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NFL AND USAA ANNOUNCE **SALUTE TO SERVICE AWARD NOMINEES**

The NFL and USAA, the Official NFL Salute to Service Partner, have announced the 32 nominees for the eighth annual *Salute to Service Award presented by USAA*. The *Salute to Service Award* annually recognizes NFL players, coaches, personnel and alumni who demonstrate an exemplary commitment to honoring and supporting the military community, as nominated by NFL clubs.

Finalists for the *Salute to Service Award presented by USAA* will be announced in January, and the recipient will be recognized at NFL Honors, a two-hour primetime awards special to air nationally on Feb. 2, 2019 the night before Super Bowl LIII.

“Since 2011, USAA has used its platform with the NFL to honor and appreciate military members, veterans, and their families, bringing them closer to a game they love,” said Vice Admiral (Ret.) **JOHN BIRD**, USAA Senior Vice President of Military Affairs. “All of the nominees for this year’s ‘Salute to Service Award presented by USAA’ deserve special recognition for their commitment to support our nation’s military.”

Current New York Jet and former Atlanta Falcons wide receiver **ANDRE ROBERTS** was last year’s award recipient. USAA, a leading provider of insurance and other services to U.S. military members, veterans and their families, contributed \$25,000 in his honor to the official aid societies representing all five military branches. USAA will continue to contribute \$25,000 in the winner’s name to the official aid societies and the NFL will match USAA’s donation of \$25,000, which will be donated to the award recipient’s military charity of choice. Roberts will serve on the award panel and vote to select the 2018 *Salute to Service Award* recipient.

The *Salute to Service Award* is part of the NFL and USAA’s year-round commitment to recognize and honor the military community. Each year, the NFL and its 32 teams come together to honor, empower and connect with members of the military as part of the NFL’s *Salute to Service*. The league’s year-round military appreciation efforts culminate in November with NFL *Salute to Service* games and other special events honoring and thanking veterans, active duty service members and their families.

Since 2011, USAA has used its sponsorship to honor and appreciate military, veterans and their families by fostering a closer understanding between military and the NFL. Among numerous events this season, USAA hosted “NFL Boot Camps” with multiple teams where military

members competed in drills similar to those used at the NFL Combine. Fans can join the NFL and USAA in honoring the military community by visiting NFL.com/Salute and see military appreciation highlights from across the league.

Since 2011, **more than \$26 million** has been raised through *Salute to Service* to support the league's military nonprofit partners.

Below is a list of the 2018 nominees:

Team	2018 Salute to Service Team Nominees
<p>Arizona Cardinals</p>	<p>BRANDON WILLIAMS (Cornerback)</p> <p>Brandon Williams has a special place in his heart for all branches of the military. His father worked as a civilian contractor for a non-governmental organization (NGO) on several bases in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan as a mechanic repairing motor vehicles that were used by troops in combat with special emphasis on the military Humvee. Brandon's Dad selflessly put himself in harm's way so that he could keep our country safe. Brandon spends most of his days off participating with military associations and giving back to those who have sacrificed so much for our country. Brandon recently has adopted MANA House in Phoenix, Arizona as the military organization he's committed to supporting. MANA House is a peer-run organization of homeless and formerly homeless veterans offering personal, individualized basic resources, community and advocacy for all veterans.</p> <p>Brandon donates his time and provides financial support to the 76 veterans who pass through the doors of MANA House. Brandon actively welcomes new veterans that sign on to MANA House and he stays in touch with veterans that have successfully gone through the MANA House programs and move on to the next chapter in their lives. One of the ways Brandon has supported MANA's efforts for veterans is purchasing desktop computers to put in the recreation room so that veterans can use them to keep in touch with family and friends. This is so important to the success of our veterans rebuilding a social base and getting our veterans back on their feet and on their way to becoming an integral part of society.</p>
<p>Atlanta Falcons</p>	<p>BEN GARLAND (Offensive Guard)</p> <p>The definition of Ben Garland can be considered many things: Offensive Lineman, Defensive Lineman, Atlanta Falcons Man of the Year, Captain in the Colorado Air National Guard or the absolute best at giving back to our nation's heroes and their families. "My family has a long, proud history of service in the Armed Forces, so I was raised understanding what the families of loved ones go through. On top of that, I was able to serve myself. During my service, I met the most incredible people; brave, selfless, intelligent athletic hardworking men and women of character. Over the years, service members I have been very close with have been injured, divorced, committed suicide, suffered from PTSD, lost limbs and even made the ultimate sacrifice overseas. Like any family member, you support each other through all times, so I want to give back as much as I can to fellow service members", says Garland. In this year alone, Ben has traveled on two USO tours; the first to Italy and Germany and the second to Iraq and Kuwait. Ben seeks out any opportunity that he can to visit with military, shake their hands and say thank you.</p> <p>When Ben is back stateside, he is extremely involved and focused on helping veterans get back on their feet after service and helping to raise awareness for PTSD. Earlier this year, he participated in the Armed Forces Mission's Georgia LOSS Walk at Patriot Park in Fayetteville, Georgia. Ben walked alongside veterans, service members and families in honor of "Turning the Tide on Veteran</p>

	<p>Suicide". Each year that Ben has been with the Atlanta Falcons he has participated in the annual Fishing with the Falcons event. This year, Ben traveled to Orange Beach, Alabama to go on a chartered fishing trip with wounded veterans.</p> <p>In his efforts for veteran suicide prevention and PTSD, Ben has created substantial relationships with a number of military non-profits that he works with year-round including; Merging Vets and Players, Emory Healthcare Veterans Program, Shepherd Center SHARE Initiative and TAPS. Ben will be wearing customized cleats in Week 13 for SHARE Military Initiative (Shepherd Center) and Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation. Ben works with the Pigskin Patriots to help raise funds and donate time for camps for military children and he works closely with Children of the Fallen Patriots Foundation on granting college scholarship funds.</p> <p>In addition to the hours he consistently gives to veterans and military families; he, as current member of our military, also finds time to give back to those who currently serve. He donates game tickets each week to service members, visits the Air Force Academy at least once a year to speak to the current students, works with Georgia Tech ROTC to inspire young officers and meets with local young officers to mentor them. In lieu of his constant efforts with our nation's military, Ben still manages to find time to fulfill his duties as a Captain in the Colorado Air National Guard; which he was just recently selected to become a Major.</p>
<p>Baltimore Ravens</p>	<p>ROBERT GRIFFIN III (Quarterback)</p> <p>While only in his first year with the Ravens, Robert Griffin III has continued to support the military while integrating himself within the Baltimore community. The mission of the Robert Griffin III Foundation is to discover, design, and support programs that benefit struggling military families, underprivileged youth, and the victims of domestic violence. The nonprofit is a supporter of Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), which offers compassionate care to all those grieving the death of a loved one serving in our Armed Forces, Luke's Wings, which unites wounded warriors, veterans and heroes with their loved ones when they need them most and the Bob Woodruff Foundation, which helps to ensure the injured veterans and their families are thriving long after they return home.</p> <p>In addition to supporting several military nonprofits, the Robert Griffin III Foundation also supports military individuals like Tim Maxwell and his family. Tim is a medically retired Marine who served 21 years and suffered a penetrating traumatic brain injury in Iraq in 2004. Tim, with the help of his wife Shannon, have dedicated their lives to helping other injured service member/veterans/families. A military brat, Griffin was born in Okinawa, Japan, where his parents, Robert Jr. and Jacqueline, both U.S. Army sergeants, were stationed. The family later lived at Fort Lewis near Tacoma, Washington, and then moved to New Orleans. Other stations included Fort Carson, Colorado, Seoul, Korea and Fort Hood, where Jackie and Robert II were able to finish their college degrees. They finally settled in Copperas Cove, Texas, an hour's drive from Baylor University, where RGIII attended college.</p>
<p>Buffalo Bills</p>	<p>RYAN GROY (Center)</p> <p>The grandson of a United States Army veteran, Ryan Groy was brought up honoring those who served our country and has carried on his admiration of the military throughout his NFL career. "My parents raised me to have ultimate respect for those who have served our country," said Groy. "I am proud to be the grandson of an Army veteran and I know anyone who is willing to put their life on the line to protect others is a true hero." Ryan Groy's grandfather served in the Army in Japan after World War II. In honor of his grandfather, Groy participated in the Buffalo Niagara Honor Flight trip to Washington, D.C., in April 2018.</p>

