

GCSU and Mercer Kappa Alpha orders support local veteran

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The Kappa Alpha Order chapter at Georgia College & State University partnered with the Kappa Alpha Order at Mercer University to fund \$26,000 to purchase an all-terrain track chair for MSgt. Michael Rollins.

"It's a national goal of our

fraternity to help the communities we are a part of," said GCSU KA Philanthropy Chair Layne Mote. "KA is a partner with the Independence Fund, which offers programs and services to veterans, their families, and caretakers to improve their lives. So, this project was completed through the assistance of the Independence Fund's mobility program."

Rollins entered the Air Force in 1979 and served for 25 years before being "seriously wounded," according to his biography. He began his career as a munitions technician and later retrained as a nuclear payload specialist, working both in-state and abroad at various bases. When he retired, he had reached the rank of major sergeant.

"In 2003, while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Rollins' unit came under heavy mortar fire. He was severely wounded while trying to rescue another wounded airman. He suffered a traumatic brain injury, nerve damage, hearing loss, vision loss in one eye, and lasting issues with balance and coordination," states his biography.

Rollins was medically retired in 2004 and eventually moved to Valdosta after enduring repeated floods and hurricanes, according to his biography. His home is in a rural area with no paved roads or sidewalks, making it "near impossible to use a wheelchair or walker."

"MSgt. Rollins owns a farm

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and since receiving his chair, he uses it to get around and complete his farm duties as well as in general day-to-day life," said Mote. "Through the Independence Fund, he has a lifetime warranty on the chair and is prevented from selling it, so it can always be repaired and returned to him."

According to Mote, Georgia College's chapter raised the majority of the money through two music events. KA annually hosts the County Line Music Festival, which has grown in popularity in Baldwin County, featuring college bands. The second music event was hosted as a fundraiser event and highlighted local bands.

"We have about 80 members in the fraternity, and we aim to fundraise each year for something that will make a lasting impact," said Mote. "Sgt. Rollins told me this was a life-changing moment for him and that is what



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Georgia College and Mercer University's Kappa Alpha Order chapters presented the chair to MSgt. Michael Rollins at Mercer's Homecoming game on Saturday, Nov. 15.

means the most to us. I became a philanthropy chair to be something bigger than myself and I feel like I'm contributing to the community that welcomed me."

Fundraising goals were completed by May and Rollins received the chair in August. On Nov. 15, the GCSU KA chapter joined the Mercer chapter at the college's football

game to hold a formal ceremony presenting the chair to Rollins.

"In case you wanted to know what it meant to me, just imagine this, when we go into combat a firefight lasts just a few minutes. We pray for snowstorms or rainstorms to allow us to get away. We call them teardrops from heaven. Now I call those boys my teardrops

from heaven," said Rollins. "I have a reason to get up every morning because now it's me that can't let them down. They are not just my fraternity brothers; they are my family and have changed my life forever. Before I met them I had only one wish and they made it possible. All I wanted was to see my wife smile again and now I wake up and

see it every morning and that gift is priceless."

The GCSU KA chapter plans to do more projects in the future to support local veterans and the community. Currently, KA is fundraising \$25,000 for Habitat for Humanity to fund a home being built and will assist in construction once funds are raised.

"We have \$10,000

of the \$25,000 pledge. Donations can be made through the PayPal link on our Instagram at [ka_gcsu](https://www.instagram.com/ka_gcsu) or by mailing checks to Macon Area Habitat for Humanity (690 Holt Ave., Macon) made out to Macon Area Habitat for Humanity and marked for Kappa House," said Mote. "We keep our social media up to date with any current service projects."