

VETERANS DAY 2011

A MOTHER'S MISSION

Ginny Luther's son put her on the path to peaceful parenting. Even his death couldn't change that.



Photos by ALYSSA ORR/Staff Photographer

JENSEN BEACH — They seek her out almost every Memorial Day or Veterans Day — a reporter or a politician or an aging soldier in an old uniform who's putting together a community salute.

They hardly ever remember his birthday.

But Ginny Luther steps up, bravely, calmly — as if it's easy to talk about her dead son — and she does this, she says, because it's a way to remember him.

It's a way to hold him close.

"Now it's an honor because it keeps him alive, but there's always sadness because it triggers the heart," she says. "It triggers me missing him."

U.S. Army Lt. Robert Bartlett Fletcher, 24, didn't die the way you'd guess a soldier might die. There was no roadside bomb. No bullet from an enemy rifle. A helicopter didn't crash over Kurdistan.



EMILY J. MINOR

Indeed, Fletcher had been to Iraq and made it home, only to lose his life here in the States, wearing his uniform, paying an official visit to a fellow member of his unit.

Sept. 8, 2008.

Army Spc. Jody Wirawan, 22, was scheduled for discharge the very next day, but officers believed that he had stolen some expensive night-vision equipment. And they didn't want that.

"Bart offered to go so the guy could be discharged and be on his way," she says.

Lt. Fletcher's mother is a bit of a
See MINOR, 4D ►



IN TGIF:
A list of
Veterans Day
activities

When Ginny Luther's son, Robert Bartlett Fletcher, left for Iraq, she gave him a blue star made from glass. "If you can't breathe, this star is to remind you that I am breathing for you," she told him. After he was killed, a fellow soldier retrieved the star from her son's body and returned it to her. "It meant a lot to know that he carried it," she says.