	<p>Although the trip was during the NFL’s offseason, Groy made the drive back to Buffalo from Wisconsin with great enthusiasm to take the flight with America’s heroes. The day-long trip with WWII, Vietnam and Korean War veterans brought great emotion to Groy, who spent the day exploring monuments with the brave men and women who made many sacrifices to ensure our freedom. Groy has developed a special connection with a non-profit organization that supports military veterans – Operation Second Chance: No Person Left Behind (NPLB).</p> <p>After Groy’s father suddenly passed away in 2015, the donations from the funeral were donated to NPLB. As part of the My Cause My Cleats games in 2016, 2017 and 2018, Groy supported the organization by wearing a pair of camouflage and red, white and blue decorated cleats. “I feel very fortunate to have the platform as an NFL Athlete to help raise awareness for organizations that support veterans, such as Operation 2nd Chance: No Person Left Behind, who does such great work for those who have done so much for our nation,” said Groy. Operation 2nd Chance: NPLB aids in the recovery and rehabilitation of injured service members from all eras who endure the lifelong sacrifices they made for our country. The organization supports injured veterans by reintroducing them to hunting, fishing and life outdoors. Volunteers offer their time and skills to aid in the emotional recovery of our veterans through outdoor activities with fellowship and encouragement to overcome any disability.</p>
<p>Carolina Panthers</p>	<p>RON RIVERA (Head Coach)</p> <p>Head Coach Ron Rivera’s father was drafted into the Army in 1952 and retired after two tours of duty in Vietnam and 32 years of service. His parents met at a USO event and raised their four children on military bases around the globe. Throughout his life, Rivera has been immersed in the military, which has shaped the values and ideals he brings to both the coaching profession and in his service to the community. During his tenure as head coach of the Carolina Panthers, Rivera has embraced the large military contingent in the Carolinas. He makes anticipated annual visits to the region’s military bases including Ft. Bragg and Camp Lejeune to spend time with troops, wounded warriors and Special Operations Forces, but his personal engagement with Armed Forces members is a passion of his. Coach Rivera regularly hosts service members at training camp, practice, and on Panthers game days. He can often be found pre-game greeting military guests and will distribute tickets to service members and their families. However, it is the personal, often out of the limelight moments that Rivera cherishes such as assembling gift bags on his own for a group of visiting Navy SEALs or staying in touch with a phone call or note to troops he has met.</p> <p>Outside of football, Coach Rivera and his wife, Stephanie, serve as USO of North Carolina and Veteran Bridge Home ambassadors donating both their time and financial resources to support organizational events and active duty troops. From USO of North Carolina President and retired Lieutenant Colonel John Falkenbury: While the Carolina Panthers are the “Gold Standard” for supporting our military and their families, it is Coach Rivera who sets the tone and leads by an example that permeates through the entire team and management.</p> <p>Ron and Stephanie Rivera personally donate funds to support USO of NC’s critical mission and help to solicit participants in area events, such as the “Fore the Troops” golf event. When a Special Forces soldier was tragically killed in action, leaving a wife and several children behind, Coach Rivera personally helped the family buy a car that the fallen Warrior had planned to do upon his return. “Coach Rivera, the son of an Army Warrant Officer, knows first-hand the challenges our military men and women, as well as what their families face on a daily basis. His commitment to them is unswerving, passionate and uplifting. Through his words and deeds, he makes a profound difference to the less than one percent of the</p>

	<p>nation protecting the freedoms of the other 99 percent,” explains retired Army Lt. Col. John Falkenbury, USO of NC president and CEO.</p> <p>Coach Rivera was the keynote speaker for the ‘Lunch and Lead with Coach Rivera’ luncheon on May 9th, 2017 hosted by Veterans Bridge Home (formerly known as Charlotte Bridge Home). Coach Rivera spoke about how growing up in a military family helped shape his leadership style as a coach. He also spoke about the ways that he encourages his players to support the military and our Veterans, on and off the field. Thanks to Coach Rivera’s support, the luncheon raised more than \$57,000 to support Veterans transitioning from military to civilian life. In addition to this event, VBH hosted quarterly Veteran networking coffees at the Panthers stadium in 2016 and early 2017. Veterans Bridge Home is just one of many active military and veteran nonprofits he supports. Coach Rivera is always going above and beyond the call of duty to support VBH in whatever way he can. VBH and our veterans are grateful for Coach Rivera’s support.</p>
Chicago Bears	<p>KYLE LONG (Offensive Guard)</p> <p>Since joining the team as a first round draft pick in 2013, Kyle Long has shown support for all branches of the military season after season during his time with the Chicago Bears. He never misses an opportunity to spend time with members of the military when they visit Halas Hall for practice or Military Appreciation Day at the Chicago Bears Training Camp. Kyle makes himself available to connect with the military community every chance he gets and has a great appreciation for their service.</p> <p>This season, Kyle Long committed to donating tickets to a distinguished military member for each Chicago Bears home game as part of the Chicago Bears/Boeing Military Salute. In conjunction with the USO of Illinois, the Bears are proud to annually partner with the Boeing Company to present the Chicago Bears/Boeing Military Salute. A deserving member of the military is honored during an on-field recognition in the third quarter. The honored veteran or active duty member also receives an American Flag that has been flown over Soldier Field throughout the 2018 season. The Military Salute provides the opportunity for the Bears, Boeing, Kyle, and our great fans to give thanks and show support to those who protect our country and to also honor the history and heritage of Soldier Field. Through tickets donations provided by Kyle to military representatives he continues to show his support to our men and women of the Armed Forces.</p>
Cincinnati Bengals	<p>JACOB BURNEY (Defensive Line Coach)</p> <p>Cincinnati Bengals Defensive Line Coach, Jacob Burney, has respect for being part of a military family and knows the true definition of the words “sacrifice” and “dedication”. Coach Burney understands the true love of country and purpose in life by experiencing it first hand through his family members. Burney’s dad and five siblings all served in the military. His dad and sister served in the U.S. Army, two of his brothers served in the U.S. Marines, one of his brothers served in the U.S. Navy, and another brother served in the U.S. Air Force. The game of football took Coach Burney down a different path in life, but what he learned through his family’s service and sacrifice to this country has given him a true understanding and respect for life and what’s important. Coach Burney support his family every day and honors the sacrifice of all service members.</p>
Cleveland Browns	<p>JOE THOMAS (Former Left Tackle)</p> <p>Meaning and purpose. Two words that describe the mentality of our now former left tackle, Joe Thomas. Through Joe’s 11 years with the Cleveland Browns, starting as a rookie, he has stayed true to what is meaningful and purposeful to him – one space being an unwavering commitment to support and give back to our military. Joe’s continuous investment with his time and treasure to those individuals in the Armed Forces throughout the years and now as a former player</p>

	<p>is one that is genuine by his efforts to extend appreciation to those individuals courageously making the ultimate sacrifice to serve our country. Joe's commitment to supporting the military locally has been best described with his constant support for the USO of Northern Ohio, continuously giving back to those military members and their families who the non-profit serves. During his last season with the Cleveland Browns before retirement, Joe selected the USO of Northern Ohio as the charity represented for his My Cause My Cleats game as an extension of his outreach to our military. Recognizing those who serve our country has meaning to Joe and serves a purpose to why this cause is so important to him. When speaking about his cleats Joe stated, "I continue to support those who are fighting for our country and inspire others to do the same, I am proud of the red, white and blue". As true testament to Joe's character and his sincere endeavor to give back to the military was shown most recently during the game day tribute to Joe Thomas recognizing his milestone of 10,363 consecutive snaps as a Brown, with a signature banner unfurled while being held by nearly 60 active military members in uniform selected by the USO of Northern Ohio. These military representatives being there for this special moment in history meant as much to Joe as it meant to them – a truly, meaningful 'Thank You' to Joe for his support and appreciation over the years.</p> <p>During his time with the Browns, 'Thomas' Troops was a ticket program made possible by Joe Thomas, to ensure every home game, military families and active military members from the USO of Northern Ohio had the opportunity to attend Browns games. Thomas' Troops was offered to 20 individuals each game but went beyond the game ticket and included custom t-shirts, food vouchers and parking passes. Thomas personally funded this game day program for multiple seasons, providing over 1000+ tickets at his expense. Joe's investment to support the military has also led him to a partnership with Mission BBQ, who proudly serves those who serve and embodies a commitment to the military. The mission of this organization with parallels to supporting military presented the opportunity for Joe to be part owner of two local restaurants here in Ohio, attributing to his continuous support to those in the Armed Forces. Throughout the years here in Cleveland, Joe has dedicated countless hours and funds to extend direct appreciation to the many servicemen and women fighting for our country. It is no question that he has consistently committed and dedicated himself to supporting our military and continues to beyond his time on the playing field. Football is Family and supporting the military continues to serve purpose and meaning to Joe Thomas as he gives his time and treasure back to the many who serve us every day by protecting our country.</p>
<p>Dallas Cowboys</p>	<p>ROGER STAUBACH (Former Quarterback)</p> <p>Roger Staubach led the Dallas Cowboys to six NFC Championship Games, four Super Bowls and two Super Bowl titles. A great clutch performer, Staubach earned the name "Captain Comeback" for leading the Cowboys to 23 comeback victories – 14 of those in the last two minutes or overtime. A five-time Pro Bowler, Staubach was drafted by Dallas in 1964 after winning the Heisman Trophy and Maxwell Award at the Naval Academy. Staubach was inducted into the Dallas Cowboys Ring of Honor in 1983 and the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1985. Staubach's grace under fire on the football field was earned through service to the United States Navy. A 1965 graduate of the United States Naval Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering, Staubach served four years as a Navy officer – one of those years spent in Vietnam as a Supply Corps officer, commanding 41 men. Staubach joined the Dallas Cowboys in 1969. His 11-year career solidified his legacy in Dallas Cowboys and NFL history. A national NFL Man of the Year, Staubach's off-the-field passion for philanthropy has touched military causes, children's cancer, women's shelters and more.</p> <p>Throughout his playing and professional career, Staubach has worked behind the scenes to support active duty military members, veterans and their families, in</p>

