallen 5 Drive and the Blazer of Glory.

"If he didn't sponsor me," Kapellusch said of Clark, "I wouldn't have been able to do the trip last year or this year."

Five fuels, 500 miles a day, five days, 5,000-mile round trip, and five years to remember five heroes from Chattanooga. Kapellusch continues to work to fulfill his mission. More information on Kapellusch, Fallen 5 Drive and the Blazer of Glory can be found on the website fallen5drive.org or follow their journey on Facebook under [Fallen 5 Drive](#).

"I am taking our message across the country and showing how Chattanooga and the community came together," Kapellusch said.



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