

Citizen Kemp

“The United States honors Roger Kemp for his unwavering efforts to ensure the safety of his fellow citizens.”

In the moments before these words were spoken during the Presidential Citizen’s Medal presentation to Roger Kemp in the East Room of the White House, the recipient was focused on something simple.

“I really wanted to smile when I had my picture taken with the president,” recalls Roger, a Leawood resident and father of the late Ali Kemp whose young life was ended during a brutal 2002 assault. “But when I stood there with the president, who was clearly moved as the father of two daughters, I was reminded of the origin of my journey to this ceremony at the White House.”

The image captured when President Obama presented the medal—the second highest civilian award in the United States—to Roger was anything but buoyant. Rather, it portrays two somber men in an emotional moment bonded by fatherhood, one who has realized his worst fears and another whose heart aches for the loss of a precious daughter. The hug and quiet words exchanged by Roger and the president symbolically frame Roger’s passionate and relentless vision of arming women and girls against violent crime.

Roger and his wife, Kathy, founded T.A.K.E. Defense in 2004. What started as a small effort to raise awareness and empower women—12 people enrolled in the first class held in the basement of Leawood City Hall—has blossomed into a nationwide effort that has trained nearly 50,000 girls and women from age 12 to 90. Roger’s tireless efforts to defend women against danger—T.A.K.E. Defense hands-on classes are free—was recognized last summer when Kansas senators Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran submitted his name as a candidate for the Presidential Citizen’s Medal. More than 6,000 individuals were nominated, and the White House notified Roger in September that he was a winner. He joined 12 other Americans—each with diverse and courageous stories of action—on Oct. 20, 2011 in the East Room.

Roger eschews any notion of being a hero. He never imagined creating a legacy for a murdered daughter, and says he can’t fathom standing idly by. But one thing about this citizen of merit is certain.

He will never stop fighting for the gift of safety in Ali’s memory.

“She is with us every day,” Roger says. ❖

TAKE ACTION: “If we save one life through T.A.K.E. Defense, it’s worth it.”

TAKE NOTICE: “Kansas City businesses, like Lamar Advertising that donated billboards, have been instrumental in helping us catch several hundred predators.”

TAKE HEART: “Kathy’s and my mission will never stop.”

Visit takedefense.org/news/videos/roger-kemp-receives-2011-presidential-citizens-medal to see the White House ceremony honoring Roger Kemp and his fellow Presidential Citizen’s Medal recipients. For more information on T.A.K.E. Defense, visit takedefense.org.