	<p>addition to mainstream philanthropy causes. He has worked closely with the United States Naval Academy Foundation, USAA, USO, Children’s Cancer Fund, American Cancer Society and others. Staubach started the nonprofit Allies in Service to support service members, veterans and their spouses with employment assistance. Through connecting veterans to essential resources, mentoring and follow-up, building public awareness and encouraging community collaboration, Allies in Service serves veterans, just as they have served the country.</p> <p>Allies in Service works to support the more than 350,000 veterans living in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex (110,000 of those veterans in Dallas County) to ensure a successful transition - allowing them to lead a life of success after service. The services provided by Allies in Service are free to veterans, their spouses, and our community partners. The nonprofit partners with individuals, employers, community and other veteran support organizations to educate and enhance the quality of life of veterans. Under Staubach’s leadership, Allies in Service offers assistance with resume writing, mock interviews, career coaching, career leads and referrals, mentorship, education, housing and healthcare. All programs strive to help translate the military and civilian experience, so employers can see the transferable skills. Among the many honors bestowed upon Roger are Commercial Property News’ "Corporate Services Executive of the Year" (four times), the 2006 Congressional Medal of Honor “Patriot Award,” the NCAA "Teddy Roosevelt Award" for being one of the “100 Most Influential NCAA Student-Athletes,” the American Jewish Congress "Torch of Conscience Award," and the United States Naval Academy "Distinguished Graduate.”</p>
<p>Denver Broncos</p>	<p>RANDY GRADISHAR (Former Linebacker)</p> <p>Randy Gradishar may be known as the heart and soul of the Denver Broncos Orange Crush Defense from the 1970s and 80s, but many servicemen and women recognize Gradishar as an advocate for the military community. A former All-Pro linebacker for the Denver Broncos, Gradishar developed an appreciation for service members at an early age. Gradishar credits his father, a WWII veteran, for demonstrating work ethic and devotion to our country. Gradishar proved both his discipline and patriotism as he pursued ROTC while attending college at The Ohio State University. Gradishar spent 10 remarkable seasons with the Broncos, demonstrating leadership both on the field and in the community to this day. After making a profound impact in the NFL and assisting the Denver Broncos in their very first Super Bowl appearance (1977), Gradishar retired from the league in 1983 after seven Pro Bowl appearances.</p> <p>Though retired from the organization, Gradishar continues his involvement with the Denver Broncos by participating in team-organized Salute to Service events. Gradishar has participated in the Denver Broncos and USAA Military Caravan tours, honoring the efforts of our troops at Fort Carson Army Base (2014) and Schriever Air Force Base (2015). Additionally, Gradishar made the trip to Pinion Canyon Maneuver Site (2017) to announce a Broncos NFL draft pick live on national television alongside soldiers from the base. Gradishar dedicates his life to honoring and supporting the military community. Since his retirement from the NFL, he has participated in three USO tours visiting our troops in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Between his several trips overseas, Gradishar has traveled more than 12,000 miles to show his support of active duty service men and women. His most memorable visit, however, was his 2007 visit to Kuwait. He and nearly 500 troops awoke at 4 AM on February 7 to watch Super Bowl XLI together. “Visiting troops overseas has renewed my sense of patriotism and reminded me of how indebted we all are to our soldiers,” Gradishar says.</p> <p>Currently, Gradishar serves as the Outreach Coordinator at Mt. Carmel Veteran’s Service Center commuting 70 miles from Denver to Colorado Springs several days per week to assist veterans in adjusting back to civilian life. Mt. Carmel Veterans</p>

	<p>Service Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing resources and assistance to veterans, military members and their families. Over 400,000 veterans live in Colorado, with nearly one quarter of those people residing in the Colorado Springs area. Mt. Carmel Veteran's Service Center aims to assist veterans by focusing their efforts in three key areas: resource navigation, behavioral health, and employment transition. In his role as outreach coordinator, Randy supports veterans in crisis, pays visits to Colorado's many military bases and serves as a spokesperson for Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. Gradishar is a devoted advocate for veterans in the Colorado area, having served Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center since its inception in 2016.</p>
<p>Detroit Lions</p>	<p>ERIC HIPPLE (Former Quarterback)</p> <p>Eric Hipple is a former NFL quarterback whose ten-year career was spent with the Detroit Lions. Hipple was born in Lubbock, Texas and raised in Southern California. Eric graduated from Utah State University with a degree in Business Administration and was drafted by the Detroit Lions. Hipple's accomplishments include two playoff bids, a Divisional Championship, and the Detroit Lion's most valuable player award for the '81 season. He is currently ranked sixth in career passing yards for Detroit. Since his 15-year-old son Jeff's suicide, Hipple has devoted his life to building awareness and breaking down the stigma surrounding depressive illnesses. Hipple has received numerous prestigious awards such as, the presidential citation at the American Psychological Association's 2006 Annual Convention for his six years of national community-based work combating adolescent depression and suicide prevention, the 2008 Life Saver Achievement award given by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the Detroit Lions 2010 Courage House award, and the Neubacher Award in 2015 from the University of Michigan for his work with stigma associated with disabilities. Hipple's message of resilience has provided mental fitness awareness to professional groups, military, law enforcement, schools, communities.</p> <p>In conjunction with NAVY U.S. Fleet Forces, Hipple has provided workshops on suicide and destructive behavior prevention during the last 10 years by focusing on mental fitness. His book "Real Men Do Cry" received a publisher Presidential Award. After retiring from University of Michigan's Comprehensive Depression Center, where he spent eleven years in outreach, Hipple currently serves as Outreach Specialist for Eisenhower Center's "After The Impact" program, a neuro-behavioral residential treatment facility serving military veterans and former NFL players. Eric's commitment to helping others find a quality in life is demonstrated through work with several non-profits. These suicide prevention workshops for USFF (U.S. Fleet Forces) are included on Navy bases and Naval Air stations on the East Coast, Europe and the Middle East.</p> <p>In 2007, Eric was involved with the planning process of the 'Real Warrior Campaign' (Army suicide prevention) that aired at Super Bowl Radio Row and organized PSA's with players supporting service members. In 2008, Eric helped organize NFL Legends to speak at Army bases throughout Texas, New York, Georgia and Mississippi during the NFL playoffs with the NFLPA and for the Army 'Real Warrior Campaign' presentations that took place at Okinawa Marine base and was a presentation that talked through suicide prevention. Eric has lead a group of eight (8) former NFL players that stayed 3 days on the Aircraft Carrier USS George Bush during deployment in 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 and has helped with 'Destructive Behavior' prevention workshops for Pac Fleet Naval bases, Naval air stations and submarine bases on the West coast, Hawaii, Korea and Japan.</p> <p>Eric Hipple has been part of the 2016 Mental Fitness training at the Army National Training Center and for the 2017-2018 suicide prevention workshops for the Air Force at Minot Air Base and at the nuclear missile launch facilities from 2012-current. Eric Hipple organized the 'After the Impact' treatment program at</p>

