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While U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire stood in line at the viewing, he tried to think of a way he could pay tribute to John Challis, a young man from Freedom whom he had never met.

Mr. Altmire was like people from all over the country who knew of John, even though they had never met him.

John died of cancer of the lung and liver in August 2008. He was 18.

During his last months, John's story and life philosophy made national news as he met with famous athletes and appeared on television channels like ESPN.

Local officials and John's family and friends will honor him today during a renaming ceremony at the Freedom post office -- which will now be called the John Scott Challis Jr. Post Office.

Mr. Altmire, D-McCandless, said he thought renaming the post office was the "best and most appropriate way" to honor John's impact on the Freedom community and region.

"He made such a positive statement with the way he handled himself in the worst of circumstances, and took an incredibly difficult situation and brought the national spotlight upon Freedom," Mr. Altmire said.

Mr. Altmire introduced the bill in February 2009. He got all the Pennsylvania delegates to co-sponsor the bill with him. After passing through Congress unanimously, the bill became law when it was signed by President Barack Obama on Aug. 19, the one-year anniversary of John's death.

Scott Challis, John's father, said that John's illness motivated him to help people live fuller lives.

"He changed a lot of people -- the way people think, the way they handle life," said Mr. Challis.

John was diagnosed with cancer in June 2006, when he was a junior in high school. He loved sports and played baseball and football.

His outlook on life in spite of his illness touched many people in the community.

"I used to be afraid, but I'm not afraid of dying now, if that's what you want to know," he told the Post-Gazette in May 2008. "Because life ain't about how many breaths you take. It's what you do with those breaths."

Before he died, John helped establish the John Challis Courage for Life Foundation, a nonprofit devoted to helping high school athletes with life-threatening illnesses fulfill sports-related wishes. So far, the foundation has helped three students: One met the Red Sox, another got a signed Penguins jersey; and another met Penguins hockey player Jordan Staal.

Mr. Challis said the renaming ceremony will be a great honor for the son who changed his life.

"John taught a country how to live a life while dying," he said.

The renaming ceremony will be held at the Freedom post office at 601 Eighth St., Freedom, from noon to 1 p.m. today.