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Mother of Yonkers man killed in Iraq releases novel, awaits street renaming

Ernie Garcia
elgarcia@lohud.com

YONKERS - The violent death of Hope Hollinsworth Coaxum's son Courtney in Iraq caused a profound pain she channeled into creative writing.

Her new novel, "A Gift of Sunshine," recently appeared in stores as the Yonkers City Council prepares to vote next week on renaming a portion of Onondaga Street in honor of her son, an Army sergeant killed in Baghdad on Sept. 7, 2007.

The street renaming and the release of her fourth self-published title has Hollinsworth Coaxum and her family feeling "overwhelmed and elated."

"My entire family, we're so grateful," Hollinsworth Coaxum said of the street name honor.

She said losing her son opened her eyes to struggles going on in her own community, including child sexual abuse, the topic of "A Gift of Sunshine."

"I always had this creative gene in me, but it wasn't released until my son's death," Hollinsworth Coaxum said.

Hollinsworth Coaxum, 45, lost her job as a licensing coordinator at Cadbury Schweppes shortly after her son died. Since then she has dedicated herself to volunteer work on domestic violence, peace walks and other social causes.

She wrote "A Gift of Sunshine" to offer readers victimized by sexual predators a beacon of hope, which is what she considers the sign bearing her son's name that will soon rise on Onondaga Street.

"For me it's a beacon of hope because it tells a story. This young man went off to war and he fought for our freedom," Hollinsworth Coaxum said, "and now his mother fights a war and that war is to free our children."