	<p>Eisenhower Center that placed veterans and NFL legends together in a 30-day inpatient stay and hosted mental fitness presentations at Warren Armory, Battle Creek Armory, Selfridge Air Base, Army Air Station Saginaw VA presentation on suicide. Eric's work continues to impact the military community.</p>
<p>Green Bay Packers</p>	<p>AARON JONES (Running Back)</p> <p>Aaron was drafted by the Packers in the 5th round of the 2017 NFL Draft, and is currently playing in his second year with the team. Aaron does not need to look far to find his inspiration to support the military. His parents, Alvin Sr. and Vurgess, both retired as sergeant majors in the U.S. Army. Vurgess served for 27 years in the Army, before retiring in 2016. Alvin Sr. decided to retire from active duty with the Army in 2013, one-year shy of 30 years, because of his desire to watch Aaron and his twin brother, Alvin Jr., play football their senior year of high school.</p> <p>Aaron's older brother, Xavier, currently serves in the U.S. Air Force. Growing up in a military family, Aaron knows how important it is to show his appreciation for all men and women serving in our Armed Forces. Growing up, Aaron would often accompany his father at work for physical training. As a child, he volunteered for several youth military events in which he received multiple awards, including 5 Military Commander Coins. Aaron has dedicated time to visit with injured war veterans in San Antonio, Texas. Aaron never takes the rights and freedoms our military has provided our country with for granted.</p>
<p>Houston Texans</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN COVINGTON (Defensive End)</p> <p>Since the day fourth-year defensive end Christian Covington joined the Texans he has been a staple in the Houston community. Covington grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia the son of a former Canadian Football League player, Grover Jr., and his wife, Natasha, who emphasized to their children the importance of giving back – a directive Christian took to heart. Christian played his college football at Rice University – located just a few miles from NRG Stadium, the home of the Houston Texans – and started giving back to the Houston community while he was still a student and he hasn't stopped since. Christian comes from a military family, his great grandfather on his mother's side, Mervyn Matthew Fleming, served as a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force flying death defying missions over Germany including flying in the first mission to bomb Berlin in World War II. After completing two tours of duty, Fleming received the Distinguished Service Order, one of the highest wartime honors, for demonstrating outstanding skill, courage, and devotion to duty before going on to a career in aviation. Christian's grandfather on his dad's side, Grover Covington, Sr., served in the Army as did two of his uncles, Johnny and Laurence Covington. When Christian was drafted in the 6th round of the NFL Draft by the Houston Texans, his uncle called from South Korea where he was stationed to congratulate him, making for a special moment for the entire Covington family. Christian has a way of making everyone he meets feel special and this skill has been on display at many Texans events. Christian annually participates in the Texans Salute to Service Military BBQ. Christian has said, "When we as professional athletes are in a position to help and give back to our communities, a sense of personal duty becomes prevalent in doing so. Giving of our time through efforts to those who have sacrificed so much and have put their lives on the line for our freedoms, nothing can bring us more pride."</p> <p>When the Super Bowl was in Houston in February of 2017, Christian attended the USO Salute to Service Military Appreciation BBQ at Ellington Joint Air Force Base in Houston. More than 2,000 service members and their families came to the base to enjoy food, fun, giveaways, games, music and more in an airline hanger filled to the brim with activity. In the summer of 2017, Christian took part in Good Grief camp at the T.A.P.S. Austin Regional Seminar. T.A.P.S, which stands for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, assists families and kids grieving the death of a loved one who served in America's Armed Forces. The Texans created fun interactive drills to aid in the building of camaraderie between T.A.P.S. children</p>

	<p>and their military mentors, along with their T.A.P.S. peers, to help facilitate important conversations that give T.A.P.S. children the opportunity to share about their grief. Representatives from T.A.P.S. said it best, “On a 100+ degree summer day in Texas, Christian, carrying a huge smile and contagiously positive energy, gave his time to bring joy to military surviving children. He engaged, encouraged, supported and coached them through a day of PLAY 60 drills. Christian spoke with every surviving child present, providing a pleasant word to each, letting them know he recognized and honored the great sacrifice that each had made. In the spring of 2018, Christian attended a military appreciation lunch at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo sitting down with service members to eat and thank all who attended for their service. Christian is always the first to volunteer to go out into the community, whether it’s attending a school assembly to combat bullying, supporting kids with cancer through his work with the Sunshine Kids Foundation, hosting a football camp in his native country of Canada, or visiting with service members and veterans at a military appreciation event we always know we can count on Christian. Christian will be supporting the USO Houston as part of his Salute to Service Award nomination. Christian said, “I feel it is an honor and a privilege to give back to the real heroes who have truly given everything. God’s blessings and love to all the military families, from my family to yours. Thank you for your service.”</p>
<p>Indianapolis Colts</p>	<p>JOE HAEG (Offensive Tackle)</p> <p>Joe Haeg is entering his third season with the Indianapolis Colts. Joe is known as a friend, supporter, and teammate to military service members and veterans nationwide. Joe’s best friend is an officer in the U.S. Marines and his cousin serves in the U.S. Air Force. Joe plays in the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Game to benefit the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team every summer while home in Brainerd, Minnesota. Haeg wears his military pride on his sleeve and on his cleats. Joe is once again representing the Wounded Warrior Project as his charity of choice for the League’s My Cause My Cleats game, just as he has for the past two seasons. For Haeg, it’s about giving back to those who sacrifice so much, he uses his platform with the Colts and the NFL to shine a light on the real heroes – the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and those who served before them.</p>
<p>Jacksonville Jaguars</p>	<p>MALIK JACKSON (Defensive Lineman)</p> <p>Defensive Tackle, Malik Jackson is a true example of what it takes to be a leader on and off the field. He has a long history of supporting the military, especially in the northeast Florida community which is home to 150,000 veterans and 50,000 activity duty military and Department of Defense civilian personnel. Jackson’s own foundation, Malik’s Gifts, specifically supports the military, at-risk youth and their families and pet adoption. Through Malik’s Gifts, Jackson has led the charge in hosting multiple events designed to support the military and their families.</p> <p>In June 2018, Jackson hosted a football camp for local kids from the First Coast military community on at the Jaguars' indoor practice facility. He partnered with St. Michael’s Soldiers, Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) and the Florida National Guard Child and Youth Program, which selected more than 100 military and Gold Star children to participate in the event. All kids received a one-of-a-kind camp t-shirt, dinner and spent two hours learning football techniques from some of the NFL’s best, including more than 10 of Jackson’s Jaguars teammates. “Malik practices what he preaches,” said Lori Culberson, SOS coordinator at Camp Blanding. “He reaches out to these kids and speaks to them in a unique way. They look up to him. He’s so humble about it. He’s doing it because he wants to serve a purpose here.” Jackson is in his third season with the Jaguars and has committed to supporting local military every year.</p> <p>For the third consecutive season, Jackson will host “Movie Night with Malik” this November in partnership with the Jaguars Foundation and Florida Survivor</p>

	<p>Outreach Services. He'll welcome more than 150 guests including military children and their family members to a private movie screening of a new feature film. This event is dedicated to supporting military children and families facing injury, loss and deployment. Jackson will also continue his yearly participation in the team's annual Stars and Strikes Bowling event at Naval Station Mayport to bowl alongside more than 200 active duty members, their families and Jaguars teammates. His generosity and love for the military also includes sponsoring Gold Star Wives Day, providing a special night out for 50 spouses whose loved ones have passed. Jackson's donations have provided child care and dinner at a local restaurant for 50 Goldstar wives. Malik hosted family fun days for military families and has supported with financial contributions to 5 Star Veterans Center, which offers safe and secure housing to displaced veterans to help alleviate veteran homelessness and resources to help them re-integrate into society.</p>
<p>Kansas City Chiefs</p>	<p>KANSAS CITY CHIEFS CHEERLEADERS</p> <p>For decades, the Chiefs Cheerleaders have entertained fans at Arrowhead Stadium. However, a responsibility equally important is military outreach. While many brethren also support our troops, the Chiefs Cheerleaders are set apart by the impact they make domestically and internationally. This is done as a patriotic duty that drives the entire squad. The Kansas City Chiefs Cheerleaders share a passion to spend time with service members and their families. Whether an outreach trip of their own or part of a larger Chiefs Community Caring Team initiative, the Chiefs Cheerleaders can often be found at Ft. Leavenworth, Ft. Riley, Whiteman AFB or a local VA Center.</p> <p>This group truly makes a personal connection with all they encounter. It's a mission that sits at the core of everyone involved. "I have watched my team's patriotism grow and grow because of these visits," noted Chiefs Cheerleading Director Stephanie Judah, herself an alumna of the squad. "I think so many people live in their bubble and don't really understand what our military does daily so we all can live our lives. When I have a cheerleader go on these trips, they come back with a greater appreciation of our troops and their families. It has been incredible to watch this over the years." The cheerleaders began international base visits a decade ago at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba with a variety show.</p> <p>The response to this visit was so overwhelming that in addition to returning there, the cheerleaders visited other international locations including Egypt, Germany, Iraq, Japan and Kuwait. Each time, the ladies have left an indelible mark on those they've encountered and vice versa. "I think my eyes have been forever changed to the world of the military," shared cheerleading veteran Anna, whose father served in the Navy. "My dad was never active since I've been alive. So, for me it's been such an impact to see the sacrifice not just from the military service men and women, but from their families for us to be free." In addition, the Chiefs Cheerleaders have visited several other domestic bases throughout the nation. Beginning at several outposts in Alaska, this year alone the team has visited Fort Carson (CO), Air Force Academy, Tinker AFB (OK), Fort Sill AFB (OK), and Sheppard AFB (TX) with plans to visit Fort Bragg (NC), a new base for the group, in the coming weeks. The team is also travelling to Hawaii to visit Pearl Harbor, Hickam AFB, Schofield Barracks and Hale Koa Hotel. Each visit, the girls work in conjunction with that base's Post Exchange to organize several activities, including youth cheerleader clinics, social outings, fashion shows, wounded troop visits in hospitals and autograph signings. "It was one of those moments where you feel so honored and proud of our organization for all that we do for the military," said cheerleading veteran Ashley O. reflecting on a base visit to Washington D.C. and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. "But it also just made me, I'm going to get emotional, proud to be an American because these people sacrifice everything to allow us to be free and dance on the field at Arrowhead and to do what we love to do."</p>

