

## Chris Kolenda

Retired U.S. Army Col. And Founder of Strategic Leaders Academy  
Member since 2021

Bicycling 1700 miles across the United States will give retired U.S. Army Col. Chris Kolenda a lot of time to reflect on the six paratroopers from his unit who were killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan. But the journey is more than a commemorative ride. It will honor the fallen heroes' service and sacrifice with scholarships in their names.

Kolenda, who joined the Rotary Club of Milwaukee in 2021, created the Fallen Hero Honor Ride with a goal of raising \$340,000. The endowments will be hosted by the Rotary Club of Milwaukee and Kolenda's Saber Six Foundation to support 1-91 CAV, 173rd Airborne veterans and families as well as underserved youth in the Milwaukee area.



"These six paratroopers gave their lives so that we could pursue our dreams," Kolenda said. "They died executing the orders that I gave them and that stays with you. I have always wanted to do something special to honor their service and sacrifice, so I decided to do a bicycle ride to visit their gravesites and raise funds to help their memories live on."

Fellow Rotarians are excited to partner with Kolenda.

"The Rotary Club of Milwaukee is honored that Chris entrusted us to carry forth the legacy of his men by creating paths for young people to pursue their education and create better lives for themselves and their families," said Rotary President Todd Bentley.



The ride will begin September 25 in Spalding, Nebraska, and wind through Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania before ending in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. on October 21.

It's been about 20 years since Kolenda rode a bike with any regularity, but that didn't give him pause. When he conceived the plan last summer, he bought a new bike, hired a cycling coach, and started telling people about the ride, "so I don't chicken out." He plans on doing much of the ride solo, but will gladly welcome other cyclists on various legs throughout the route. Family and friends of the deceased soldiers, who were killed in 2007, plan to meet Kolenda at the gravesites of their loved ones.

"The stories of these six paratroopers are frozen in time, but the scholarships from Rotary and the Saber Six Foundation will keep their legacies alive and help people pursue their dreams," said Kolenda, a West Point graduate who served four tours of duty in Afghanistan.

Kolenda, who is the first American to have both fought the Taliban as a commander in combat and engages them in peace talks, is the founder of a consulting business, Strategic Leaders Academy, where he brings the wisdom of warrior-diplomacy to the private sector. He has been featured in the New York Times bestselling books “The Outpost” by Jake Tapper and “Stones into Schools” by Greg Mortenson, as well as Steve Coll’s “Directorate S” and several others. His contributions have been cited in journals and newspapers such as the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, The Economist, and The London Times. His books include “Leadership: The Warrior’s Art,” “The Counterinsurgency Challenge,” and “Zero-Sum Victory: What We’re Getting Wrong About War.” He holds a PhD in War Studies from King’s College, London.

Those donating \$1700 (\$1 per mile) to the honor ride will receive a commemorative jersey, which can be personalized if a donation is submitted by July 4, and a thank you video during the ride.

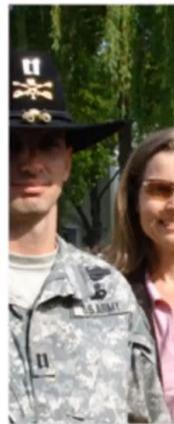


To learn more and to donate to the Fallen Hero Honor Ride, visit <https://strategicleadersacademy.com/support-fallen-hero-honor-ride/>.

## Rest in peace



**David Boris**  
Nov 12, 2007



**Tom Bostick**  
July 27, 2007



**Ryan Fritsche**  
July 27, 2007



**Adrian Hike**  
November 12, 2007



SPC JACOB M. LOWELL  
B Co./1-503RD (ABN) IN  
JUNE 2, 2007, AFGHANISTAN

**Jacob Lowell**  
June 2, 2007



**Chris Pfeifer**  
September 25, 2007

**Editor’s Note:** *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Mary Bolich.