



HOPE IN THE TRENCHES

THE KATE W. MCDONALD MEMORIAL
MILITARY SCHOLARSHIP

Peggy Wilckens' Story

Born at a naval hospital in San Diego, California, Kate McDonald took her first breaths as the daughter of a Navy physician. Relocating to bases in Cuba, Indiana, North Carolina, and Hawaii, Kate grew up learning practical knowledge about military life that she would later pass on to friends as hard-earned wisdom.

Kate became a military spouse in 2008, and together, she and her husband embarked on a rollercoaster journey with five moves in ten years and numerous deployments.

From the trenches of Navy life, Kate demonstrated quietly and tirelessly how to endure the hardest seasons as a military spouse during wartime service. The four things that mattered most to Kate were faith, family, friends, and football. Her Catholic faith not only shaped her life but those around her. She was a participant and organizer of several Bible studies that created a supportive community. She kept her and her friends hopeful and focused on the Truth when it was easy to become discouraged. Reclaiming Friendship was one of her favorite studies.

At the end of 2019, Kate, 34, sought medical care on their overseas base for a lingering cough she couldn't shake. The scans returned a shocking diagnosis that shattered her world—renal carcinoma, which had metastasized to her lungs. Suddenly fighting for her life, Kate was medevaced to a stateside military hospital where brain scans revealed additional malignant tumors and where she received aggressive treatment for her cancer.

Peggy Wilckens, her mother and also a WWP participant, shared, "As she began her incredible battle with cancer, I am sure she had moments of anger with God, but she always knew God was with her, joining her in her journey. This faith allowed her to focus on each and every day, living it to the fullest."

Despite her fighting spirit and the tremendous efforts to prolong her life, Kate passed away a few days after Thanksgiving 2021. "She embodied the mantra of St. Therese of Lisieux, a young woman who also died much too young, but had such a profound impact, she did small things with Great Love," Peggy reflected.

In honor of the legacy of heartfelt devotion, kindness, and genuine connection left by Kate, her parents, Peggy and John Wilckens, have created **The Kate W. McDonald Memorial Military Scholarship—Hope in the Trenches**. It is their hope that Kate continues to be a source of inspiration to military spouses stationed around the globe. Due to their generous donation, active duty military members and their spouses are now eligible for free WWP Bible study guides and WWP coach support at their bases.



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