**Los Angeles
Chargers**

ALEX SPANOS (Ownership)

Alex G. Spanos was the team's owner from 1984 – 2018 and this nomination is both in recognition of his years of service in the United States Air Force and the Spanos family's decades-long dedicated support to our nation's military. Alex Spanos grew up in Stockton, California and attended California Polytechnic School until 1942 when he chose to join the Army Air Force. He started training as a pilot before making the change to serve as a tail gunner during World War II.

In 1951, when his military service had come to an end, Spanos borrowed \$800 from a local banker to buy a truck which he then used to sell sandwiches to field hands in the San Joaquin Valley. By 1955 he had made his first million dollars, invested his earnings in real estate and started to build apartments. In 1960, he founded A.G. Spanos Companies, which by 1977 had become the largest apartment builder in the United States. Firmly established in the business world, Spanos began his pursuit of a childhood dream – owning a professional sports team. With football his top passion, on August 1, 1984, dreams became reality when Spanos purchased the Chargers.

From day one, military support became a calling card of the Spanos family and Chargers organization. Whether it has been by raising awareness through in-game recognitions, supporting military families through complimentary ticket donations, hosting team practices at multiple military bases (including a practice on board the USS Ronald Reagan), or providing funding and new fitness equipment for homeless veterans, the Chargers organization's embrace of the military community started at the top.

Spanos, who developed a memorable tap dance routine with legendary entertainer Bob Hope, performed at charity events around the country – many of which in support of our Armed Forces. His relationship with Hope and the USO undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the team raising \$4.5 million dollars for the USO's national 1991 Golden Anniversary Salute Luncheon – marking, at the time, the most successful fundraising event in their history. More recent examples of the team's work with the military include hosting NFL PLAY 60 physical fitness camps for military children and organizing friendly "Pros vs GI Joes" video game competitions between players and soldiers deployed overseas. While Alex Spanos passed away on October 9, 2018, his legacy of giving back to the Armed Forces lives on through the ongoing work of his family and the Chargers organization.

**Los Angeles
Rams**

ANDREW WHITWORTH (Offensive Tackle)

Andrew Whitworth was drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals in 2006, where he played 11 seasons before signing with the Rams in 2017. As soon as he joined the Rams organization, he made an immediate impact in the community, including with the military members and veterans living in the Los Angeles region. Through our All-Community Team ticket program, Andrew purchased 50 tickets for every home game and donates the tickets to military organizations such as USC Veterans group and Merging Vets and Players (M.V.P).

Whitworth, who has a strong relationship with Merging Veterans & Players' co-founders, Jay Glazer and Nate Boyer, spends much of his offseason training with some of M.V.P veterans at Unbreakable performance gym in Hollywood and has represented M.V.P. during the 2017 and 2018 My Cause My Cleats games. Most recently, Andrew joined M.V.P co-founder, Nate Boyer, and two veterans with ties to Hollywood Veteran Center, a homeless shelter strictly for veterans. Whitworth shared why he's so strongly connected to helping veterans and veterans shared their stories about how the Hollywood Veterans Center has helped their life. The conversation was followed by a tour of the veteran's shelter where Andrew was able to interact with residents and finished with a surprise ticket donation for the Rams Salute to Service game.

Miami Dolphins

LARRY BALL (Former Linebacker)

Larry has been the President and Vice president of the NFL Alumni South Florida Chapter for more than 20 years. In his time with the chapter, he has expanded the chapter's mission statement from just benefitting local children's charities to supporting veterans and their families as well. Each year, the chapter teams up with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) for an annual event that raises money for disabled veterans and NFL alumni to visit children's hospitals and donate gifts. Throughout the years, Larry has been instrumental in solidifying the relationship with the Disabled American Veterans help raise funds through events. Each year, Larry participates in a Thanksgiving event that the Chapter hosts where veterans from a local hospital are brought out for a fun day, which includes a Thanksgiving meal. For many of these veterans, this is their one day out of the hospital throughout the year.

Additionally, Larry, through the NFL Alumni provides the DAV with Super Bowl tickets through a raffle. That drawing takes place each year following the visit to the Broward Children's Center for their holiday party. The military veterans join NFL legends to provide a special day for the children and then a winner for the raffle is drawn at the American Legion. Funds raised from the raffle further support the efforts of the Marine Corps League and the DAV. The Alumni South Florida Chapter also donates funds to help send members of the DAV to Orlando for a state-wide veterans training. During the training, 10-20 members of the local DAV become certified to assist other local veterans in understanding their VA benefits fully. Larry has been an unwavering advocate for our local DAV and our veterans. It has been quoted that he "gets the least attention when he deserves the most." From the DAV local chapter president: "Larry deserves all the credit you can give him. He has been a pillar of support to Disabled Veterans for years. He has always had our back tirelessly to give others the hope to carry on when the chips are down."

Minnesota Vikings

LATAVIUS MURRAY (Running Back)

Latavius Murray lives the sacrifices of military families each day. Murray's fiancée, Shauntay Skanes, is in her 11th year of serving in the United States Navy. Skanes recently gave birth to the couple's first child, a son named Major. Murray fully supports Skanes decision to serve her country. "She decided to stay active, and I fully support her," Murray explained. "When you have those desires before the relationship, you have to do everything you can to make sure that person is still being the person that she wants to be and you make sure you support her. It's the same with my career, so it's only right that I do the same for her." Murray and Skanes have known each other since he was a preteen. After he moved with family from Florida to New York, they stayed connected. They weren't a couple when Skanes decided to enlist out of high school, but as their relationship has blossomed, he has encouraged her to re-enlist as many times as she would like. Murray said he's been able to see characteristics that help military members accomplish their jobs and how it overlaps with elements that help him in football. "In any branch of the military, there's things we can relate to, a lot of things other than work, but when you talk about our jobs, you have to be prompt, you have to be on time, you have to carry yourself a certain way. We can relate a lot of ways in that," Murray said.

The up-close view of commitment, sacrifice and unselfishness has inspired Murray to do more to support military members and their families. This offseason, Latavius participated in a USO Tour to visit troops serving in Germany and Italy. "It felt really cool to be able to bring a little bit of the NFL to them and where they were based," Murray said. "That was a really cool experience and what stuck out the most, was us being able to be there for them and give them a little taste of home." Murray also hosted men and women from the 945th FST, a surgical medical support team based at Fort Snelling that is part of the U.S. Army Reserves, during

	<p>Vikings training camp. He provided encouragement and expressed gratitude before the group's deployment to Afghanistan. "I think that's what it's all about, if we can meet with them, talk with them and try to help as much as we can before they go and do their mission," Murray said. Maj. Paul Jarett, who was able to bring his wife and three children ages 11, 7 and 4 to the practice, said the 945th FST appreciated the experience. "It was very nice to have us out here and treat us like we're being treated," said Maj. Jarett, who is approaching his 24th year of active duty of reservist service. The visit provided respite from the stress of the deployment, a mission that was months in the making. "We are trying to do things that really focus on our families, on our job, the mission we're going to have in Afghanistan and just get ready for it however we can, be best prepared," Maj. Jarett said. "It's a little anxiety-provoking, but it's something that we enjoy doing. We go into it with a positive outlook. It's just serving our country, so we're happy to do it."</p> <p>Additionally, Murray is honored to become the second NFL player to ever serve as an ambassador for the United Heroes League. United Heroes League provides sports registration fees and equipment for children in military families. Murray will further support United Heroes League during the Vikings My Cause My Cleats game. "What they provide is giving children the opportunity to be active in sports, by paying for league costs and providing equipment, allowing them to see sports games and things like that," Murray said. Murray said his goals for the ambassador position are to increase awareness, help raise funds and show "the people that are actually involved truly care."</p>
<p>New England Patriots</p>	<p>JOE CARDONA (Long Snapper)</p> <p>Joe Cardona epitomizes what it means to be a Patriot. Following an impressive high school athletic career, Joe enrolled in the Naval Academy Preparatory School. Upon completing the prep year, Joe attended the Naval Academy where he was a four-year player as a long snapper. He later became one of only a handful of long snappers to ever be drafted into the NFL after the New England Patriots selected him in the fifth round of the 2015 NFL draft. During his rookie season, Joe was also balancing a second full-time job. He was an Ensign in the Navy and worked as a staff officer at the Naval Academy Preparatory School in Rhode Island. During the 2015 season, he was working his second job four days a week, which included a 24-hour shift during the team's "day off." Last year, Joe was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG) and serves as a Junior Commissioned Officer in the United States Navy. He proudly wears his Naval uniform as the team boards the plane for away games and remains humble about his service to our country. When asked about his dedication to the Naval Academy, Joe simply states, "It's just about doing your job. Whether that's on the military end, or the football end, it's showing up every single day and doing the best you can."</p> <p>Over the past four seasons, he has taken advantage of every opportunity to show his appreciation for his fellow servicemen and women. Following a preseason joint practice with the Jacksonville Jaguars in 2017, Cardona hosted a special re-enlistment ceremony for two brave individuals. After practice, he changed into uniform, led the ceremony and recruited both teams to be a part of it. Joe has facilitated more than a dozen re-enlistment and retirement ceremonies at Gillette Stadium for his fellow military members. He also led a handful of free football clinics for military children at military bases across New England, including Hanscom Air Force Base and Naval Station Newport. Two years ago, Joint Base Cape Cod experienced a fire that burned several of their storage buildings. Inside of one of those buildings were toys for military families to receive during the holidays. Joe quickly decided to visit the base and worked with the Patriots Foundation to collect toys that would help to replace the ones that were lost. Last season, Joe spoke with Patriots team captains and came up with an idea to do something special for our nation's military. During a team meeting, Joe</p>

	<p>encouraged all of his teammates and the coaching staff to donate a pair of tickets to the Oct. 22 game against Atlanta. Thanks to Joe’s leadership, more than 150 military members, who have returned from deployment within the past six months, were invited to the game and took part in a special pregame ceremony.</p> <p>During Memorial Day weekend, he helped plant more than 37,000 American flags in the Boston Common to honor all of the brave men and women from Massachusetts that have lost their lives defending our country. Joe has also hand delivered new bicycles to military families, put the finishing touches on a new home for a wounded veteran and taken part in a special pinning ceremony for Vietnam War veterans. Joe has also offered his support to the Travis Manion Foundation, a nonprofit organization that empowers veterans and families of fallen heroes to develop character in future generations. In August, Patriots Chairman and CEO Robert Kraft presented Joe Cardona with the Ron Burton Community Service Award. This award is named after Ron Burton, the first player drafted by the Patriots who left a legacy of giving back to the community. Joe became the 16th player to receive this award and was recognized for his outstanding commitment to military families and veterans. Joe has a genuine appreciation for people who make the ultimate sacrifice to defend our country. When asked about his military experience, Joe replies, “It’s given me a good perspective on what’s really important in life. I appreciate our nation’s service members so much, especially being able to take pride in counting myself among them. Ultimately, that’s the uniform I put on first, and when I get the opportunity to go out on the field and play, I take that as a blessing every single day.”</p>
<p>New Orleans Saints</p>	<p>JOSEPH LOMBARDI (Quarterbacks Coach)</p> <p>New Orleans Saints Quarterbacks Coach Joe Lombardi comes from a long family legacy: both football and dedication have always been a hallmark of the Lombardi family. Joe’s grandfather, legendary football coach Vince Lombardi, served as an assistant coach at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York from 1949-1953. Following some ups and downs, Lombardi persevered and served and the 1953 team went on to be 7-1-1 as the program built and he was subsequently hired as the top offensive assistant for the New York Giants.</p> <p>Enjoying his own interest in both football and military as a youth, Lombardi committed to play football at and attend the Air Force Academy, where he earned three letters as a tight end and one in lacrosse. He graduated in 1994 as an acquisitions officer, and spent four years as a program manager on the F-22 program at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, where he spent four years. Lombardi eventually juggled his commitments in uniform to double as the defensive line coach at Dayton, embarking on what has become a 23-year coaching career, the last 13 in the NFL. Ten of them have been with the Saints, eight as the club’s quarterbacks coach, where he has tutored QB Drew Brees.</p> <p>During his tenure with the Saints, Lombardi has actively engaged military from all branches when they have visited the Ochsner Sports Performance Center as guests of the team. In 2018, Lombardi teamed up with Drew Brees at the Saints training camp along with USAA to host a “Salute to Service NFL Boot Camp” for a large group of veterans from the Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard where they tested their might with both athletic conditioning drills and some football-specific exercises.</p>
<p>New York Giants</p>	<p>PHIL MCCONKEY (Former Wide Receiver)</p> <p>Phil McConkey was a U.S. Navy officer and helicopter pilot for five years before deciding to play professional football even though he was already 27. He weighed barely 160 pounds and hadn’t played football in five years. The first person he approached was Steve Belichick, Navy’s backfield coach and scout, who timed him at a speedy 4.4 seconds in the 40-yard dash. Belichick then contacted his son, Bill Belichick, who had just been elevated to defensive coordinator of the New</p>

	<p>York Giants under head coach Bill Parcells. McConkey was signed by the Giants as a 27-year-old rookie. He was the first Navy Midshipman to join the NFL after four full years of service since Roger Staubach in 1969.</p> <p>In his six NFL seasons, McConkey was used as a reserve receiver, and frequently returned punts and kickoffs on special teams. McConkey's best statistical season was in 1985, when he caught 25 passes for 404 yards, returned 53 punts for 442 yards, and gained 234 yards returning kickoffs. After two seasons with the Giants, in 1986 he was released and signed with the Green Bay Packers. He played four games with the Packers in 1986, then was re-signed by the Giants for the season's last 12 games. In those 12 games, he caught 16 passes for 279 yards and one touchdown, plus he was a punt returner and kick returner.</p> <p>McConkey is best remembered for his performance in Super Bowl XXI after the Giants 1986 season, which the Giants won 39-20 over the Denver Broncos. In the game, his 25-yard punt return set up a Giants field goal. On the team's next drive, his 44-yard reception on a flea flicker play gave the Giants a first down on Denver's one-yard line, setting up a touchdown on the next play. In the fourth quarter, McConkey caught a six-yard touchdown reception after the pass bounced off the fingertips of tight end Mark Bavaro. Phil McConkey knows what true sacrifice is and is a proud supporter of active duty service members and veterans.</p>
New York Jets	<p>MIKE MACCAGNAN (General Manager)</p> <p>Mike was hired by the Jets in 2015, and in his short amount of time with the Jets organization, the impact him and his wife have had on the military community has been tremendous. Mike's older brother, Victor Maccagnan, served in the military for 28 years, and along with his father who also served. The Maccagnans have personally dealt with the hardships and emotions military families face as they say goodbye to loved ones and anxiously await their return home. Using his platform as General Manager, Mike and Betty have supported other military families during the holiday season, creating an annual signature military appreciation event for families who have a spouse deployed during Christmas. Military families are invited to the New York Jets training center for the day to watch practice and participate in holiday activities such as making gingerbread houses, cooking, Jets Fest, massages, make-overs, pictures with Santa, and a Christmas dinner, to hopefully comfort the families during a holiday so focused on togetherness. Mike enjoys providing tours of the Jets facility to the guests, while Betty takes each spouse to "Santa's workshop," a room within the facility that she transforms and decorates to keep up with the Christmas theme, and the room is filled with personalized Christmas presents for each child.</p> <p>The day is filled with so many special and memorable moments, but an aspect that always resonates with the military families is the sincere connection Mike and Betty build with the families during the event and the warmth in which they greet each person, who truly becomes a friend when the day is over. In addition to the annual event, Mike and Betty also host military members from Fort Drum at each game during the season and stand with them on the sideline to watch pre-game warm ups.</p>
Oakland Raiders	<p>JEMAL SINGLETON (Running Backs Coach)</p> <p>Coach Jemal Singleton is the Raiders running backs coach and is in his first season with the Raiders, having previously coached two seasons with the Indianapolis Colts. Prior to the NFL, Coach Singleton worked with Arkansas and Oklahoma State. Before that, he spent nine years coaching at his alma mater, the Air Force Academy. While a student at the Air Force Academy, he studied social sciences and played running back. Coach Singleton is one of six players in the Air Force to be elected as a two-time captain. In just his first year with the Raiders, Coach Singleton has already stepped forward in his support of veterans.</p>

	<p>Upon hearing of the Raiders Foundation’s recent work with Veterans Village in Las Vegas, Coach Singleton didn’t hesitate to get involved. After learning that the Raiders Foundation was gifting container homes to six veterans, Coach Singleton took time from a family vacation to fly to Las Vegas to be there for the presentation of the homes. Not only was Coach Singleton at the presentation, but he met with the veterans of Veterans Village and went on a tour of the model container home. Coach Singleton’s act of prioritizing veterans changed the life of one of our veterans. Thanks to Coach Singleton, one of our veterans, who was previously homeless, learned that he now has a permanent place to live. Coach Singleton continues to be involved with the Oakland Raiders community efforts that positively impact military members and their families.</p>
<p>Philadelphia Eagles</p>	<p>HOWIE ROSEMAN (Executive Vice President of Football Operations)</p> <p>As the Executive Vice President of Football Operations for the Philadelphia Eagles, Howie Roseman takes his responsibility to the community seriously, both on and off the field. Over the years, Roseman has taken a special interest in giving back to both active and veteran military members. Roseman invites military guests from the Joint Base McGuire-Dixon-Lakehurst to each home game for a unique VIP experience. Each guest receives tickets and pregame field passes, opportunities for photos at the 50-yard line, and a meet-and-greet with Roseman. Prior to the start of each game, Roseman’s military guest and the team’s Hometown Hero serve as "guards," helping to open the Eagles locker room doors as the team takes the field.</p> <p>The Philadelphia Eagles hosted two training camp public practices at Lincoln Financial Field in August 2018, with one serving as Military Appreciation Night to honor our active and retired service men and women. In recognition of our troops and their sacrifices for our country, the Eagles and Roseman thanked them with some very special moments throughout the evening. Spearheaded by Roseman, the “jerseys off our backs” initiative pairs up each player with a member of the military at the conclusion of practice. Players and military personnel line up on opposite sidelines and walk towards one another for a special practice jersey exchange/autograph session at midfield. In recognition of his continued efforts with the military, Roseman was named Honorary Commander for the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.</p>
<p>Pittsburgh Steelers</p>	<p>ROCKY BLEIER (Former Running Back)</p> <p>Robert Patrick Bleier, is known as ‘Rocky’ to the Steelers faithful. Bleier, like all of those who have served in the military and continue to serve, is a true American Hero. Following his rookie season with the Steelers, Bleier was drafted into the United States Army during the Vietnam War. He was deployed to Vietnam in May of 1969, and assigned to Company C, 4th Battalion (Light), 31st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, as a squad grenadier operating a 40mm M79 grenade launcher. While on patrol that August, Bleier was wounded in the left thigh by enemy fire when his platoon was ambushed. An enemy grenade also landed, and he was hit in the right leg by shrapnel, and lost part of his right foot. Bleier, who was awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart, was later told by doctors he would never play football again. But when you talk about heart, that is something Bleier has so much of there was no way he would not return to football. While he was recovering Art Rooney Sr., sent him a postcard delivering a message that spoke volumes. It read: “Rock - the team's not doing well. We need you. Art Rooney.”</p> <p>Bleier worked day and night in rehab, and miraculously made his way back to the Steelers in 1970, spending that season on injured reserve. “It was Dan Rooney who gave me an opportunity to play this game,” said Bleier. “He put me on the injured reserve list and bought me a couple of years when I came back from Vietnam. It was Dan who was in my corner. He was that way in every player’s corner.” Bleier returned to the field for the 1971 season, playing on special teams, and despite some ups and downs, Rocky always kept fighting. “Rocky is a hero,”</p>

	<p>said Lynn Swann. “He saved lives in Vietnam. He overcame great obstacles just to be able to walk, let alone play football. He found himself in a key role as a starter on a Super Bowl championship football team and a great contributor, and a great contributor to the community.” Bleier played for the Steelers until 1980 and was an integral part of four Super Bowl Championship teams. “One day Rocky was on the training table and I came through there one day and saw him lying on the table,” recalled Joe Greene. “His body was purple and blue up and down. I said he needs to be in the hospital. What I recall that same day he practiced. I said if Rocky can practice, nobody should miss practice. I don’t think I ever missed a practice, not only because of Chuck (Noll) but because of Rocky Bleier and that influence he had on me.” His inspiration on his teammates was widespread and grows with the passing of each day.</p> <p>“The older I get the more I appreciate Rocky and his story and his triumphs,” said Mel Blount. “He showed us all about perseverance, commitment and hard work. That determination to accomplish the goals he set. He is a guy who showed us how to live and taught us about life’s challenges and how to overcome them.” Bleier spends much of his time now supporting various veteran and community groups. He also serves as a motivational speaker providing career development advice for corporate executives, sales and marketing teams, young professionals and student athletes. In 2017, Bleier began starring in his one-man play, titled “The Play” where he shares his story from the football field to the battlefield and back, where he helped the Steelers to four Super Bowl victories. Bleier, who was just inducted into the Steelers Hall of Honor Class of 2018, released a special edition of his book Fighting Back as a part of the Fighting Back for Veterans campaign. The first edition, written by Bleier and Terry O’Neil, was released in 1975 and chronicled Bleier’s story of being wounded in the Vietnam War in 1969 but beating the odds and returning to the Steelers. Proceeds from the new release, titled Fighting Back: The Inspirational Journey of American Hero Rocky Bleier, will benefit military veterans’ groups, including Veterans Leadership, Joint Training Facility, and Legacies Alive.</p>
<p>San Francisco 49ers</p>	<p>JOHN LYNCH (General Manager and Former Strong Safety)</p> <p>One of the most respected players to ever play the game of football, and a five-time finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, John Lynch enters his second season as the team’s General Manager following a 15-year playing career and more than eight seasons as an NFL analyst. In addition to his passion for professional football, Lynch has a longstanding appreciation for the United States military. As someone whose grandfather and great uncle volunteered for the Army the day after the deadly attacks on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Lynch has the utmost respect for our military service men and women and has committed time and resources towards supporting the United States Armed Forces for decades. Since 1998, Lynch has frequented various Air Force bases and military hospitals to personally thank those serving in the military, including MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL, Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, MD, and various visits to Fort Carson and Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado. In 2002, the John Lynch Foundation hosted the ‘Salute the Stars & Stripes’ fundraiser honoring then United States Army Commander of U.S. Central Command Tommy Franks.</p> <p>“Through my foundation, we’ve been involved in military appreciation for a long, long time,” said Lynch. “Military appreciation is so important to me, because we understand that the unbelievable freedoms, ideals and realities that make America – in my mind – the greatest country in the world are given to us because a lot of people sacrificed for them. To me, no one does so more than the military.” For these efforts and more, Lynch was the recipient of the 2006 Bart Starr Award, which is voted upon by players throughout the NFL and recognizes a player who shows outstanding character and leadership in the home, on the field and in the community. He was also presented with The Byron “Whizzer” White Award, which is given annually to the NFL player who serves his team, community and country</p>

	<p>in the spirit of Bryon Raymond White. During his last season playing in the NFL (2007), Lynch hosted troops from Buckley Air Force Base (Aurora, CO) during the Denver Broncos training camp at Dove Valley. He visited with and shared a meal with military personnel who had either recently returned from serving in Iraq or were preparing for overseas deployment. Lynch’s military appreciation continues to this day. Every year since 2011, he has hosted military families at the annual Lynch Christmas Party in Colorado and during his first holiday season with the 49ers, he hosted military families and underserved youth for a holiday party and practice visit. The military families, who were without a mother or father during the 2017 holiday season due to deployment, enjoyed brunch and viewed practice from the sidelines. John then surprised the kids with presents from their personal wish list. During his inaugural training camp as 49ers general manager, Lynch hosted service men and women during the team’s Military Appreciation Day.</p> <p>In his second training camp with the 49ers, Lynch again welcomed 250 active duty troops and veterans for a VIP practice experience and then hosted a meet-and-greet with players and coaches. In November 2017, Lynch spearheaded a visit to the USO office at the San Jose Military Entrance Processing Station to congratulate newly enlisted recruits heading off to basic training and thank them for their dedication of service. Lynch, along with eight players, witnessed these young men and women take their oath of enlistment, spent time with their families, and wished them luck as they boarded their bus to depart for basic training. Lynch’s respect for our service men and women extends to their dedication to training and team-building. This past offseason, Lynch and 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan welcomed Acumen Performance Group (APG) to the team’s facility to train players, coaches and staff during OTAs. The relationship inspired Lynch to suggest the Navy SEAL Foundation as the 50/50 Raffle beneficiary for the 49ers 2018 Salute to Service game.</p>
<p>Seattle Seahawks</p>	<p>PAUL G. ALLEN (Ownership)</p> <p>Seahawks nominate owner Paul G. Allen for the Salute to Service Award in recognition of his commitment to preserving military history, honoring those who were lost, reconnecting those who fought side by side and sharing what he found with the world. In 1998, inspired by his father’s service in the U.S. Army, he began acquiring and preserving historic military airplanes. Allen’s passion for aviation and history and his awareness of the increasing rarity of original WWII aircraft motivated him to restore these artifacts to the highest standard of authenticity and share them with the public through his Flying Heritage & Combat Armor Museum. The museum offers visitors unique ways to explore and examine history by providing firsthand experiences with one of the world’s finest collections including 45 war machines: 26 aircraft and 19 tanks, vehicles and guns, mostly from the World War II era. “I started collecting these unique aircraft not only to preserve the planes, but even more important, to preserve the human stories they really represent,” said Paul G. Allen during the opening. In 2016, Allen’s production company, in partnership with NBC Learn, launched "Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation." The educational video series takes viewers on a journey through World War II history, as told firsthand by pilots and other aviation veterans from the U.S., U.K., Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan. Chronicles of Courage is one of the largest oral history video archives on war and aviation ever created. Spanning three continents, eight countries and seven wars - beginning with World War II - this revolutionary video archive captures the powerful first-person perspectives of over 300 men and women from opposing sides of conflicts. While viewing the Chronicles of Courage, Ray Owen, Jr. saw an interview with U.S. Navy Commander Robert Turnell, 93, and wondered if this was the same man who served with his father in WWII. With the help of the museum, Turnell of Bothell, Wash. and Owen of Detroit, Mich. were reunited in a special moment not only for the two men, but their families as well. “Growing up we heard a lot of war stories from dad,” said Ray H. Owen. “To see these guys come</p>

	<p>together as 95 and 93-year-old men has been an extremely heartwarming and emotional experience for both our families.”</p> <p>Under Allen’s direction, the museum also features a one-of-a-kind interactive exhibit called “Why War: The Causes of Conflict” that explores the reasons countries go to war and puts context behind the war machines living in the museum. Through a unique and highly interactive, media-rich experience, the exhibit explores the roots of military confrontations throughout U.S. history and provides visitors a new way to explore history and examine conflict through the lenses of key figures, technology, and pop culture to demonstrate the common causes of war. Allen also assembled a multi-disciplined team of researchers, engineers, and explorers to locate historically significant wreckage and explore underwater ecosystems. Earlier this year, on March 4, the World War II-era aircraft carrier USS Lexington was found after decades and thousands of feet underwater. The Lexington was one of the first aircraft carriers built by the U.S. It went down in 1942 with 216 crewmembers and 35 aircraft on board. Allen-led expeditions also resulted in the discovery of the USS Indianapolis (August 2017), USS Ward (November 2017), USS Astoria (February 2015), Japanese battleship Musashi (March 2015) and the Italian WWII destroyer Artigliere (March 2017). His team was also responsible for presentation to the British Navy in honor of its heroic service. The USS Indianapolis was our first mission in August of last year and we could not have started our year with a more fitting or important ship. It holds a unique place in American naval history, and a sacred place in your own families’ memories. With each story we hear, we are reminded why these expeditions matter. David Mearns, a marine scientist and historical researcher who worked with Allen, shared the following. “Paul’s interest in marine exploration and shipwrecks was very personal, which grew in part from his father’s service during WWII. But in pursuing his passion and curiosity he also invited the world to join these exciting explorations through the computers he helped create. His important discoveries and illumination of naval history have ensured that the sacrifice of those who served is not forgotten.” Mr. Allen extended his dedication to military personnel through the team’s numerous programs honoring military members, veterans and their families. This included special recognition moments during every home game, visits by team members to military bases, bringing service members and veterans to practices, and private outreach to Gold Star families. Paul G. Allen passed away on October 15, 2018.</p>
<p>Tampa Bay Buccaneers</p>	<p>EVAN SMITH (Offensive Guard)</p> <p>Growing up in a military household, a respect and reverence for the Armed Forces was ingrained early for Evan. His father, Albert, was a member of the United States Army 82nd Airborne division, which specializes in parachute operations, from 1971-1973. Evan’s grandfather, Robert Dietrich served in the Navy during World War II from 1942-1945. Evan’s brother, Alex Dietrich-Smith, became the third generation to serve in the military and was deployed in the Iraq War after which he was awarded a Purple Heart for his efforts. In all, both Evan and his wife have 12 relatives who have or are currently serving in the United States Military. That family connection has translated into a desire and passion to aid veterans and service members, especially in Tampa Bay, where there is a large military community.</p> <p>This season, Evan has visited members of the U.S. Coast Guard in St. Petersburg and made the trip for the second year in a row to MacDill Air Force Base, home to the United States Special Operations Central Command and met with members of all branches of the military during players’ days off. Every opportunity to go on base or interact with servicemen and women the Buccaneers get, Evan is the first to volunteer. This past offseason, Evan was the honorary guest speaker during the General H Norman Schwarzkopf Awards, which honor the families of active duty military members from each branch of service, recognizing their integrity, courage, commitment and service before self. When addressing the crowd gathered in the</p>

	<p>auditorium at AdventHealth Training Center, Evan expressed his gratitude for the sacrifices these families make day in and day out, knowing firsthand how hard they can be. Though people may look up to him as a professional athlete, Evan considers military service members the true heroes and is the one who looks up to them tremendously. During a USAA Boot Camp event at the Buccaneers' Training Camp, Evan took time to participate in the competition and drills in a closed practice exclusively for military members and their families, but he went even further to ensure all participants felt honored and purchased 50 tickets to the game for the remaining military members. In fact, Evan Smith brings military personnel to every Buccaneers home game as part of the Buccaneers' player ticket program. Aiding military members is just inherent for Evan. He will be continuing his efforts this year during the NFL's My Cause My Cleats game. Evan's love for veterans and active duty military members is well-known throughout the Tampa Bay community and he has used his position within the NFL to make an impact on those who serve in every way he can.</p>
<p>Tennessee Titans</p>	<p>ARIANA CAMPBELL (Tennessee Titans Cheerleader)</p> <p>Ariana Campbell is currently a Tennessee Titans cheerleader who has a long history of ties to the military community. Ariana is originally from Pennsylvania and is the daughter of a Navy Veteran. Her Dad was a Petty Officer, 3rd Class and Ariana is currently married to a U.S. Army Sergeant E5. When Ariana's husband was assigned to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, she had to change her entire life, including the college she was attending to move with her new husband. Ariana transferred to Chaminade University to complete her degree and after her husband's initial three years, he reenlisted for another 4 years and was transferred to Fort Campbell. Immediately after moving to Fort Campbell, Sergeant Campbell was deployed to Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, Africa. Ariana works full-time for a bank on base at Fort Campbell. She helps Army families manage their finances and specializes in assisting servicemen with their budgets and personal finances during long deployments. Ariana and Sergeant Campbell are active supporters of the USO, working as volunteers for various USO events on base.</p>
<p>Washington Redskins</p>	<p>JOSH NORMAN (Cornerback)</p> <p>Josh Norman continues to be a forceful presence on the field and a constant threat to the backfield. During the 2017 season, Norman successfully defended nine passes and forced two fumbles with a fumble recovery. He had a combined 64 tackles over 14 games, starting in each game he played. Off the field, Norman also maintained a constant and thoughtful presence for service men and service women in the Washington, D.C., area and across the world. Norman takes time to connect with service members during events throughout the year and has gone to Andrews Air Force Base for special practices reserved for members of the Redskins Salute and Norman has been active in participating in other Salute to Service community events. Josh Norman has developed a friendship by way of the Redskins Salute to Service games, with General Robert B. Neller, the 37th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. Each year he has met with General Neller prior to kick-off, gaining a further appreciation of our Armed Forces. In 2017, Norman gave his custom military designed cleats to the commandant following the Salute to Service game, which were later used in a fundraiser for the U.S. Marine Corps.</p> <p>Along with his concentration in helping those who defend our freedom, Norman has a strong desire to give back to youth in the DC Metro Area and at in his home state of South Carolina through his Foundation, Starz24. Through a variety of different events and programs, Norman has donated his time and resources to provide enrichment opportunities to children, with an emphasis on fitness and teamwork. Norman's generosity even reaches as far as Puerto Rico with his outreach, when he announced last winter the partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs to provide much needed resources to the area after hurricane Maria. Josh</p>

	Norman continues to be a positive force in the community as well as on the football field.
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